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The offering site in Mørsvikbotn, Sørfold municipality, Nordland county, Norway

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Abstract

An offering site and several scree graves are located in a scree landscape in Mørsvikbotn. A documentation project of the offering site has been conducted, and bones have been collected from the locality. Later, Tromsø University Museum excavated a scree grave in the same landscape, where several animal bones were identified, so the grave can also be interpreted as a sacrificial site. The results of the two studies are discussed. The bone material has been studied, with an emphasis on the species identified, and on which parts of the animals that were sacrificed. Radiocarbon dating of the material was also obtained. The cultural monuments are located in a Saami area, where it is possible to distinguish between three different Saami adaptations. A central question is which of the three groups used the offering site.

Keywords: Offering site, scree grave, Saami religion, North Norway, changing traditions

5.1 Introduction

An offering site is located in Muorgos, or Mørsvik, in Sørfold Municipality, Nordland County, and a scree grave has also been found here. Árran Lule Sámi Centre and the Sørfold division of Nordland Museum have documented the offering site (Andersen 2018). Later Tromsø University Museum excavated the scree grave in the same landscape. A number of animal bones were found in at the same place, which indicates that this could be a second offering site (Opvang and Kjellmann 2018). The site is therefore defined as a probable sacrificial site. The results of these two studies are discussed in the paper.

The sacrificial site has been known of for a long time. It is accessible by road, so it is easy to get to the area. Over time, many people have visited the place and collected bones from the offering site (pers. comm. Steinar Isaksen 2015; Vorren and Kalstad 1974). The first documentation of such enterprises dates back to the 1930s (Sandbakk 1982). Over time, this meant increased pressure on the area, and the number of bones has been reduced. These facts were among the reasons why we felt it was high time to make a thorough documentation of the site. Before the survey took place, a public meeting was held in Murgos/Mørsvik, where the plan was presented to the local people. We received a positive response and therefore felt that we had good reasons for conducting our investigations.

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There are several research questions for the project. A basic aim was to identify the species of the animals and kinds of bones included in the offerings at the site. Another aim was to date some of the bones, in order to get an idea about the age of the offerings. The final aim was to get insight into, who had placed the bones at the offering site?

The method of determining which kind of species dominated these two sites, is based on the number of bone fragments documented. No analysis of the minimum number of individuals, which could further improve the analysis, was done (Salmi et al. 2015: 13). Nevertheless, I believe that the analysis gives an indication of the species distribution at these two localities.

In addition, interviews were conducted with locals about the area, with an emphasis on understanding how they perceived the use of the sacrifice sites. Various archives have also been consulted both at Tromsø University Museum and the Norwegian Museum of Cultural history (Norsk folkemuseum) in Oslo.

My approach is based on sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's thinking about habitus. Habitus is about: the preoccupied active presence in the world, through which the world imposes its presence, with its urgencies, its things to be done and said, things made to be said, which directly govern words and deeds without ever unfolding as a spectacle (Bourdieu 1990: 52).

An action should be understood on the basis that an agent is permanently immersed in the social world, that is, one is in the world and understands the world from this. The strategic actions are influenced by structures, where the individual cannot go beyond the framework that already exists. These are transcendental structures that are historically constituted through practice, and constantly oriented towards practical functions. In this way, the individual has a practical knowledge of the world and aligns activities with this knowledge. The individual does things unconsciously without thinking that the actions follow a particular pattern. Practice, therefore, is, as part of habitus, knowledge learned through the encounter with the world, by copying, watching, listening, and attentive involvement (Bender 2006: 305).

5.2 Rituals and sacrifices

The Saami worldview was earlier probably understood as animistic. People perceived the world through a visible material and an invisible spiritual dimension. The first was everyday life, and the other dimension was populated by spirits and several divine beings. Through the presence of the beings, the different spirits had a strong impact on both life and the natural environment. According to Samuel Rheen, in the 1670s, the most powerful gods among the Lule Saami in Jokkmokk were the Thunder God, the Sun and 'Storjunkeren'. Storjunkeren had power over mammals, birds, and fish (Rheen (1671) 1983:35–43).

Meetings between the gods and people could happen at special places – the offering sites. These sites are often located in rocky terrain. Preferred places were a scree landscape with caves, overhangs, and big boulders (Manker 1957: 23–24). In this landscape, the *siejdde* or *værromuorra* could be located (Mebius 1968: 60). A *siejdde* (SaaL.) could be a sacred stone or a wooden figure. It belonged to the landscape and its inhabitants or users and had the power to influence daily life. Sacrifice to a *siejdde* was a way to stay in touch with the gods and the spirit world. Ethnographer Johan Albert Kalstad (1997) says that in the Lule Saami area, the *siejdde* could be both smaller and somewhat distinctive stone figures, or large stone blocks weighing up to several tons. In these places there could also be figures carved in wood.

