New Users and Changing Traditions—(Re)Defining Sami Offering Sites

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Sami are indigenous people of Northern Fennoscandia. Some Sami offering sites have been used for over a thousand years. During this time, the offering traditions have changed and various people have started using the places based on different motivations. Present day archaeological finds give evidence of both continuing traditions and new meanings attached to these sites, as well as to sites that were probably not originally used for rituals in the Sami ethnic religion. In some cases, the authenticity of the place seems to lie in the stories and current beliefs more than in a historical continuity or any specifically sacred aspects of the topography or nature it is situated in. Today's new users include, for example, local (Sami) people, tourists, and neo-pagans. This paper discusses what informs these users, what identifies certain locations as offering sites, and what current users believe their relationship to these places should be. What roles do scholarly traditions, heritage tourism, and internal culture have in (re)defining Sami offering sites and similarly what roles do 'appropriate' rituals have in ascribing meaning to particular places? How do we mediate wishes for multivocality with our professional opinions when it comes to defining sacredness?

Keywords: Sami, offering site, multivocality, authenticity, site biographies

INTRODUCTION

During the twentieth century, research on Sami offering sites, including any excavations, was, to a large extent, performed by ethnographers (e.g. Manker, 1957; Itkonen, 1962; Vorren, 1985; Vorren & Eriksen, 1993; though see Hallström, 1932; Erä-Esko, 1957). Despite some calls for more archaeological research on such sites (Vorren, 1985: 81; Rydving & Kristoffersen, 1993), only in recent years has there been a renewed interest in fieldwork related to Sami offering sites among archaeologists. Prior to 2006, only four excavations had been carried out on Sami offering sites in Finland. Results from excavations on two sacred islands in 2006 and 2007 led to the launching of the project ‘Human-Animal Relations among Finland’s Sami’, funded by the Academy of Finland. During this project, excavations were conducted at eight Sami sacred sites in different parts of Finnish Lapland.

Recent archaeological studies in Norway and Sweden have so far mainly been limited to surveys, inventories, and delineations of Sami sacred sites and offering sites for heritage management purposes (Myrvoll, 2008), and to relating known offering sites to other archaeological and topographical features in order to
discuss past and present Sami landscape cognition and use (e.g. Hedman, 2003; Sveen, 2003; Fossum, 2006). Apart from this, previously collected material has been used to analyse Sami offering sites (e.g. Mulk, 2005; Salmi et al., in prep.). In 2013, two limited excavations were performed in structures called ‘Sami circular offering sites’ in northern Norway (Spangen, in prep. a, in prep. b).

The findings from the recent excavations in both Norway and Finland have equally resulted in questions about the age of the offering sites and about what has led to their present definition as such. Studies of the research history in general and concerning some sites in particular have shown that the understanding of certain locations, constructions, or topographical features as being Sami sacred sites may be of quite recent origin, sometimes based on scholarly hypotheses and sometimes outright inventions for touristic purposes, though the interpretations may have some association with older historical accounts or traditions (cf. Äikäs, 2011; Spangen, 2013a). This raises questions of authenticity and definition that are not only relevant when studying Sami offering sites, but that contribute to a wider debate concerning the experience of authenticity and sacredness, usually in terms of the age of such traditions. Apart from a general archaeological preference for the old and ‘original’ (see below), in Norway, this is partly related to cultural heritage legislation, which protects both material and immaterial Sami heritage older than one hundred years. Similar time limits are not mentioned in Finnish legislation, but it is more vaguely stated that monuments should be ‘ancient’. In much previous ethnographic research, however, the time depth of Sami traditions concerning offering sites has not necessarily been explicitly discussed, but rather assumed to be the remnants of something very old (e.g. Manker, 1957: 79). This is partly a legacy from the national romanticism of the nineteenth century, when scholars and artists sought the peripheries and outlands to find ‘pristine’ cultural expressions unhampered by modernity, and indigenous

**Defining Sami Sacred Sites in the Past and Present**

The historian of religion Rydving (1993) has discussed research into Sami offering sites and emphasized the need for correct categorization according to the available sources. He divides sites into: ‘sacrificial sites’, which are here called ‘offering sites’, and are delimited sites with remains of offerings or other substantiated indications of an offering practice; ‘cult sites’, which include sites that are documented to have been the scene of cult acts such as offerings, ceremonies, or burials; and ‘sacred sites’, which include both of the above-mentioned, but also areas or sites without evidence of cult acts, but with place names or traditions that indicate a sacred status. Hence, offering sites are included in all three categories, as sites with strong indications of offerings, hence cult sites and sacred sites, while sacred sites may simply be, for instance, a mountain or lake with a name related to holiness (including North Sami terms such as basse, sáiva, siéidi, etc.) (Rydving & Kristoffersen, 1993: 197).

In archaeological contexts, defining a Sami sacred site is still closely related to judging the authenticity of any claim for sacredness, usually in terms of the age of such traditions. Apart from a general archaeological preference for the old and ‘original’ (see below), in Norway, this is partly related to cultural heritage legislation, which protects both material and immaterial Sami heritage older than one hundred years. Similar time limits are not mentioned in Finnish legislation, but it is more vaguely stated that monuments should be ‘ancient’. In much previous ethnographic research, however, the time depth of Sami traditions concerning offering sites has not necessarily been explicitly discussed, but rather assumed to be the remnants of something very old (e.g. Manker, 1957: 79). This is partly a legacy from the national romanticism of the nineteenth century, when scholars and artists sought the peripheries and outlands to find ‘pristine’ cultural expressions unhampered by modernity, and indigenous
populations like the Sami were seen to be particularly traditional, to the extent that they have been viewed as static cultures without history (Olsen, 1986; Hansen & Olsen, 2004: 10; Svensson & Gardiner, 2009: 23). The cultural determinism that characterized both research and popular depictions of the Sami during the twentieth century has led to unfortunate generalizations about the Sami ethnic religion, based on initially local traditions. In fact, the Sami religion, and Sami culture and traditions in general, have been, and, indeed, still are highly diverse, relating to a range of economic adaptations, languages, and other regional and local cultural variations. Today it is generally accepted that, even if some mutual or similar main ideas can be identified as common and persistent over large geographical and chronological distances, the Sami have not had one single consistent belief system (Rydving, 1993: 19–23).

Instead, the expressions of Sami beliefs have been distinctly local and have depended on the spiritual experiences of the individual or the local noaidi currently in charge of the community’s communications with gods, spirits, and ancestors (e.g. Pollan, 1993).

