# History, hearths and contested landscapes

## – Sámi land use east of the Lapland border of Sweden

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According to Swedish law, reindeer grazing is allowed east of the Lapland border (Sw. Lappmarksgränsen) on a seasonal basis during winter. Today, coastal winter pastures are contested landscapes facing the claims of a number of industries other than reindeer herding. Disputes over land use and land rights have led to legal proceedings. In this context of conflicting claims, history plays out as a significant factor decisive to Sámi usufruct. This paper examines the diversity and time depth of Sámi cultural landscapes in coastal areas. The study draws on archaeological remains, historical records, place names and oral tradition among Sámi as well as local villagers in an area covering the Piteå and Älvsbyn municipalities in the south-eastern parts of the county of Norrbotten. Social and economic strategies are analysed as they have played out in the landscape. The analysis shows, that the studied area contributed to Sámi subsistence throughout the last 500 years and beyond, linking back to the indigenous population of prehistoric times.

### Introduction and aims

According to Swedish law, reindeer grazing is allowed east of the Lapland border (Sw. *Lappmarksgränsen*) only on a seasonal basis during winter. Disputes over land use and land rights have led to legal proceedings, such as the Nordmaling Case about winter grazing in the coastal areas of Västerbotten county (Swedish Supreme Court, 2011). In this context of conflicting claims, history plays out as a significant factor decisive to Sámi usufruct. However, there are few archaeological and historical studies of coastal areas as Sámi cultural landscapes in terms of diversity and time of use.

In this study, the focus is on Sámi land use east of the Lapland border, referred to as coastal areas in the following, during the period CE 1600–1900. The study area corresponds to



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*Figure 1. Map showing the study area.*

the Piteå and Älvsbyn municipalities in the south-eastern parts of the county of Norrbotten (Fig 1). This analysis draws on archaeological remains, historical records, place names and oral tradition among Sámi as well as local villagers. Inter-community relations are analysed and interpreted as they have played out in the landscape, specifically in relation to the concept of *Lappmarker* and the establishment of the Lapland border (Sw. *Lappmarksgränsen*) in the middle of the 18th century.

## Background

Studies of prehistoric and Early Medieval coastal communities of northernmost Sweden have long been carried out within a conceptual framework characterised by oppositional pairs: hunting *versus* cultivation, mobile *versus* sedentary, indigenous versus foreign, Sámi versus Swedish et cetera. The establishment of sedentary agrarian settlements related to the political and territorial ambitions of the Crown and the Church, commonly referred to as the colonisation enterprise (cf. Sundström 1984 and cited literature; Wallerström 1995a, b; Tegengren 2015) constitutes a mental template running as a tacit subtext through the historiography.

In earlier archaeological and historical studies, the relationships between Swedish central powers and northern communities have been interpreted in terms of supremacy versus subordination, to the extent that the indigenous population has been made invisible as actors in their own right (cf. Wallerström 1995a; Tegengren 2015). For example, although interpreting contemporary coastal hut remains in terms of Sámi ethnicity, Noel Broadbent (2010) nevertheless uncritically adheres to the colonial paradigm. In fact, by arguing that the Swedish powers and settlers evoked the displacement of the coastal Sámi population (Broadbent 2010, pp. 201, 207–215, 217–221) he sets the *terminus ante quem* of coastal landscapes as integral to indigenous Sámi subsistence.

From a Sámi perspective traditional land use with diverse economic strategies and nuanced forms of landscape affiliation, has included the coastal areas of northernmost Sweden since time immemorial. Recent multidisciplinary research focussing on the interplay between



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reindeer herding, farming, hunting, fishing and trade from a landscape perspective, has produced new knowledge about the resilience of indigenous socio-economic structures transcending the illusive border between coastal and interior areas (Bergman 2018). For example, cereal cultivation formed part of Sámi subsistence long before the colonisation enterprises started and occurred in the interior around CE 800, as was generally the case in the coastal areas, (Bergman & Hörnberg 2015; Hörnberg et al. 2015). In addition, the social organisation of sea- and river fishing enterprises exhibit traits similar to those of historically known Sámi communities and can be traced back to the Late Iron Age, (Bergman & Ramqvist 2018). Analyses of systematic fishing by coastal farmers in interior lakes revealed an area of overlapping land use and a sphere of social interaction reaching back to prehistoric times (Bergman & Ramqvist 2017). Furthermore, historical and archaeological investigations have revealed a trading network closely tying together coastal and interior communities as equal parties (Bergman & Edlund 2016). The long-lasting misconception of the superiority of the birkarlar vis-à-vis the Sámi has, thus, been overthrown.