It is possible to distinguish between several levels of ritual space (Rydving 1993: 98–100). The first level was composed of a few cult sites where the whole community and people from other communities came in order to perform rituals. An intermediate level could include cult sites used by families belonging to the same working group (SaaL.: *sijdda*), who followed the same migratory route or fished in the same lakes. Lastly, the third group included the places near the tent or hut, where the family performed their daily rituals.

People could sacrifice reindeer or other animals, money, tobacco, and even liquor to the *siejdde* (Kalstad 1997). The sacrifice could begin with the selection of a sacrificial animal. In the autumn, it was natural to sacrifice male reindeer to certain deities, while female reindeer were sacrificed to the goddess Sáráhkká. The animal that was sacrificed could be slaughtered in the place, and then certain parts of the animal were buried. This could be done through a sacrificial meal, where parts that were not eaten were laid down at the offering site (Mebius 2003: 142–143, 146). In other cases, it is known that complete animals could be sacrificed. It is, for example, known from the Salten area in Nordland that reindeer herders in the late 18th century could buy sheep, goats, cats, cocks, or other domesticated animals, and tie them to a cave, as a meal for their gods, who provided luck on the journey eastward. When they returned in the following spring, and did not find the sacrificed animal any longer, they regarded it as a sign of good fortune (Rosenwinge 1994 [1790]: 20–21).

Offering traditions have changed over time. The oldest dated sacrificial site is Unna Saiva in Gällivare, northern Sweden, where a bear bone was dated between 549 and 770 AD, while a bone of a swan was from the period before the 11th century (Salmi et al. 2015). During the Middle Ages, reindeer bones became more common. In the Lule Saami area, a bone deposit/offering site is documented in the high mountains in Hamarøy municipality, where reindeer bones have been dated to the end of the Viking Age and the early Middle Ages (Andersen 2008, 2009). In the Finnish area, the oldest reindeer bones from a sacrificial site have been dated to the 12th century. The offering of reindeer bones continued probably until the 17th century, with a peak in the period between1420 and 1660 AD. After that, the offering tradition continued as offerings of coins, small personal items, and, today, as performances for tourists (Äikäs and Salmi 2013: 69; Salmi et al. 2015: 10).

Manker (1957: 11) has argued that the offerings made by the Saami had utilitarian motives, and this view is also embraced by other researchers. It is argued that the offerings were related to subsistence and livelihood, and in this way the diversity of the species of animal offerings at Saami offering sites could reflect the connection between subsistence strategies and religious rituals (Johansen and Mulk 2006; Salmi et al 2015: 10).

5.3 The offering site in Muorgos/Mørsvik

The offering site in Muorgos/Mørsvik is mentioned for the first time in a source from 1923. The source says:

> *There was an offering site at Hellarnes in Mørsvikbotn. According to tradition, there was an idol – a human figure of wood that was first removed around 1830 (?) – at the same place. Initially, an attempt was made to burn the idol, but it was unsuccessful, and the human figure of wood was lowered into the fjord. There is a burial place near Hellarnes (Norges Topografiske beskrivelse* 1923, the author's translation).

The human figure of wood must be interpreted as a *siejdde*. Later written sources give the information that the siejdde was removed in the late 1800s. According to the descriptions, it was dragged down to the sea, where it lay for a time before it floated out into the water and sank. The description

says that the *siejdde* was completely black from being smeared with blood from animals for a long time (Sandbakk 1982). When we asked the locals about this event, some said that they knew who removed the pole. They also thought that this was done in the late 1800s.

The offering site is located in Hellernesura, overlooking the Mørsvikfjord (Figure 5.1). According to one of the informants, the place looks from a distance like a face with a nose. Hellernesura forms a scree landscape. The landscape is forested and slopes steeply towards the sea. It consists of blocks of stone, with several large stones and boulders. It is therefore very difficult to move in the landscape. The landscape borders the fjord in the west. In the east is Hellerneskollen, a small knoll just over 125 meters above sea level.

Figure 5.1: The offering site is located in the Mørsvikfjord. (Map: M. Spangen. Background map: The Norwegian mapping service.)

During interviews, informants told us that previously there were several graves in the scree. In the 1950s and '60s, people or youngsters from the village found several skulls in the scree that were removed and placed on the quay, where they lay for a while before they disappeared, probably into the sea (pers. comm. Steinar Isaksen 2015).