Similarly, there is a variation in Sami offering sites; while new investigations show that some offering sites have been used for a very long time, some from the Early Iron Age onwards (Äikäs, 2011; Salmi et al., 2011; Salmi et al., in prep.), not all Sami offering sites known today were necessarily in use at the same time and it is likely that some were in use for only a short period of time in the past (cf. Qvigstad, 1926: 319; Hallström, 1932: 112–13). Contemporary sources describe how the Sami themselves in pre-Christian contexts could destroy or stop visiting offering sites because these did not work as intended (Fellman, 1906: 19–20; Paulaharju, 1932: 24, 43–44; Högström, 1980: 183; Rydving, 1993: 66). Different Sami offering sites that were in use at the same time have also been subject to concurrent multivocal definitions and held differing value and meaning to different Sami people. From information in written and ethnographic sources, at least three types of offering sites can be distinguished, whereof some were used by an individual or a family, some were attended by the whole local community (often called the siida), and yet others were revered by people from a whole region or beyond (Rydving, 1993: 97–104). While it is likely that Sami people, before Christianization, usually treated offering sites and sieidis with respect even if the sites or objects were primarily used by someone else, it should be recognized that Sami sacred sites have always had a varying degree of significance to different people. As more and more Sami became Christians in early modern times, especially during the seventeenth to eighteenth century, this difference in perception within Sami communities was accentuated. Some of the Christian Sami were actively involved in the destruction of offering sites, which led to internal and sometimes violent conflicts (cf. Rydving, 1993: 66–68). The early twentieth century looting of certain offering sites with metal objects by tourists and young Sami was to the obvious displeasure of older Sami at the time (Hallström, 1932: 113, 123), while finds of recently deposited bones and antlers at some of the same plundered offering sites as late as 1973 suggest that some people in the younger generations continued to feel reverence towards the sites, so that there have been conflicting

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1We use the term ‘ethnic religion’ to describe a worldview that partly predated the arrival of Christianity but also lived simultaneously with it (Äikäs & Salmi, 2013). We are, nevertheless, aware that even the term ‘religion’ is an etic concept that does not fully cover the notions of a worldview that included all aspects of living and livelihood (Äikäs et al., 2009).
attitudes to the sites within these Sami communities throughout the twentieth century (Mulk & Löfstrand, 1973; Zachrisson, 1984: 15). Hence, the varying meaning of Sami offering sites to different people within and beyond the local communities has a long history and it has partly been a source of conflict. Today, users of Sami offering sites can include Sami and other locals, tourists, and neopagans, or people one might include in several or all of these categories. As in the past, different sites may constitute Sami sacred sites to different individuals and groups, and such sites may hold different meanings to each of them.

This forms a multivocality in defining Sami sacred sites and offering sites that archaeologists have to relate to, whether they be in a research or cultural heritage management context. The traditional, mainly ethnographic, research on such sites, included local traditions and opinions as to which sites were sacred, and these have often been important sources of information. However, according to the indigenous archaeology that has developed within a postcolonial theoretical framework from the 1990s onwards, such local voices should no longer be sought out alone as sources of information, but engaged as influential actors in the process of research or cultural heritage management. This is meant to enhance one common aim within the range of approaches and foci this theoretical and methodological strand incorporates, which is to challenge the hegemony of Western knowledge and decolonize science by emphasizing local and indigenous methodologies and worldviews (Atalay, 2006; Nicholas & Watkins, 2014: 3778).

Multivocality is thus generally seen as a positive and necessary aspect of indigenous archaeology, where research ethics, indigenous rights, and local participation are factors that need to be considered (e.g. Damm, 2005; Smith & Wobst, 2005; Atalay, 2012). Indeed, dialogue with different groups in society can be claimed to be a fundamental prerequisite for the justification of any cultural heritage management (Burström, 2001). The question is how wishes for multivocality can be mediated with a need to define authenticity, a categorization that is still a fundamental part of both research on and the administration of cultural heritage, and that in the case of offering sites is related to defining (degrees of) sacredness. Even if this categorization is done within a framework of indigenous archaeology and with a focus on local and indigenous opinions, there may still be several voices that advocate different and even diverging interpretations. By portraying a range of sites and users in the past and present, we wish to exemplify some of these challenges in relation to Sami sacred sites.

In our opinion, these examples raise questions about authenticity, sacredness, and the power of definition (cf. Smith, 2006), which are relevant to a wider debate, but which are perhaps especially important and somewhat poignant when it comes to archaeological research on the sacred sites of a minority such as the Sami, who have experienced centuries of oppression of their ethnic religion, language, and culture in general.

SITE BIOGRAPHIES, AUTHENTICITY, AND MULTIVOCALITY

One way to describe the above-mentioned time depth and variation in traditions connected to Sami offering sites is the term ‘site biography’. Through social interaction, the meanings attached to objects and places change during their life cycle. These changes are related to each other and create meanings (Gosden & Marshall, 1999: 160–70). With a site biography, we
mean a description of such a life history of an archaeological site—here the Sami offering site—concerning the changes that occur during its use and possible re-use, the activities that take place there, and the meanings that are attached to it. The latter also include archaeological interpretations and heritage values (see, for example, Burström, 1993; Chippindale, 1994; Holtorf, 1998; Shanks, 1998: 16). In archaeological contexts, the different phases of site biographies are, however, often given different values—usually emphasizing the older use of the sites. Writing an object (or a site) biography will inevitably involve a choice of what events to highlight, a choice that should be made according to explicit and delimited problems one wishes to explore (Burström, 2014: 79). The focus on older phases of a site biography may be a result of such a choice, but it may also illustrate a ‘hagiographic’ aspect, where the story of the object, or site, is written according to predetermined standards and expectations of what an archaeological site is, should be, and can represent (cf. Burström, 2014: 71).

This modern understanding and search for authenticity based on age and history has been linked to an increasing degree of individualism in Western European religion and society in the sixteenth century and a simultaneous quest for essential and true qualities in individuals and objects alike. In contrast to this essentialist approach, most recent research emphasizes that authenticity is culturally constructed. However, the constructivist approach to authenticity does not explain the effect of the materiality of objects, and is not suited to explain the powerful and primordial sense of authenticity people have when relating to certain objects, monuments, or sites (Jones, 2010: 183). Hence, there are also current arguments for the existence of inherent qualities in certain monuments or sites that make them more valuable as heritage because of the way these qualities make us experience them (Solli et al., 2011). The latter arguments may perhaps be seen as a result of the ‘material turn’ in archaeology, where the agency of objects (and sites) is seen more as a result of their materiality, i.e. their material characteristics and the impact this has on the surrounding world, than, for instance, their life history or biography (Burström, 2014: 67).

Along with Jones (2010: 181–82), we would maintain that even if the physical or sensory impressions of a space or an object are prone to inspire a certain feeling, thought, or action in (some) beholders, authenticity is not given in an object or place, but is created in the relationships between people, places, and objects, and dependant on who is experiencing it and in what situation. Authenticity can take many forms and these can be mutually intertwined. Prentice (2001: 15–22) has stated that an authentic experience can be created, by, for example, (1) an original object or location; (2) a natural environment; (3) a location at which something significant has happened or believed to have happened; (4) a connection to one’s own or another’s roots; (5) a learned authenticity, which is based on expert guidance; or (6) a built authenticity at a place that replicates history.