Altogether, a new picture has emerged characterised by close relations between coastal and interior communities, with mutuality and overlapping land use during the Late Iron Age and Medieval period.

The presence of Sámi in coastal areas is generally only briefly accounted for in studies of local history (cf. Svensby byamän 2003, pp.177–185; Lundström 2004, pp. 36–39; Dahlbäck et al. 2018, pp. 134–136, however, see Elenius 2019 for more detailed documentation). In archival sources, for example parish records and court protocols, the Sámi are commonly mentioned as 'lapp men' (Sw. *lappman*), 'lapp wives' (Sw. *lapphustru*), 'lapp maids' (Sw, *lappiga*) and 'lapp henchmen' (Sw. *lappdräng*) These are terms occurring in contemporary records in Sámi-dominated parishes in the interior, referring to persons engaged in reindeer herding, although never explicitly mentioned. In the coastal parishes, Sámi are also listed as daily wage earners and sometimes as beggars. Even if notes on Sámi people do not necessarily expose condescending attitudes, it is obvious that they were regarded as visitors from outside, settling on village grounds on the terms of the local residents. However, from a Sámi standpoint, coastal areas have remained obvious parts of traditional land use. They are Sámi cultural landscapes.

## History and hearths

The earliest historical records mentioning Sámi (*'lapp'* in the original documents) in coastal areas date to the first half of the 16th century. One record, written in the period 1520–1530, includes two passages



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referring to Sámi in possession of rights to salmon fishing in the rivers Skellefteälven and Åbyälven (Berggren 1995, p. 51). The 1543 and 1553 tax registers of Västerbotten mention a place named *Lapuiken* situated in Lövånger parish (Nordlander 1990, p. 290) and the lake *Lappetreskitt* (todays' Stor- och Lill-Lappträsket) in the Piteå area (Berggren 1995, p. 67). It is noteworthy, that the earliest references relate to fishing in one way or another, thereby pointing to the diversity and long-term Sámi subsistence in coastal areas.

Place names including the prefix *'lapp'* are quite frequent and commonly located on the outskirts of villages (cf. Bergman 2010, p. 173). They often relate to various constructions such as sheds (for example *Lappbodviken*), storage huts (*Lapphjäll*) and fences (*Lappgärdan*), indicating either permanent or repeated seasonal settlements. Village maps from the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Sw. *avvittringskartor*) show the exact location of Sámi sites including buildings, patches and clearings. The map of 1803 of the Lillpite village shows two homesteads labelled "Lappgård" in close connection to the village farmsteads (Fig. 2). Furthermore, an early 17th record mentions a *'Lappmarknad'* (Sámi market) located to Lillpite (Hoppe 1945, pp. 59–60), probably on a regular basis (Hoppe 1945, pp. 59–60). The Sámi part of the Lillpite community life was obviously strong. According to the local folklore, the village was founded by Sámi (Grahn 1981, p. 11).

Sedentary Sámi settlements were far from uncommon during this period. Parish surveys provide information about marriages, births, baptism and deaths taking place among the Sámi population all year round, regardless of season. The Sámi residents were apparently supporting themselves, at least in part, through small-scale cultivation and farming, possibly in combination with reindeer herding. They owned land of their own, albeit on the margins of the most productive arable areas. However, there are examples of Sámi in possession of farmsteads proper, such as Oluf Matsson Häf who received a freehold farm in Roknäs village in 1612 as an expression of gratitude from the King for his surveying for pearls and precious stones (Nordlander 1990, pp. 327–328). Another example is Anders Andersson who was in possession of land in Roknäs in the middle of the 18th century (Dahlbäck et al. 2007, pp. 199–200).

Surveys (carried out by the author) of Sámi sites marked on 19th century maps covering Piteå parish, failed to identify the remains of buildings or other physical structures positively related to Sámi settlements. In most cases, there were no remaining structures at all. However, there were house foundations of more recent date that may have disguised older settlements. Thus, this stratum of Sámi land use, more or less embedded in peasant village



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*Figure 2. Detail of a map (Sw. avvittringskartan) from 1803 showing a homestead labelled 'lappgård' in the Lillpite village, Piteå parish. Map from Lantmäteriets historical archive of maps.*

areas, has largely been erased by later land use, leaving only marks on the maps.