Through documenting the scree we recorded a scree grave, as well as two other sites where there have been scree graves. In one of these probable graves, we found birchbark with sewing marks. It is known that in the past corpses were covered with slivers of birchbark that were sewn together.

5.4 Archaeological investigation of the offering site

The offering site is located at the very top of the scree and above the scree graves. It is hard to get to the site, and we had to use a rope to pull us up to the last part of the offering site. The site was formed by a slab that juts out of the mountain, forming a space beneath the mountain and the slab. Due to the narrow sloping surface on the front it is possible to investigate the locality. The photo shows that there is not room for many people there (Figure 5.2). The bones were found inside this space (Figure 5.3), concentrated within an area of 3 m x 0.7 m, and lying on top of a layer of sand. Since it is completely under the mountain, this area is dry.

Over time, several different researchers and other people have visited the place. Bone material has been collected from this place over time, and today this material is located in different institutions. In 1930, missionary Bertrand Nilsen visited the site and collected bones from the place (Nilsen 1935). Later, in 1974 and 1975, people from Tromsø University Museum documented the area, and collected a number of bones at the same time. They also found some coins at the site, some pieces of wood, a nail, and a piece of iron (Vorren and Kalstad 1974, 1976).

Figure 5.2: Due to a narrow sloping surface on the front of the offering site (no. 1) it is possible to investigate the locality. (Photo: O. Andersen.)

Figure 5.3: The bones are found at the offering site (site no. 1). (Photo: O. Andersen.)

We received help from Tromsø University Museum and Erik Kjellman (Kjellman 2015) to carry out the documentation of the site, and we collected 51 bones from the place (Figure 5.2 and 5.3). In 1974, Vorren and Kalstad (1974) argued that the bone assemblage had been disturbed many times, since so many had visited the place. For that reason, we just selected the bones that lay on the surface. We submitted three samples for radiocarbon dating. The samples submitted were of cattle, sheep, and reindeer. They were all dated to the period from the mid-17th century to the 20th century (Figure 5.4). One can therefore assume that the site cannot be older than the 17th century.

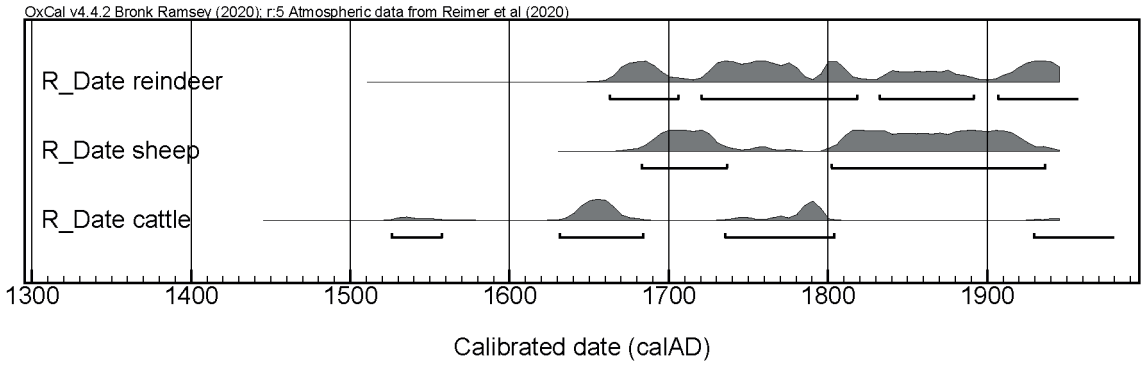

Figure 5.4: Radiocarbon dates of the bones.

How late the offering site was used is uncertain. The mission came to the fjord in 1722, with Thomas von Westen, who wanted to convert the Saami to Christianity. According to a note from Johannes Rasch, a minister from Rørstad who joined the journey to Muorgos/Mørsvik, the mission did not convert a single person, since the Saami had fled to the mountains (Breivik 1982: 16).

In a later source from 1725, we hear about a sacrifice at Ånderbakk farm, farther out in the fjord. A man had sacrificed a dog, and this became known to the authorities, so that the person who performed the sacrifice had to meet with the priest, where he was given a reprimand for his act. One can therefore assume that the missionaries' entry into the fjord could have made it difficult to continue the use of the offering site. Nevertheless, there are sources saying that some people continued to use the place up to the end of the 19th century (Rønnebu 1978: 64). Removal of the pole at the end of the 19th century confirms that the site had lost its significance by that time.