In all instances, authenticity arises as a result of action and encounter. Because some courses of action are seen as better and more legitimate and others are dismissed or discriminated against, the defining of authenticity is often a process that raises controversy (Jones, 2010: 199). What courses of action are considered better will vary depending on the cultural background of the individual or group that is interacting with a site and what life history these people have in terms of
ethnicity, class, status, family background, age, education, occupation, etc. There may exist, for instance, conflicting ideas between (indigenous) archaeologists and (indigenous) non-archaeologists about what is authentic, but there may also be differing views within these groups, as well as overlapping ideas of authenticity between representatives of all groups, if they share frames of reference for the issue in question. As cultural heritage managers, archaeologists have an institutionalized power to define what sites are significant to record, convey, and preserve, but in the ethical framework of indigenous archaeology this also includes a responsibility to define what features are important not to investigate and make public, and rather leave to decay, exactly because of the authenticity and value they are bestowed with from other perspectives (see, for example, Skandfer, 2001: 123–24; Skandfer, 2009: 92–93; Myrvoll, 2010a: 92). In Fennoscandia, this balancing act between the formalities of cultural heritage protection and multivocality is perhaps particularly accentuated when dealing with Sami sacred sites, which are symbolically laden on so many levels concerning both the cultural history of indigenous religion and the colonial history of suppression and exploitation of this and of the Sami culture in general.

**SAMI OFFERING SITES AS DEFINED BY DIFFERENT USERS—SIX CASE STUDIES**

In simplified terms, the life phases of a Sami offering site may be described as: birth, use, end of use, and re-use. Use can, nevertheless, be multi-phased, and re-use can either pre-date the end of use or activate an offering site into new use even after a long period of not being in use (Äikäs, 2011: 140–41). As described above, a phase of use or re-use can also include several different and contradictory actions, and a site can be transformed or perceived as alternately being a sacred site, a cult site, and an offering site according to the use and knowledge of the individual. Here we approach questions of site biographies, authenticity, sacredness, and multivocality with reference to six Sami offering sites, or presumed offering sites, in Finland and Norway (Figure 1). The sites include *sieidi* stones, one *sáiva* lake, and two so-called ‘circular offering sites’.

The word *sieidi* (in North Sami) has a somewhat different meaning in different Sami areas (e.g. Graan, 1899: 62; Manker, 1957: 13–14; Rydving, 1993: 20–21). In Finnish Lapland and Finnmark in northern Norway, it mainly refers to larger or smaller offering stones unshaped by humans. At times, a *sieidi* can be a carved wooden pole or consist of cairns of piled stones, and sometimes it can also refer to landscape features, e.g. islands, fells, or headlands. In such cases, it is often unclear in historical sources whether the whole landscape feature was then considered a sacred site or whether the name refers to a particular *sieidi* stone that once stood there (Äikäs, 2011), i.e. an offering site. *Sáiva* is another term with many different meanings (e.g. Bäckman, 1975). Here it refers to a sacred lake that was seen as an entrance to the underworld. People’s behaviour by these lakes was restricted by many rules, but, on the other hand, they were considered to be good fishing lakes. Offerings were sometimes brought to these lakes (e.g. Paulaharju, 1932; Læstadius, 2002; Pulkkinen, 2005: 374–75). Circular offering sites refer to a specific kind of large circular stone enclosure in northern Norway. They have been claimed to have surrounded wooden or stone *sieidis* that were later torn down, as no such features have been found standing in any of the structures in question (e.g. Friis, 1871; Spangen, 2013a). So far,
circular offering sites of this kind are not known in Finland (though see Karjalainen, 2007; Saloranta, 2011).

The offerings in Sami ethnic religion were usually connected to means of livelihood and consisted of animals that were important for subsistence, such as reindeer, fish, and birds. Animal offerings could include live animals, pieces of carcasses, food remains, or reindeer antlers. Offerings were given as a part of a negotiation with spirits in order to gain success in hunting, fishing, or reindeer herding. In addition, offerings could be made during, for example, pregnancy and life crises. In addition to animals, offerings could include alcohol, porridge, tobacco, small personal objects, and other daily utensils (e.g. Itkonen, 1948; Rydving, 1993: 104–06). Some offering sites include precious and base metal ornaments, iron arrows, and other objects (e.g.}

Figure 1. Map of the Sami offering places described in the text.
Map: T. Äikäs
Serning, 1956). These were deposited in certain time periods and areas, indicating that the offering matter and rituals were closely related to the current economic and societal context at any given time or place (Salmi et al., in prep.).

The case studies presented here concern sites in Finland and Norway that were investigated within two projects respectively, the previously mentioned ‘Human-Animal Relations Among Finland’s Sámi 1000–1800 AD: DNA and Stable Isotope Analyses of Bones from Ritual Sites’ (2008–2011), and the PhD project ‘Sámi Circular Offering Sites — A Comparative Archaeological Analysis’ (2012–2016). Despite different aims and resources, both projects have included investigations of known or alleged Sami offering sites, maintaining a focus on the ethical issues related to such research. As mentioned, indigenous archaeology is highly concerned with decolonizing archaeology through cooperation with indigenous groups and respect for indigenous views on what is relevant and acceptable research (e.g. Silliman, 2010; Nicholas & Watkins, 2014). Among many indigenous communities, archaeological excavations on sacred sites are not seen to be appropriate because these powerful and dangerous places are disrespected by digging the earth and by revealing hidden objects (Colley, 2002: 75), and this is an issue in some Sami contexts (e.g. Skander, 2001). On the other hand, our experience is that there is an interest in such research among many local and other Sami, so claiming that all Sami are wary of excavations at offering sites would be an unjust generalization. Yet, the projects mentioned have emphasized the existence of such attitudes to ensure a considerate approach.

The Finnish project mostly investigated known offering sites that were accounted for in historical and ethnographic sources. Before the excavations and during the project, the plans were discussed with the President of the Finnish Sami Parliament (Sámediggi) and measures were taken to disturb the sacred nature of these sites as little as possible. Hence, only small excavation areas were opened and complete excavations were avoided. Some of the finds were also left in situ, including all contemporary material and some of the bone finds. The identification of the bones was conducted by an osteologist in the field and then bones were selected for further analyses (DNA, radiocarbon, isotope). In some sites, we were able to leave most of the bones at the site, whereas in other cases all the excavated material was needed for analysis. After the final analyses in 2011, however, the bones (except from samples) were returned to the sieidi sites from which they were taken. After the excavations, the results of successful excavations were first given to the local media. The local Sami people who visited the places during the excavations were mainly enthusiastic about gaining new information about the sacred sites in question and about sharing their knowledge concerning these places.