A huge number of hearths are located in lichen heath areas exhibiting features typical of traditional Sámi winter settlements (Liedgren et al. 2016, 2017; Bergman 2018, p. 66–75). Archaeological excavations show that most hearths date to the late 19th century and that reindeer bones are frequent in the hearth filling (Liedgren et al. 2016). No doubt, these are the remains of reindeer herders settling on a seasonal basis, representing a niched stratum of Sámi land use. Each *sijda* (SaP, plural form) group and family had their winter camps in a defined area within village grounds. The system of Sámi taking care of reindeer belonging to non-Sámi (Sw. *skötesrensystemet*) was common practise and based on close contact between the parties, thereby promoting a mutual understanding of land use and the distribution of forest resources (cf. Nordin 2002). On the part of the local residents, the Sámi were referred to by their association to a certain village, for example Sámi settling close to the Svensbyn village were called "svensbylappar" (Pellijeff 1988, p. 116). Among themselves, Sámi referred to their affiliation to a Sámi village community (Sw. *sameby*), their *sijda* and family.

Sámi perspectives on coastal land use seldom, if ever, emerge in historical records. However, naming landscapes is a way of enculturing them and thus place names form a narrative of past and present land use. Within the study area, the number and density of Sámi place names follows a gradient of successive decline from west to east (cf. Pellijeff 1988; Korhonen 2009, pp. 203–234). This gradient may be



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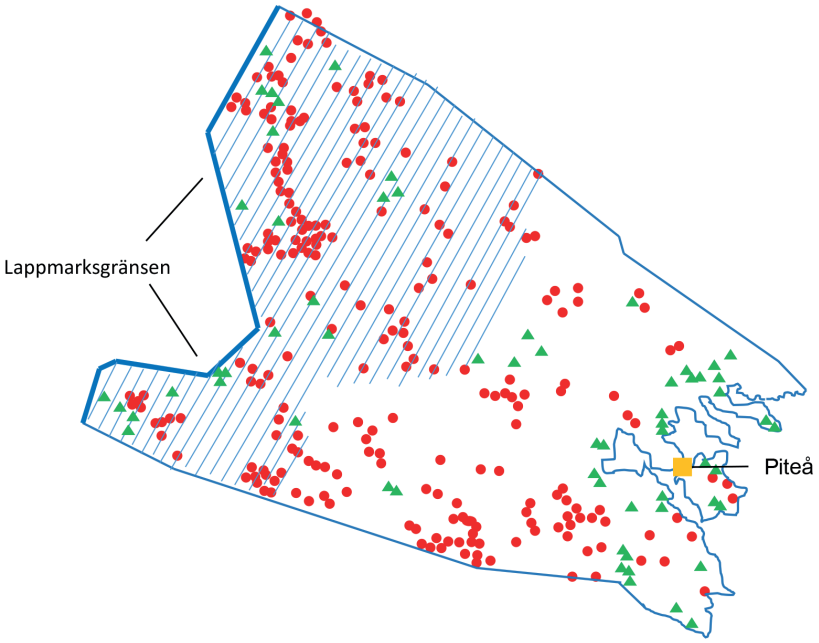



*Figure 3. Map showing the distribution of hearth sites (dots), place names including the prefix 'lapp'- (triangles), and areas with Sami place names (lines), based on Pellijeff 1988; Bergman 2010; Liedgren et al. 2016 and Korhonen 2009.*

perceived as a timeline of Swedish impact with the handful of Sámi names in the easternmost part towering like *nunataks* above a dense and younger layer of Swedish place names. In a corresponding way, the larger number of Sámi place names in the western part of the study area suggests a much longer and later date of Sámi predominance. For example, the 16th century farmers who were fishing in the area adopted the Sámi names of the lakes rather than naming them in Swedish (Bergman & Ramqvist 2017). Most of the Sámi names that remain until today, can be traced far back in time (cf. Korhonen 2009, pp. 203–234), thereby underlining the relevance and resilience of Sámi place names in areas of interfacing social, economic and language strategies. In a sense, they reflect the balance of power over land use and landscape affiliation.