People from Tromsø University Museum found a coin dated 1922 at the site, and this is a special observation since mainly bones were sacrificed here. It is tempting to associate it with visitors to the place in the 1930s. Most likely the offering site was used in the period from the from the mid-1600s to the end of the 19th century.

5.5 What was sacrificed?

Researchers who visited the site before us believed that there were countless reindeer bones in addition to some horse bones (Simonsen 1991; Vorren and Kalstad 1974, 1976). Therefore, our initial hypothesis was that we might find reindeer bones and horse bones. In total, 51 bones from the site, weighing 1564.7 grams, were collected and analysed. The analysis was done by osteologist Anne Karin Hufthammer, University Museum of Bergen. The analysis documented the following species: cattle, sheep/goat, sheep, and reindeer. Fourteen of these bones were only defined as a cloven-footed animal.

Most of the bones that were analysed were from cattle (Figure 5.5), amounting to a total of 24 cattle bones. There were eight sheep/goat bones, while one bone was defined as sheep. There were four reindeer bones. In total, this shows that 33 bones were of cattle, sheep, and goat origin. The result was therefore surprising in relation to what we had expected. Only a small proportion of the bones were from reindeer, and horse bones were not identified.

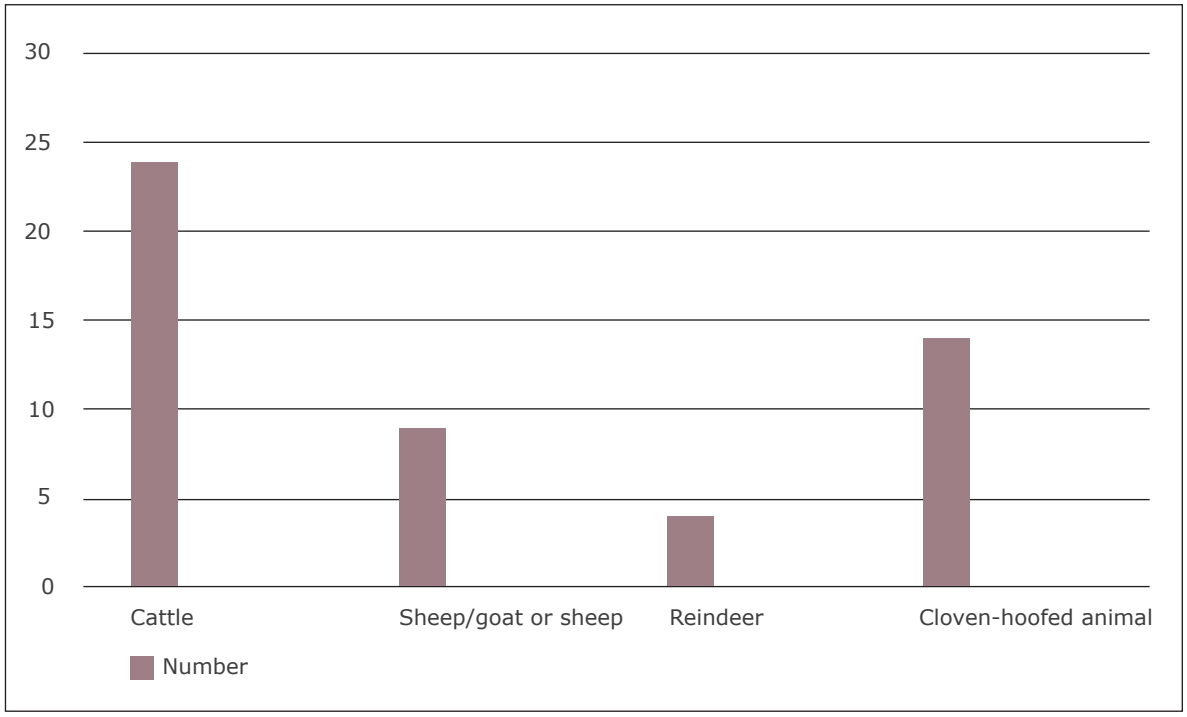

Figure 5.5: Bones that were species-identified from the offering site (site no. 1).

5.6 Which parts of the animals were sacrificed?

The analysis of the 51 bones identified shows that only certain parts of the animals were represented (Table 5.1). Five skulls, of which four were of cattle, and one skull of sheep. Several vertebrae were documented, most of which came from the middle or the front of the animals. Three ribs were identified. Finally, there were many bones from different parts of the feet. Six tibia bones were either split open or had cut marks, suggesting that the marrow had been removed.