The circular offering sites in Norway have been investigated mostly with non-invasive methods, such as surveys and mapping, in the current PhD project. This has been done in cooperation with the Norwegian Sami Parliament, which has a delegated authority for Sami cultural heritage management in Norway. Local museums and residents close to the sites have been contacted, informed, and involved to the extent that this has been of interest to them. In 2013, small excavations were performed in two circular offering sites after recommendation from the Sami Parliament and permission from the Directorate for Cultural Heritage. The Sami Parliament had participants present in the excavation referred to here. In
general, there have been positive responses from local Sami residents to the investigations reported here.

Taatsi, Kittilä, Finland

The sieidi of Taatsi in Kittilä is one of the most well-known Sami offering places in Finland. It is mentioned in many written sources (Fellman, 1906; Andersson, 1914; Paulaharju, 1922, 1932; Äyräpää, 1931) and visited by tourists. Paulaharju (1932: 50), a school teacher and collector of ethnographic knowledge, describes how there used to be a lot of reindeer antlers, reindeer cranial bones, and fish bones on top of the sieidi of Taatsi. Archaeological finds support this picture; they mainly consist of reindeer and fish bones with some additional bird bones, including wood grouse (Tetrao urogallus) (Äikäs, 2011; Salmi et al., 2011).

Excavations at Taatsi have revealed the oldest bone material found from sieidi sites in Finland. This stemmed from a pike bone found from the eastern side of the sieidi that dated to 900 ± 25 BP (Hela-1878), corrected to 1040–1180 cal AD (Reimer et al., 2004). A reindeer bone found from the western side of the sieidi gave considerably newer results, dating to 80 ± 25 BP (Hela-1880), corrected to 1690–1920 cal AD (Reimer et al., 2004). Hence, the scarce dated material from Taatsi reflects the whole period from which animal bone material from sieidis in Finland has been dated, ranging from the eleventh to the seventeenth century. Since in the total material that have been dated from Finnish sieidi sites there is a gap between seventeenth and twentieth centuries latter ones have been interpreted as marks of later activities not necessarily connected to ethnic religion (Äikäs, 2011; Äikäs & Salmi, 2013, figure 3).

The end of bone depositing did not mean the end of offering practices at Taatsi. Present day visits manifest themselves as coins and personal objects left at the sieidi. Some more peculiar finds included pieces of quartzite and twenty-nine partly burned tea lights that were placed on rock shelves and on the ground. These kinds of offerings have their closest resemblances in neo-pagan activities documented at archaeological sites in Britain. We will return to this in the next section.

Here, the interpretation of the activities as being neo-pagan is made somewhat more uncertain by the fact that a shaman entrepreneur called the Shaman of Nulituinen has organized shamanistic sessions for tourists at Taatsi. Some of the above-mentioned objects might have been left there during these sessions. In an interview, the shaman, nevertheless, denied leaving anything behind. The case of the Shaman of Nulituinen is one example of performances where touristic behaviour and experienced spirituality might be intertwined. In contrast to personal neo-pagan experiences, people attending these organized ‘shamanistic sessions’ might just want to have a nice experience on their holiday or feel ‘the magic of Lapland’ without any religious connotations. On the other hand, one can also gain spiritual experiences from touristic performances.

Kirkkopahta, Muonio, Finland

Kirkkopahta (meaning ‘church stone’) is a 6 × 7 m rock located on a pine heath. Paulaharju (1922: 81, 165, 1932: 48–49) mentions this sieidi by the name Seitapahta and tells how Sami people believed that ‘a powerful force of god’ (Paulaharju, 1922: 165) lived in this stone. Hence, both the name and tradition relate this stone to sieidi practices.
During excavations conducted in 2009, no ancient bone material was found. Phosphate analyses gave some indication of possible ritual practices around the sieidi (Äikäs & Tolonen, in prep.) but otherwise there were no older finds in the surroundings. This did not, however, mean that the site was abandoned or empty. On top of one shelf in the stone, there were elk skulls, so fresh that flies were still flying around them (Figure 2). And on shelves on the opposite side of the stone, we found pieces of quartzite, one tea light, tied animal hairs, and a bunch of

Figure 2. Elk skulls lying on Kirkkopaha sieidi. Photo: T. Äikäs

Figure 3. The stone structure at Offerholmen. Photo: M. Spangen
lingonberry sprigs tied together with a string. The elk skulls might relate to modern hunting practices. As with the quartz and tea lights at Taatsi, these other finds have their closest resemblances in neo-pagan rituals where it is usual to leave natural objects. In Britain, neo-pagans have left offerings at megaliths, for example. These offerings include flowers, tobacco, food, drinks, and more durable objects, such as crystals, coins, quills, stones, and personal ritual objects (Wallis, 2003: 171; Blain & Wallis, 2007: 10, 56). In the context of Sami offering places, the neo-pagans visiting these sites may be either Sami, other locals, or residents of southern areas of Fennoscandia (cf. Fonneland, 2010).

Here the offering traditions have taken a new form. The history of the place as an offering site has given it its authenticity, which again has inspired new interpretations. Well-known sieidi sites can be used as places for neo-pagan visits (Informant 2009, personal communication). Here the offering tradition continues, but offerings and the reasons behind them have changed (for more detail, see Äikäs, 2011, 2012).

**Offerholmen, Ørevatn, Lakselv, Finnmark, Norway**

The local priest Knud Leem described this islet as an offering site in 1767, calling it in Sami ‘Leunje-Jeure-Suolu’, meaning ‘Porsanger river’s first lake’s islet’ (Leem, 1975 [1767]: 439, our translation from Norwegian). The site is also mentioned by J. A. Friis in 1887, and he gives a lively account of his vision of a wild reindeer hunt and the subsequent sacrifices on the islet, apparently based on the descriptions given by Leem (Friis, 1887: 143–45). The names ‘Offerholmen’, or in Sami, ‘Sieide-suolu’, meaning ‘the offering (site) islet’, are widely used today, but they are not registered as official place names on either older or newer maps. They seem to be of quite late origin and could be a result of the islet’s increasing status as a tourist destination in the nineteenth and twentieth century; it is mentioned and recommended for visiting in several early twentieth century travelogues and tourist guides (e.g. Schibsted, 1903: 42–43; Hagen, 1926; cf. Nissen, 1928: 185). Its status as a local attraction is partly due to its convenient location on the lake just outside the Skogarvarre tourist cabin (today run as a camping site). The islet is still well known locally as an offering site and promoted as one of the touristic sites worth seeing in Lakselv municipality.