The clusters of Sámi place names in the western part of the study area coincide by and large, with the spatial distribution of hearths (cf. Korhonen 2009, pp. 203–234; Liedgren et al. 2016, p. 30). Regarding the chronological setting, hearths are generally younger than the earliest confirmed Sámi place names (cf. Korhonen 2009, pp. 203–234; Liedgren et al. 2016, p. 31). In other words, the hearths occur in a Sámi cultural landscape, named and claimed more than 500 years earlier. Altogether, the spatial and chrono-



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logical distribution of place names with the prefix *lapp-,* and the distribution of Sámi place names and hearths, verify the diverse and long-term Sámi history east of todays' *Lappmarksgräns*.

## Lappmarkerna, the Laplands

The Lapland border (Sw. *Lappmarksgränsen*) was established in the middle of the 18th century to regulate land use between the Sámi and settlers west of the border and communities of farmers in the coastal parishes. It was the result of a long process concerning fishing rights, the rights of reindeer herding and the rights to establish farming settlements. The seasonal fishing in interior lakes by coastal farmers (above) had led to several permanent settlements, secondary to the farmer villages. In addition, farmers settlements had increased in number following the so called *Lappmarksplakaten* of 1673 and 1695, that allowed 15 years of tax exemption and exemption from military service for those settling on Sámi land (cf. Bylund 1956, pp. 33–46; André 1998, pp. 55–59). To the same extent as the measures facilitated agrarian settlements, they limited the conditions for reindeer herding. The drawing-up of the Lapland border adjusted to the existing social and economic situation and involved negotiations between the parties, sometimes leading to a revision of the location of the border. What was the meaning of the term *lappmark* further back in time?

The earliest mentions of *lappmarker* in written records date to the early 14th century (Sommarström 1981, p. 321). The term is a common denominator for land inhabited by Sámi, without further specification. However, the subdivision into different *lappmarker* appears, although vaguely, in connection with the *birkarla* trading network, pointing to an indigenous socio-economic structure of significantly older age (Bergman & Edlund 2016). The geographical range of different *lappmarker* becomes clearer in connection with the fiscal system implemented by King Gustav Vasa in the early 16th century. According to the earliest tax registers, the Pite lappmark included four so called *'lappebyar'*, corresponding to Sámi village communities: *Semes jerff, Lochetis, Laiis* and *Arffues jerff* (Västerbottens handlingar, 1539–1561).

The final outline of the *Lappmarksgränsen*, settled in the 1750s, runs in a north–south direction some 20 kilometers west of the Vistträsk, Muskus and Manjärv villages in Älvsbyn municipality (Fig. 4). Forty years earlier, in 1714, the villages were regarded as outposts of the settled area against the *lappmarken* (Westerlund 2005, p. 112). According to a contemporary map, the border was around. 10 kilometres west of the villages (Fig. 4). In 1563



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two unnamed forest Sámi, *'granlappar'*, from *Pite lappmark* were paying taxes for their fishing in Lake Muskusträsket ("Musketresk"), and again the following year by exactly the same amount of fish (Norrlands lappmarker, 1563, folio 14). They were obviously fishing on a regular basis, suggesting that *Pite lappmark* ranged the areas around Lake Muskus at the time (Fig. 4). The names of Lakes Vistträsket, Muskusträsket and Manjärv are, in all likelihood, of Sámi in origin (Korhonen 2009, p. 204–211) and emphasise the long lasting significance of the area to Sámi subsistence. These were also the regular fishing grounds for coastal farmers in the 16th century. Because they adopted the Sámi names of the lakes, they were probably bilingual, speaking both Sámi and Swedish. The spatial distribution of interior lakes used by coastal farmers exhibits a distinctive structure with each village, or set of joined villages, linked to a specific cluster of lakes. In the case of Lakes Vistträsket, Muskusträsket and Manjärv, the organisation of fishing reflects the successive establishment of sedentary settlements in the area (Fig. 4). Overall, there was an overlap in land use with Sámi and farmers fishing in the same areas, and even in the same lakes. In this respect, there was no clear-cut border separating the *lappmarker* from the coastal areas. In a wider meaning, *lappmarker* could simply be the land and landscapes where Sámi lived.

## Discussion

The analysis of historical information in combination with archaeological remains and place names has uncovered different time layers of Sámi use in coastal landscapes. The explicit information given in early 16th century records about Sámi fishing salmon in the rivers Skellefteälven and Åbyälven, together with contemporary place names including the prefix *'lapp'-*, represent evidence for an early layer of coastal land use. The Sámi communities of this time relied upon a diversified subsistence including maritime resources. They were, in all probability, descendants of the hunters and fishers using the Iron Age and Early Medieval campsites in the outer archipelago (Broadbent 2010; Bergman & Ramqvist 2018). Sámi place names near the coast may date to this period, and earlier. By this time, the sedentary agrarian settlements had expanded significantly. The extent to which this was the result of an economic differentiation among the indigenous population is unclear. However, the coastal and interior communities remained closely intertwined, not least in connection with the fishing in interior lakes by coastal farmers.