Several animal bones were not documented, and these are primarily from the meaty parts, such as the upper front leg (*humerus*) and shoulder blades (*scapula*). In addition, there were no femur and pelvis bones, and some of the back parts of the vertebrae are also missing.

Table 5.1: The bone material from the offering site (site no. 1).

Latin Name	Part Of The Body	Number	Percent
Dens	Head	3	
Cranium	Head	5	
Mandibula	Head	4	
Total	**Head**	**12**	**24**
Atlas	Vertebra	1	
Vertebra	Vertebra	15	
Vertebra epiphysis	Vertebra	1	
Vertebra spina	Vertebra	1	
Total	**Vertebra**	**18**	**35**
Costa	Rib	3	
Total	**Rib**	**3**	**6**
Radius/Ulna	Feet	1	
Tibia	Feet	6	
Radiale	Feet	1	
Metacarpus	Feet	2	
Metatarsus	Feet	1	
Phalanx I, I, III	Feet	5	
Clacaneum	Feet	1	
	Feet	1	
Total		**18**	**35**
Total		**51**	**100**

5.7 The scree grave

The scree grave was excavated by Tromsø University Museum in 2017. The skeleton lay in a space between two big blocks, leaning against each other to form a cave. In total, 11 human bones were recorded. The bones were from a skull, a vertebra, and small pieces of a rib. The bones probably came from one individual, a man. The bones were placed on birchbark and moss. The birchbark may have been a part of shroud the deceased had been wrapped in, but only fragments with no traces of sewing marks were left. Radiocarbon dating of the skull and birchbark were dated to between 894 and 1260 cal. AD. The skull was dated between 895 and 1018 cal AD with 95.4% probability (Oppvang and Kjellmann 2018).

The excavation documented a large bone repository of various animal species on the same site. Of the 288 samples collected, the species of 151 bone fragments were identified; their total weight is 4187.3 grams (Figure 5.6). This material consisted of 119 reindeer bones; sheep or goats accounted for 25 bones, six bones were only identified as mammal and one bone was from a hoofed animal. About a third of the bone material had cut marks or was cut, probably to get access to the bone marrow. A reindeer bone was radiocarbon dated to between 1470 and 1640 cal. AD with 95.4% probability (Oppvang and Kjellmann 2018).

The dating of the reindeer bone does not coincide with the radiocarbon dating of the skull and indicates that the skeleton may be older than the bones at the site, but more datings should be conducted to investigate this further.