Historic sources indicate that this is indeed a sacred site. As for the exact offering site, Leem (1975 [1767]) only refers to a rather large compilation of antlers at one end of the islet and does not mention any sort of sieidi or structure, but in later research a stone construction identified as a so-called ‘circular offering site’ on the northwest end of the islet has been ascribed this function (Vorren, 1985). This reflects a general offering site explanation for similar stone circles in Finnmark (e.g. Vorren, 1973; Hansen & Olsen, 2004: 222–23; Spangen, 2013a). The structure on the islet is situated in the only visible scree area. It is made up of head-sized stones, and today it has a rather uneven shape of a conical depression in the scree, the middle being about 1.8 m deep. The thrown-out stones form a slightly elevated wall around it with a diameter of approximately 8 m (Figure 3; Spangen, 2013b). The shape has probably been quite altered over the years; by the 1920s, it had already been substantially damaged by the increasing tourist traffic and was in danger of becoming ‘just another pile of stones’ (Nissen, 1928: 185, our translation).
However, it was not in this stone structure, but at the highest point of the steep islet that a stick with freshly carved runes was found during a survey in 2012. The runes, spelling ‘O, B, F, TH, R’, have no immediate meaning in Norwegian or Sami (Figure 4). It has not been possible to uncover who placed the stick there, and it could be for a variety of reasons, possibly only as a memento of the visit, but the runes could also indicate a ‘Norse’ neo-pagan motivation. There are examples of Germanic runes (not to be confused with the figures featured on Sami drums) used in Sami areas and by Sami people both in the Middle Ages and in the nineteenth century (Keilhau, 1831: 32–33; Olsen & Bergsland, 1943; Snædal et al., 1988), but they are not generally related to Sami ethnic religion. If the runes were meant to be in honour of the old offering tradition of the islet, it seems likely that the stick was carved by someone with limited knowledge of Sami history, which could of course include non-Sami and Sami people alike.

**Gálgojávri, Storfjord, Troms, Norway**

The circular offering site by Gálgojávri consists of a dry wall enclosure of boulders and smaller stones. The outer diameter is approximately 8.7 m and the current height is up to 80 cm (Spangen, 2013b). In the middle of the structure, there is a mound in which a hole had been dug before the site was officially registered as a cultural heritage monument in 1973 (Teigmo, 1973: 17).

In 2013, a small excavation was performed in the structure (Spangen, in prep. a). In contrast to the findings during an excavation of a similar site by Geaimmejávri in Karasjok (Spangen, in prep. b), all the finds made in the Gálgojávri structure were very recent. They consisted of eighteen coins, fourteen of which dated from the 1970s to the 1990s, one to 1929, one to 1953, one to 1961, and one to the 2000s (the exact year is not distinguishable). In addition, there was a silver necklace and a pendant with a famous sun symbol copied from a Sami drum still not oxidized, a plastic die, a copper alloy ring, and three pieces of recently deposited reindeer bones.

Hence, the archaeologically recordable sacrificial activity at the site was restricted to the twentieth century, and particularly to the 1970s onwards. The ethnographer Ørnulf Vorren, an expert on circular offering sites, does not seem to have noticed any recent offerings when visiting the site in 1973 (Teigmo, 1973: 17), which indicates that his sanctioning of the offering site interpretation and later repetition of this by influential professional and local
voices, have contributed to creating a new local offering tradition. A nearby primary school has visited the site regularly since 1986 and taught the children about the assumed offering tradition (cf. Antonsen & Brustø, 2002: 49). On these occasions, grown-ups in the company have occasionally tossed coins into the centre of the structure (Principal and school teacher, 2013, personal communication).

For some, this may have had the character of throwing coins into a wishing well, but it cannot be excluded that some have had a stronger spiritual or emotional experience when doing this. It is uncertain if other coins and objects have been deposited by other locals or visitors. The site has probably taken on different meanings for different local people, both Sami and non-Sami, as some visit it more like tourists, while others may have a closer relationship with it and possibly their own explanations and stories related to it.

Äkässaivo, Muonio, Finland

Äkässaivo is a sacred säiva lake in the municipality of Muonio. Paulaharju (1922: 198) mentions it to be a powerful säiva. He pays special attention to deep cliffs called Kirkkopahta and Hammaspahta surrounding the lake. There are nevertheless no remarks about a sieidi even though on the following page, Paulaharju states that there often was an offering stone on the shores of säiva lakes.

On the western side of the lake there is actually a high rock formation of similar appearance to the sieidi in Taatsi. In maps, this rock has been named ‘Seitapahta’ (‘seita’ referring to sieidi in Finnish). Metsähallitus (‘the Finnish Forest Service’) has also erected a sign that describes the sacred nature of this rock and its connection to Sami offering traditions. Here, Seitapahta is interpreted as being equivalent to Kirkkopahta mentioned by Paulaharju (1922).

In the fieldwork conducted in 2010, the shores of Lake Äkässaivo were surveyed and the surroundings of Seitapahta were studied with test pits, but no archaeological bone material referring to offering practices were found. Instead there were marks of more recent visits. On the rock, we found a piece of cold smoked reindeer meat, snuff, and quill, which could be interpreted as continuing old traditions of offering reindeer meat and tobacco or to be connected with similar neo-pagan practices, like the offerings in Kirkkopahta and Taatsi. Hence, Seitapahta has gained a new meaning as an offering place. In addition to the above-mentioned finds, we also came across a tract with a title ‘Jesus – your Saviour!’ This could be seen as a possible attempt to Christianize a ‘pagan’ site.

It is hard to say at which point Seitapahta gained its meaning as an offering place and what role the touristic infrastructure played here. Nevertheless, it is an example of a place where dominant landscape features, stories and histories connected to the place, and expert guidance create authenticity.

Kalliorova, Muonio, Finland

Paulaharju (1932: 48) mentions that Kalliorova was an old offering site. He has later been interpreted as referring to a tree-covered hill (vaara in Finnish) called Junkirova in Muonio. Pääkkönen (1902: 19) has stated that the sieidi in question consisted of a stone standing on four smaller stones. A stone similar to this description has been identified from the top of Junkirova. There are nevertheless, many similar stone formations on Junkirova so the identification as a sieidi is uncertain. In addition, this kind of sieidi type is not previously known in Finland, even though
these so-called ‘table stones’ are named sieidi or seid in Russia (e.g. Manyuhin, 1996: 72). Even the identification of Junkirova as being the Kalliorova of written sources is unsure; also the Kalkinrova hill west from Junkirova is covered with stones.

The uncertainty of archaeological interpretation has, nevertheless, not prevented the use of Junkirova as a sieidi site. A local tourist entrepreneur brought one of the authors to a stone that bore a resemblance to some of the well-known sieidis (Figure 5) and mentioned that he shows this place to tourists and organizes shamanistic sessions here. In this case, the authenticity of the stone does not lie in the continuous use of this particular stone, but in the stories created by a ‘shaman’ and by a broader landscape with old traditions.

**DISCUSSION**

**Historical authenticity and sacralization**

These case studies are only examples of a more widespread tendency that show that Sami sacred sites have been coming and still come into existence, are used, fall into disuse, and are reused through different trajectories and actions. A site biography can illuminate the life history of a place, but the site biographies of Sami offering sites are diverse, and old use or traditions are not always necessary to create an offering site to suit the purposes of the range of individuals and groups that relate to such places today. These groups do not automatically associate authenticity with old age, or what we could call ‘historical authenticity’ (cf. Jones, 2010: 184), but have other criteria for defining a site as sacred.

