

Indigenous religion in the 21st century: The Sámi people of Scandinavia

- Origins:
- Descendants of nomadic peoples who had inhabited northern Scandinavia and what is now Finland for thousands of years. (Ole Magnus & Stein, 2008).
 - Finno-Ugric-speaking people. (Valter, 2020).
 - They inhabit the region of Sápmi (formerly known as Lapland). (Sternlund & Inger, 2017)
 - Historically referred to as Lapps or Laplanders, terms regarded as offensive by the Sámi. (Sternlund & Inger, 2017)
 - Traditionally, pursued livelihoods of coastal fishing, fur trapping, and sheep herding. (Conrad, 2000)
 - Best-known for semi-nomadic reindeer herding. (Solbakk,2006).
 - Lived in tents or turf huts and migrated with their herds in units of five or six families. (Lotha,2020).
 - The shaman was important in Sami society, including the use of shamanistic healing rites. (Das, 2011)
 - Used craftsmanship such as tin and pearl embroidery, wood carving, and knife-making,(Solbakk 2006).



- Present-day:
- The Sami people live in mainly four countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia.
 - Population estimated at approx. 80,000.
 - The Sami were gradually forced to give up land, to farmers, forestry and mining.
 - One of Sweden's official national minorities. This status means that their culture, traditions and languages are protected by law.
 - Around 2,600 Sami people in Norway still make their living from herding reindeer.
 - Now a large proportion of the Sami people have moved into the towns of Northern Norway.
 - Even within traditional Sami settlement areas many earn their living in more modern sectors.
 - (Experience the Sami culture, 2022), (Sami in Sweden, 2022), (The Sami, 2022).
- Traditional Sami clothing such as the Gákti was previously made of reindeer leather and sinews and used to protect against the harsh living climate. Now they are more commonly made from wool, cotton, or silk and are only worn during rituals, ceremonies and festivals, (Ripa, 2015).

- Sami Religion Then & Now:
- The Norwegianization policy undertaken by the Norwegian government from the 1850s up until the Second World War resulted in the apparent loss of the Sami language.
 - with the rise of an ethno-political movement since the 1970s, Sami culture has seen a revitalization of language, cultural activities, and ethnic identity (Brattland 2010:31).
 - RidduRiddu “little storm on the coast.” is an annual Sámi music and culture festival in Norway. The Sámi population as meeting and learning expeience, (Henriksen,2020). Used to seek answers as to why elders in the community spoke a different language. However is now used asatourist, education and economic venture.
 - 'Many are taught to be cautious of certain objects in nature: stones, trees, and areas. For example, certain rituals had to be performed when we travelled past a big rock called “Stallo.”’ (Henriksen,2020). In folklore a Stállo is a large, human-like creature who likes to eat people, acknowledgement of the Stallo by verbally communicating, bowing or leaving monetary offerings were used to ensure safe travel for the Sami community. In recent years however the story of 'Stallo' has caught the attention of modern day urban explorers; including Stefan Spjut a Swedish author of fiction; Who published his book 'Stallo' in 2016 thus opening up a rendition of the Sami folklore to a global audience. The story becoming one of entertainment rather than one of culture and warning.
- Sami drum
- 'Noaide' – ”the one who knows,”
- Connection to the spirit world.



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