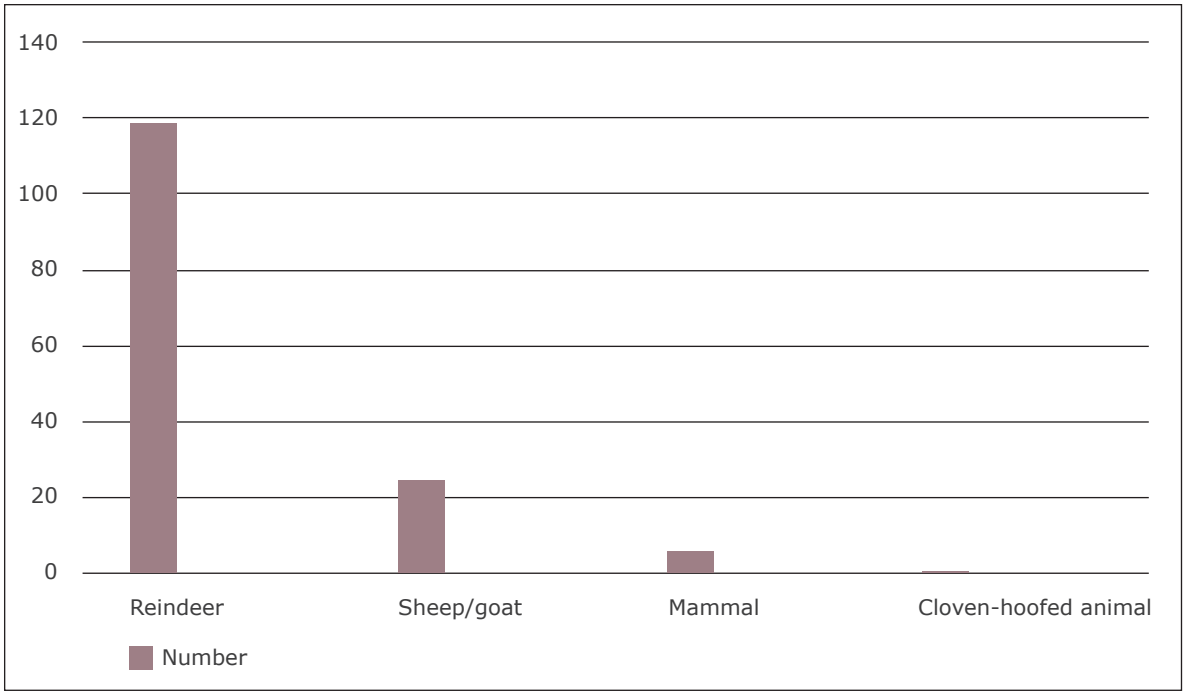

Figure 5.6: Bones species-identified in the scree grave (site no. 2).

In Table 5.2 there is an overview of what part of the animal the different bones are from. The largest proportion of the bones is related to what is defined here as part of the feet and constitutes 52.3 % of the bones, 11.3 % of the bones are from the skull, where four of the bones are from the cranium. Otherwise, the vertebrae make up 22.5 %, while bones from the ribs make up 10.6 %. Most parts of the animals are represented. This also applies to the meaty parts of the animals. Eight femur and seven humerus bones were identified. Shoulders (scapula) and pelvises were represented with four bones each. Bones from all parts of the vertebrae were recorded.

5.8 Discussion of the two sites

The analyses of the two sites show that the offering site (no. 1) is defined based on written sources and oral tradition, and the archaeological excavation has confirmed this as a place of sacrifice. The area had also been marked by a *siejdde* of wood, which stood on the site until the end of the 19th century. The scree grave (no. 2) is not documented as an offering site in written or oral sources. It is believed to be a sacrificial site on the basis of several bones identified in the scree grave, and that the area is generally known as a sacrificial site.

The two sites lie in a scree landscape which slopes down to the sea. Being located in a scree has been considered typical for this type of cultural monument (Manker 1957: 23–24). Both localities are close to the fjord and just below Hellerneskollen. The proximity to water and connection with dominant high points in the landscape has also been pointed out as landscape features associated with sacrificial sites in Finland (Äikäs 2015: 72–86). Tiina Äikäs (2015: 108) argues that connection with water is a landscape feature described as liminal, explained as being in a state of in-between two levels. This is understood as a meeting place between the natural and the supernatural. Similarly, Audhild Schanche (2000: 284) has pointed out, in her work on scree graves that this landscape may have formed passages

down to the realm of death, so that the scree landscape can be understood as a meeting place between the world of the living and the dead. Marte Spangen (2016: 104–106) has argued against placing too much emphasis on topographic landscape elements. She points out that Finland is stereotypically called 'the land of a thousand lakes', so the location of sacrifices close to water may have been natural. She argues that the location of the sacrificial site can be seen in relation to other conditions, such as good fishing and hunting sites or migration routes. Proximity to main residences in winter may have been another factor to emphasize.

Table 5.2: The bone material from the scree grave (site no. 2).

Latin name	Part of the body	Number	Total	Percent
Cranium	Head	4		
Dens	Head	10		
Mandibula	Head	3		
Total	**Head**		**17**	**11.3**
Atlas	Vertebra	2		
Axis	Vertebra	1		
Vertebra	Vertebra	31		
Total	**Vertebrae**		**34**	**22.5**
Costa	Rib	16		
Total	**Rib**		**16**	**10.6**
Astragalus	Feet	3		
Calcaneum	Feet	2		
Carpale 2+3	Feet	1		
Carpale 4+5	Feet	2		
Centrotarsale	Feet	1		
femur	Feet	8		
humerus	Feet	7		
Intermedium	Feet	1		
	Feet (Limb bones)	2		
Metacarpus	Feet	3		
Metacarpus (uncertain)	Feet	1		
Metapodium	Feet	1		
Metatarsus	Feet	7		
Pelvis	Feet	4		
Phlanx (uncertain)	Feet	14		
Radius+ulna	Feet	8		
Scapula	Feet	4		
Tibia	feet	9		
Ulna	Feet	1		
Total	**Extremities**		**79**	**52.3**
Unidentified		5		
Total	**Unidentified**		**5**	**3.3**
Total	**Total**	**151**	**100**	

The two sacrificial sites were used during two different periods of time. The most recent sacrificial site (no. 1) was probably used in the period from mid-17th century to the end of the 19th century. This is substantiated through radiocarbon dating, written sources, and oral traditions. The second site (no. 2) is dated only through one radiocarbon dating. It shows that it was used at least once during the period 1470 to 1640 cal. AD, and it therefore appears to be somewhat older than the first site (no. 1).