The interpretation of sites as being sacred is usually related to older sources describing indigenous religion—in part, these have also been our source material. But the archaeological data show that not all experienced sacredness is rooted in ethnic indigenous religion. Different groups who use these sites are often seen as more or less justified users, but if multivocality is to be taken seriously when exploring such sites archaeologically and in
terms of cultural heritage management, validations other than historical authenticity obviously have to be included in the evaluation of the sacredness of a site. This kind of multivocality means that deciding what is an authentic Sami offering site based on the life history or other aspects of the place is not so straightforward.

In recent years, the use of the term ‘authenticity’ has gained some critics (Holtorf, 2005; Edensor, 2006: 3; Lovata, 2007). We will continue to use the term, but, as Prentice (2001) stated, authenticity can take many forms. Concerning Sami offering sites, authenticity is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be created for example by the location, an impressive natural environment, ritual activities, an experienced communion with forefathers connected to the place, or a story created by expert guides, signs, or touristic entrepreneurs. The process involved is closely related to processes of sacralization. According to Smith (1998), sacredness depends upon ritualization and repetition of rituals, but it should be kept in mind that sacred experiences can come in both religious and secular versions (Anttonen, 2000; Hervieu-Léger, 2000; Kraft, 2010: 59). Hervieu-Léger (2000) defines the distinction between a religious sacredness and a secular sacredness as whether or not the belief or experience is legitimated with a reference to older religious traditions, so that there is a chain of memory, or chain of belief. On the other hand, there may be sacredness even if the chain of memory is broken. Sami people today may feel reverence towards old offering sites, while not having enough knowledge about the past to know how to relate to such sites in a ‘proper’ manner (Jernsletten, 2003). In such cases, the sacredness is not created by religious rituals, but is of a more secular form. When the chain of memory has been broken because of colonization and forced assimilation, as within Sami communities, the more secular sacredness may also be part of a restoration and a nation-building project (cf. Kraft, 2010: 59). In the following, we will explore the processes of sacralization and authentication further using the examples above.

**Authenticity and sacredness in tourism**

Some of the offering places explored here, such as Kalliorova, were especially created for tourists. This kind of landscape made for tourists has been described with the term ‘inauthenticity’, which includes commercialism, amusement, and conventionality (Relph, 1986; Keskitalo-Foley, 2006: 132). However, what has been considered inauthentic can gain meanings of authenticity. Even though authenticity is a presumption for tourists when they arrive at a place, inauthenticity is not perceived as a disappointment. Kalliorova is an example of a place where a touristic experience does not depend on seeing the real sieidi, but where meanings are created by action and stories, not necessarily by the history of the place. The sieidi created here can be said to convey a sense of a known older tradition, and hence represents an authentic immaterial cultural heritage (cf. Myrberg, 2004: 160). Notably, the Cultural Heritage Act of Finland (1963) makes it possible to also protect this kind of site with related stories and traditions, but it is only seldom used. Similarly, the Shaman of Nullituirinen, working at Taatsi, said that people who attend his ceremonies are fascinated by ‘closeness to nature [and] original religion’ (Siitonen, 2011, personal communication).

Hence, emotional experience can be born without strict historical authenticity. When people are experiencing a place, it can gain meanings of sacredness even when the original object of reverence can
no longer be seen. For example, even though the supposed birthplace of Jesus is no longer visible in Bethlehem, the meaning of the place has shifted to the Church of the Nativity. As it has gained the meaning of the birthplace, it is not experienced as a fake (Meskell, 2004: 192, 216; Melotti, 2007: 118–30). In a similar fashion, the meaning of the sieidi at Kal-liorova has shifted to the stone to which tourists are guided and in Äkässaivo to the stone marked by signs.

Tourism at sacred sites has been seen as problematic. According to Ruotsala (1998: 95), the use of Sami culture in tourism is an example of ethnographic exploitation. Tourism can be seen to secularize and wear sacred sites down, but it can also create new meanings that become part of the materialized site biography of the sacred site. Taatsi is an example of this; by the sieidi there were stairs and platforms that were built to make the site easier to reach for the tourists. At another sieidi, Ukonsaari Island in Inari, Finland, similar constructions have been seen to secularize the sacred island. At Taatsi, the constructions were removed around 2010 because they had fallen into disrepair. Before this they nevertheless enabled tourists, and possibly neo-pagans, to visit and recreate the site. Touristic visits can be seen to litter and damage the site, but they can also make it meaningful for people and raise public awareness of ethnic religion.

Rather than recreating an original, authenticity depends on transferring the atmosphere of the original place as well as the emotions and experiences attached to it. Hence, authenticity can be gained by reconstructing either the object or the experience (Melotti, 2007: 125, 2008: 19, 20–21). This partly depends on an individual’s will to experience something specific, which is related to the different preconceptions of the visitors—some may be prone to certain demands for authenticity, while others are prone to want a spiritual, nature-related and/or ‘ethnic’ experience, and may have that regardless of the recorded history of the place. Consequently, touristic shaman ceremonies at Sami offering places should not necessarily be seen as a form of ‘Disneyfication’ (Relph, 1986: 101) of ethnic religion and the past, but as a way of providing meaning through action.

In addition to visits to sacred places, sieidis can interest people even when they are disconnected from their context. Sieidis have lent their name to a multitude of other commercial purposes, to our knowledge including a bar, a hotel, a climbing wall for kids, and a mulled wine, and the concept can be seen for example on billboards in shops (Figure 6). These are some examples of the productization of sieidis. This can be seen as a transferring of the original location from the context of sacredness. Here, sacred experience is replaced by a commercial and entertaining experience. Meskell (2004) has, nevertheless, stated that productization does not detach an object from the connection of sacredness. Productization can diminish spirituality but also democratize it and make it easier to reach. Objects can get new meanings that can either relate to or not relate to the old spiritual meanings (Meskell, 2004: 177–219; cf. Byrne, 2009: 75).

Neo-pagan use of Sami offering sites

Several of the finds made during our surveys and excavations indicate neo-pagan activities at the described Sami sacred sites. On Offerholmen, a stick with carved runes was found on the highest point of the islet. As mentioned above, the sacralization of a site may be related to people’s reverence for past sacred sites while they have little knowledge about the ‘proper’
way to adhere to such sites. Germanic runes are not known to have been part of the ethnic Sami religion, but the symbols on the holy drums are partly, and erroneously, referred to as runes, and the term is even included in a Scandinavian obsolete name for the drums, ‘runebomme’. It could be that the carved runes are expressions of a misunderstanding concerning the old Sami religion, but, as runes are also frequently present in Norse neo-pagan contexts, this is an equally probable affiliation. Neo-pagan rituals on archaeological sites are not necessarily historically correct according to either previous use of the place or the specific actions related to a certain time or group, though many practitioners are interested in historical accuracy as well (Blain & Wallis, 2007: 6). Another possibility is that Norse symbols have been chosen in an attempt to relate the site to Norse or Norwegian history rather than the Sami, despite all historical evidence to the contrary. We will return to this controversy below.