Sámi settlements close to farmers' villages represent a subsequent layer of Sámi land use. Parish records from the late 17th century provide accounts of Sámi staying in the coastal areas, either on a seaso-



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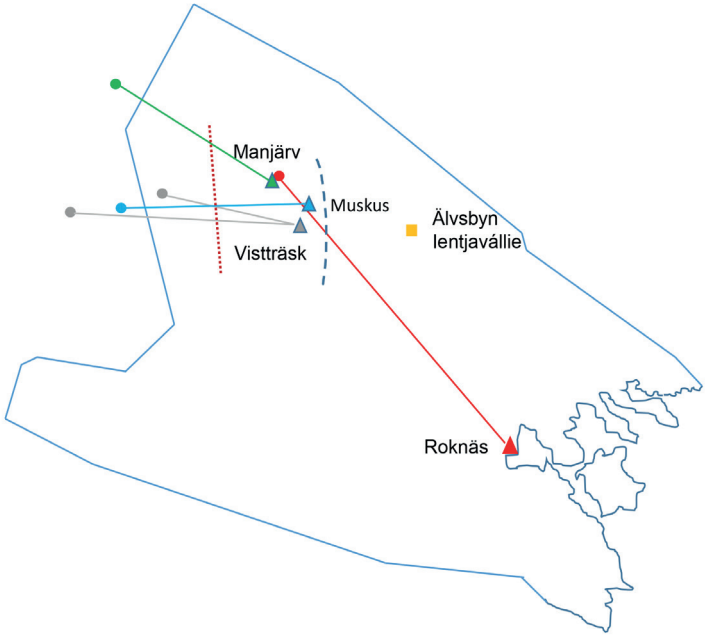



*Figure 4. Schematic model illustrating the successive settling by farmers and claiming of interior fishing lakes, based on the tax record of 1553. Triangles marks homesteads, circles mark fishing lakes. Dotted line marks the Lapland border of 1714 and the dashed line marks the range of Sami fishers of Pite lappmark.*

nal or a permanent basis. They are generally referred to in terms indicating their independent social status as Sámi in their own right (*'lapp men'* etc.). This is further emphasised by the fact that Sámi could own land with settlements, including permanent buildings, patches and clearings and sometimes farmsteads proper. However, there was an increasing number of Sámi from the Arvidsjaur and Arjeplog parishes who moved to the coast as a way of supporting themselves when they ceased reindeer herding. The Sámi were part of village community life, albeit with some degree of social distance between them and the farmer settlers. On the other hand, the system of *skötesrenar* supported strong social and economic relations. Altogether, the Sámi presence was manifest, founded on long-term land use and close social and economic relations with the local residents.

The huge number of hearths dating to the period covering the late 18th century until the early 20th century, signifies a third layer of Sámi coastal land use. The process of distributing estate (Sw. *avvittringen*) during the course of the 19th century changed the preconditions for land use (cf. Stenman 1983 and cited literature). In addition, regulations relating to reindeer herding introduced into Swedish law at the end of the 19th and beginning of



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the 20th centuries greatly affected the system of *skötesrenar* (Nordin 2002, p. 79–119), thereby undermining the long and strong tradition of mutual social and economic relations between local residents and reindeer herders. Since 1886, the Reindeer Herding Act further regulated the use of winter pastures allowing reindeer to graze east of the *Lappmarksgränsen* during the period October 1st to April 30th.

The study area contributed to Sámi subsistence and land use throughout the last 500 years and beyond, linking back to the indigenous population of prehistoric times, although the ethnic processes are yet to be analysed in depth. The suggested time layers do not represent isolated events, separated in time. Instead, they describe the continuous and consistent role of coastal areas as Sámi cultural landscapes. Thus, the historical *lappmark* concept is best understood in the context of close inter-community relations and overlapping land use. The concept is in essence relative, defined by cultural processes rather than geographical demarcation lines. Today, the Lapland border has an agency of its own, fixing relative positions of stakeholders in contested landscapes. That's what borders are, that's what borders do.

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