Before our investigation, different bone compositions were assumed for the two sites, with mostly reindeer bones and some horse bones being associated with the youngest site. Through the present analysis, it appears that the bones were mainly of cattle, sheep, and goat, and only a small percentage of reindeer bones were documented. In the other locality (site no. 2), reindeer bones predominate, and in addition there are sheep and goat bones. However, we note that there are no cattle bones, which implies that there has been a change. During the mid-17th century, cattle were introduced, and reindeer bones were no longer deposited in the same amount as before.

The analysis of the bones also shows some differences in what animal parts were deposited in the two places. At the sacrificial site (no. 1) certain bones were not included. This is primarily the case with bones from the meaty parts of the animal. At the second site (no. 2), the analysis shows that the meaty parts of the animals are also included.

5.9 Comparison with other offering sites

Archaeological investigations of other offering sites have shown that reindeer bones predominate in the material, which is typical (Salmi et al. 2015: 17). Bones of sheep or goat, bear, wild birds, beaver, elk, and cattle have also been documented. The age profile shows that individuals of all ages exist, but with a preference for older individuals. The sacrificial sites in Muorgos/Mørsvik included bones from reindeer, cattle, and sheep, and bones of no other species have been found here. When it comes to the species composition, it is the oldest sacrificial site (no. 2) that bears most resemblance to the other sacrificial sites, since reindeer bones predominate. At the more recent locality (no. 1) cattle dominate, and bone species are therefore atypical in relation to well-known offering sites.

An analysis of bone composition has been carried out on an assemblage from Unna Saiva (Salmi et al. 2015: 13). It appears that most reindeer bones were fragments of antlers attached to the skull and chopped off. A considerable number of skull and mandible fragments were documented, as well as the uppermost vertebra. The dominance of antlers, crania and mandibles is typical at Saami offering sites. Several uppermost vertebrae, such as atlas, axis, and uppermost cervical vertebrae have often been documented. Salmi and her co-authors (2015: 13) argues that this suggests that reindeer heads were offered with soft tissue still holding the skull and the uppermost vertebrae together at these sites. Bones from the limb extremities were also represented in the Unna Siva material. A large number of metatarsal and metacarpal bones are documented. There is an indication that meat and marrow were consumed from these bones before they were placed at the offering site. Upper limbs of bones and lower vertebra were often absent in the Unna Saiva bone material, but some fragments of the femur, humerus, pelvis, and scapula were identified.

The bone composition in the more recent sacrificial site (no. 1) bears resemblance to the bone material from Unna Saiva, where bones from the upper part of the animal, as well as lower limb bones predominated, while bones from flesh-filled parts were missing. At the other sacrificial site (no. 2) there are bones from most parts of the animal; bones from the meatier parts of the animal are also well represented.

Another notable feature is that there are no antlers at the two sacrificial sites. This has similarities to what is common in the scree graves, where antlers are rare (Schanche 2000: 292–294). No antlers

have been found in a scree grave, only a goat's horn found in Narvik, and this may be a powder horn. Since both localities in Muorgos/Mørsvik are dry, the lack of antlers was most likely not a result of decomposition. It must therefore be due to the fact that no antlers were placed at the two sites. Schanche (2000: 293–294) thinks that the lack of antlers in the graves must be due to the fact that antlers were treated differently than at the sacrificial sites, because antlers were not part of the death ritual. The reindeer bones were sacrificed to the god of death, while antlers were sacrificed to other gods. This suggests an interpretation as to why no antlers have been detected at these two sites in Muorgos/Mørsvik, since this is a burial ground.

5.10 Who sacrificed in Muorgos/Mørsvik?

Finally, I will address the question of who laid down the sacrificial material at the two sites. To gain an understanding of this, it is necessary to look at who lived in or used the area. The discussion emphasizes what written sources reveal about who was in the area.

Several different Saami groups were previously known in the area (Qvigstad and Wiklund 1909a: 146; Stensland 1979). In the 18th century, a Saami population can be linked to the settlements located along the fjord. Major Peter Schnitler's description from 1743, compiled in relation to the border negotations with Sweden, states that the people here had farms with horses, cattle, sheep, and goats. In addition, they fished in the fjords. Schnitler therefore said that they lived as Norwegians, but married their own ethnic group. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Saami settlement is evenly distributed in the fjords, all the way to the head of the Mørsvik fjord. We can define them as coastal Saami farmers. During the 18th and 19th centuries, changes occurred along the coast, and many of the Saami farms were no longer identified as Saami settlements (Qvigstad 1929: 15).