While it has not been possible to establish who carved and placed the runic inscription at Offerholmen, or why, other examples and informants confirm that known Sami offering sites are used by neo-pagans of various group affiliations (cf. Fonneland, 2010). At the Finnish sites, the material evidence of this is more in line with what is found on cultural heritage sites further south in Europe, such as tea lights and quartzite, but the attempt to restore or reconnect with a past religion through rituals that are not historically authentic is the same.

Neo-pagan activities can be seen as a form of neo-colonialism that include stealing the traditions of indigenous peoples (Wallis, 2003: xiii). The history of
indigenous people is invalidated by creating a picture of noble savages who are not able to cherish their own traditions (Wallis, 2003: 17). This is, however, an argument that implies that there cannot be neo-pagan activity within an indigenous group, which may be seen to reduce such communities by presenting them inaccurately and as being non-complex. It is obviously possible that even local Sami may be neo-pagans. Indeed, some current neo-shamanistic practices among the Sami can be traced back to general neo-pagan or New Age practices that are common throughout the world (Fonneland & Kraft, 2013).

**Expert definitions and sacralization**

The dating of much of the material found at the site by Gálgojávri to the time after the expert validation of this structure as an offering site in 1973 (Teigmo, 1973) suggests that the recent offering practice has been inspired by this advice. This may be seen as a revival of an older tradition, but the investigations of so-called circular offering sites in general have disclosed several indications that the structures in question may have been built for a different initial purpose than as offering sites. If so, they are examples of ‘offering’ sites that have been imbued with such meaning primarily through a late academic tradition (Spangén, 2013a). Again, this involves a process of sacralization that is not necessarily less valid because it concerns ‘historically inauthentic’ offering sites, even if the practices cannot be seen as a direct continuation of a religious tradition (cf. Hervieu-Léger, 2000).

Another example of expert guidance, or rather authorities’ guidance, to authenticity, is the sign-posted stone at Ákássaivo. The rather uncertain and possibly erroneous definition of this stone as a **sieidi** has led to a sacralization, though by which groups or individuals is uncertain. As described above, this process can be seen to transfer and convey a historically authentic immaterial Sami cultural heritage related to the area, but, even if the current users are local Sami, it is problematic that the focus of this heritage is constructed by a Finnish state authority without consulting the local indigenous population.

**Neo-shamanism and Sami nation building**

(Re)use of offering sites can have a distinct political aspect, perhaps especially concerning identity issues within a discourse of ‘rites and rights’. Though it is not possible to know for certain who made the stick with runes left on Offerholmen, it could possibly be an attempt to redefine the historical context of the offering sites from Sami to Norse. Questions about local Sami, Finnish, and Norwegian identity have been controversial in northern Norway for centuries following the process of christening the Sami and including the populations in these areas in the nation state. From about 1860 to 1970, it was government policy to ‘Norwegianize’ the Sami population, officially called ‘modernization’ (Olsen, 1986: 30). This had dramatic consequences for Sami culture and language, and firmly established a paradigm of shame for any Sami ancestry that is still part of the identity discourse in these areas. This is also related to past and current issues concerning land rights. In such a context, Norse neo-pagan activity may be seen as ‘rewriting’ the history of a site to make it a more comfortable narrative for some.

The recent offerings in the Gálgojávri structure are probably initiated by the scholarly definition of the site in the
1970s, but they are also related to a Sami cultural revival that includes teaching a new generation of children the language, traditions, and history of the Sami. The documented new offering activity from the 1970s onwards coincides with a revival of the long suppressed Sami identity and cultural expressions in Norway, a revival that was especially controversial and emotional in these inner coastal areas in Troms (e.g. Pedersen & Høgmo, 2004). Religion was not a very important part of the Sami cultural revival when it gained momentum in the 1980s, partly because the Sami were mostly Christians, so religion would not be an efficient way to distinguish an identity opposed to Norwegians, and partly because much of the pre-Christian traditions had been lost by that time (though see, for example, Myrvoll, 2010b, on how aspects of pre-Christian beliefs have been incorporated into a primarily Christian Sami worldview). However, the forced Christianization has been a hovering stigma and some activists from the 1980s and 1990s did engage in reviving a shamanistic religion too. This revival was initially heavily inspired by the somewhat earlier movement of indigenous spirituality in the USA, but it has more recently gained a local vocabulary of Sami symbols and words and is today often perceived as more authentic than its American source of inspiration. Nevertheless, the new Sami shamanism cannot be distinguished from a global discourse of indigenous spirituality that has a secular importance as a civil religious dimension of indigenous identity and nation building. In the Sami context, the concern is with identity in terms of distinction from the nation state identities and Westerners, and union with other indigenous people of the world as part of an ethnopolitical project of building a positive identity drawing on ‘rites and rights’, which form two interdepending discourses (Fonneland & Kraft, 2013).

While offerings from a small number of people at the structure by Gålgojávri have not necessarily been consciously motivated by these identity issues, and may have been differently motivated by various individuals, the actions can hardly be seen as detached from this discourse of indigenous spirituality and Sami nation building.

Managing multivocality

The discussion above shows how Sami sacred sites in general and Sami offering sites in particular are created and recreated through redefinitions and reinterpretations by a number of groups and individuals with diverging motives and backgrounds. Importantly, both local indigenous people and ‘outsiders’ participate in these redefinitions and reinterpretations of sacred sites. By denying the value of new meanings, we can protect sites from ‘outsiders’ but also from locals and their actions (cf. Byrne, 2009: 68; for criticisms of preservation ethics, see also Melotti, 2007).

Though recent offering activities may not be old in years, they can still contain a sense of the ancient, and be a material way of expressing an immaterial heritage, often maintaining an identity or perceived ‘correct’ way of doing things, though this may be historically incorrect. In this sense, new actions can be charged with the significance of the past, even if it is geographically or materially disconnected to previous similar actions (cf. Myrberg, 2004: 160).

The presented research projects are among the few that have studied Sami offering sites in detail in recent years, while archaeologists in Norway and Finland usually relate to various concepts of sacredness in connection with cultural heritage management. However, in both these settings, there is a need to acknowledge and evaluate the multivocality described above.
and to define the contexts and purposes of these alternative understandings to evaluate their relevance for archaeological categorization and interpretation. It is necessary to define what discourse these narratives belong to, and whether or not it is relevant or necessary to include or oppose them in research or heritage management discourse, beyond creating an academic archaeological parallel narrative. According to the decolonizing aim of indigenous archaeology, archaeologists may be obliged to encourage alternative narratives in situations where local or indigenous voices are clearly the weaker ones (Damm, 2005: 82; Myrvoll, 2010a: 90). This is a moral and ethical question that has to be considered in each particular situation (Nilsen, 2003: 25–26). Hence, it cannot be finally decided once and for all whether other narratives of sacredness are relevant or not, as this will depend on the historical context, on the specific site, and on the current status of the academic discourse, since science is also an ever-changing culturally constituted field (Nilsen, 2003: 26, with references).