In addition, two other Saami groups lived in the fjord during the same period who were described in the same written source (Qvigstad and Wiklund 1909a: 146). Firstly, there are Saami described in Norwegian as "*bygdesamer*". Schnitler wrote that they had settled in the outlying fields of the farms along the coast, in what we call outfields (No: *markebygder*), as there was no space along the shoreline. At least some of the people in this group had a nomadic lifestyle, moving between summer and winter camps, and reindeer husbandry was part of the economy. We can therefore categorize them as coastal Saami reindeer herders (Qvigstad and Wiklund 1909b: 345). But during the second half of the 19th century, there was a change in the economy, and agriculture became more important, and this led to the settlement becoming more permanent (Qvigstad 1929: 12).

A third group were the Saami who moved west to the coast in the summer and spent winters inland east of the mountain range Kjølen (the Keel) or high mountains in today's Sweden. Schnitler uses the term "Østlapper" ("eastern Lapps") for this group. Usually it is this group that have been identified as reindeer nomads (No: *helnomader*). Some of the people in this group would probably come to Muorgos/Mørsvik to participate in the market that existed there in the 1700s and 1800s.

5.11 Discussion

Through analyses of offering sites, we see that the tradition of sacrifice goes far back in time. It is a part of a religion, which is a system constructed by a long tradition of thoughts about fundamental human problems: life, love, good, evil, and death, to mention some (Insoll 2004: 7).

The offering tradition documented in Muorgos/Mørsvik shows many similarities with other places. The use of a scree landscape is a known feature in Saami culture (Manker 1957: 23–24). With reference to Bourdieu's thinking (1990: 53), we must assume that the Saami in Salten believed that this was the right way to treat the sacrificial material. The lack of antlers in the material was possibly due to the fact that this was a burial ground where sacrifices to the god of death may have been emphasized.

At some point, however, there has been a change, a shift from placing reindeer bones at the site to offering mainly livestock bones. What this is due to is uncertain. My hypothesis is that it could be linked with changes in the economy of the Saami population. If it is assumed that the offering site reflects subsistence strategies, it is natural to associate the use of this site with the coastal Saami population, a population that had livestock breeding as part of their subsistence strategies.

When cattle herding became more important, sacrificial practices were maintained by offering cattle. Through studies of settlement mounds in Tysfjord, it has been shown that both cattle and goats/sheep became part of the Saami economy during the Middle Ages (Andersen 2019). It is also known that the coastal Saami made sacrifices (Kolsrud 1947). The story from Ånderbakk from 1725 documents the sacrifice of a dog (Sandbakk 1982). In the 1700s, Ånderbakk was one of the Saami farms along the fjord, where the economy was based on farming and fishing.

It is feasible to imagine that the coastal Saami population with agriculture as their main subsistence used the sacrificial site. Therefore, there has been no shift in thinking or doxa related to the sacrificial tradition, even though new animals have been introduced and offered at the site. It has still been important to carry on the tradition by sacrificing. I therefore choose to assume that there may have been coastal Saami who made sacrifices at the offering site in Muorgos/Mørsvik.

It cannot be ruled out that sacrifices may have been made by reindeer herders, especially those visiting the fjords, because written sources also describe reindeer herders' sacrificial practices in Salten. But I think that the reindeer herders' contribution to the site was of lesser importance.

Finally, it ought to be pointed out that there was a marketplace in Muorgos/Mørsvik, in the 18th and 19th centuries (Rønnebu 1978: 68, Qvigstad and Wiklund 1909a: 145). Schnitler mentions that the 'eastern Saami' visited Muorgos/Mørsvik in the 18th century, to take part in the market (Qvigstad and Wiklund 1909a: 145–146, 154). The question is whether sacrifices were made at the sacrificial site in connection with meetings between the coastal and inland Saami populations. In this way, the sacrificial sites may have served as a ritual site for a wider part of the Saami population.

5.12 Conclusion

This study has documented the offering sites in Muorgos/Mørsvik. The analysis of the bone material has shown that there has been a change in the use of the area, where the oldest phase has documented bones of reindeer and sheep/goat, while from the 17th century onwards, cattle bones predominated together with bones of sheep/goat and only a few reindeer bones have been documented. Assuming that the offering practice reflects the subsistence pattern, it is natural to suppose that it was the coastal Saami population, who had an agricultural and fishing-based economy, that made sacrifices on the site. The lack of antlers in the bone material indicates that the sacrifice was linked to the area being a burial ground.

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