The alternative narratives have their own criteria and cannot simply be defined as everything that is evidently not academic (cf. Nilsen, 2003: 31). They have been created within specific social frameworks and constitute independent discourses (cf. Nilsen, 2003: 384). In alternative discourses, it is often less problematic to include new (academic) narratives without losing or changing a previous understanding than the other way around, i.e. trying to include alternative narratives in the academic discourse, simply because the goals of the alternative discourses are different from the self-declared truth-seeking academic discourse (cf. Solli, 1996). Still, the archaeological and the alternative discourses do affect, shape, and sometimes exclude each other, and archaeologists have to acknowledge that the academic story may be excluded from a local discourse because, for instance, the locals know something the expert does not. Integration, however, also depends on the will to understand the worldview of the other (for instance, the view of the local or the academic; cf. Nilsen, 2003: 385–86). Academics clearly bear the lion’s share of the responsibility for this, due to the inherent power of definition that comes with such a position in relation to the other groups, whether indigenous or not. To achieve the required knowledge about other discourses and narratives, the key issue for archaeologists is to spend time in the study areas in question and interact with the groups that interpret and use the sites in different ways. Unfortunately, the difficult resource situation usually limits this kind of interaction (cf. Nilsen, 2003: 287).

The focus on multivocality is itself part of a specific discourse that emphasizes rights to and democratization of history and cultural heritage. In some contexts, it may be more important to draft the plurality of histories relating to a cultural heritage monument rather than a single ‘correct’ story (Burström, 1993: 26). However, this obviously depends on the goal of the exercise. In other contexts, a ‘correct’ archaeological narrative can be highly relevant to local, indigenous, and academic discourses alike; for instance, it may contribute to the local understanding of the landscape in areas with less density of traditions and stories because of depopulation and migration (Myrvoll, 2010a: 89). It may also assist in restoring a chain of memory (cf. Hervieu-Léger, 2000) where this has been broken by colonialism and forced assimilation, as in the case of the Sami. Then again, the academic understanding may be unimportant. Determining the sacredness of a site, for instance, is not only an academic enterprise. The sacred quality, the authenticity, is not inherent, and it is not necessarily
related to the natural environment, the topographical features, or any present objects, or, for that matter, the life history of the site. Rather, the experience of sacredness and/or authenticity depends on what resonates with the narrative or discourse that is relevant to the individual relating to the site. Hence, Sami offering sites have to be evaluated on an individual basis and differently in different contexts, demanding more attention to alternative voices and discourses at some sites than at others.

CONCLUSION

Sami offering places—or places interpreted as such—demonstrate how site biographies, authenticity, and sacredness can be intertwined in different ways. Their life histories have included changes both in offering practices and in groups of people using them. In meeting such multivocality, the challenge for archaeologists is to identify the discourses involved, and to evaluate if and when these discourses are relevant to include or oppose in the archaeological narrative. Multiple users of these sites and the meanings attached to them can be seen to strengthen their value, but they can also be problematic. Questions of colonial suppression, productization, and even destruction of the sites can be raised as diverse users interact with the sites differently. The marks of modern practices especially can hold different connotations to different people; what is trash to one can be an offering to another.

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BIографICAL NOTE

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Nouveaux usagers et évolution des traditions – Une (re)définition des lieux d’offrandes des Samis

Les Samis sont un people du nord de la Fennoscandie. Certains de leurs sites d’offrandes ont été utilisés pendant plus d’un millénaire. Les traditions d’offrandes ont évolué au cours des temps et certaines communautés ont commencé à utiliser ces lieux pour des motifs divers. Le matériel archéologique actuel indique d’une part que les traditions ont continué à être respectées et d’autre part que ces lieux ont acquis de nouvelles significations, rattachées tout aussi bien à ces sites qu’à d’autres sites qui n’avaient probablement pas été utilisés dans les rituels religieux des Samis. Dans certains cas l’authenticité des lieux semble être davantage liée à de récits et à des croyances actuelles qu’à une continuité historique ou à d’autres aspects expressément sacrés de la topographie ou de l’environnement. De nos jours les usagers de ces lieux comprennent, entre autres, des Samis indigènes, des touristes, et des néo-païens. Dans cet article nous examinerons les éléments qui informent ces usagers, comment ces derniers identifient ces sites comme lieux d’offrandes et quels rapports ils entretiennent avec eux. Quels sont les rôles que jouent les traditions scientifiques, le tourisme lié au patrimoine et la culture indigène dans la (re)définition des lieux d’offrandes Samis et quelle est la place qu’occupent les rituels « opportuns » dans l’attribution d’un sens à certains endroits Comment pouvons-nous concilier un désir de donner voix à la multivocalité avec nos opinions professionnelles quand il s’agit de définir le sacré ? Translation by Madeleine Hummler.

Mots-clés: Samis, lieux d’offrandes, multivocalité, authenticité, biographies de sites

Neue Benutzer und Traditionswandel – die (Neu)Definierung der Gabenstätten der Samen

Die Samen (oder Sámi) sind ein indigenes Volk im Norden von Fennoskandinavien. Einige samische Gabenstätten wurden über mehr als eintausend Jahre lang benutzt. Während dieser Zeit haben sich die Gabenstätten verändert und verschiedene Gruppen haben begonnen, diese Orte aufzusuchen, und dies aus verschiedenen Gründen. Gegenwärtige archäologische Befunde zeigen, dass alte Traditionen weiterleben aber auch dass, neue Bedeutungen diesen Stätten und anderen Plätzen, die nicht zu den ursprünglichen Ritualen der Samen gehört, zugewiesen werden. In einigen Fällen beruht die Echtheit dieser Stätten scheinbar eher auf Erzählungen und gegenwärtiger Glauben als auf eine historische Kontinuität oder
auf eine spezifische Eigenschaft der Landschaft oder Umwelt, in welcher die Stätte liegt. Unter den heutigen Benutzern befinden sich, u.a. einheimische Samen, Touristen und Neuheiden. Unser Artikel untersucht, was diese Benutzer informiert, wie gewisse Stätten als Gabenstätten bestimmt werden und wie sich die Benutzer in Zusammenhang mit diesen Orten verhalten. Was für eine Rolle können die wissenschaftliche Tradition, der Kulturerbe-Tourismus und die einheimische Kultur in der (Neu)Definierung der Gabenstätten der Samen spielen, und was für eine Rolle können „angemessene“ Rituale bei der Bedeutungszuschreibung einer gewissen Stätte haben? Wie können wir Multivokalität mit unseren beruflichen Auffassungen versöhnen, wenn es sich dabei um die Bestimmung der Heiligkeit handelt?

Translation by Madeleine Hummler.

Stichworte: Samen (oder Sámi), Gabenstätten, Multivokalität, Echtheit, Biografien von archäologischen Stätten