

Learning goals

By the end of this learning object you would have learnt about:

- The life of the Sami people living in Northern Europe
- The use of the Sami tents for archaeological theory
- The development of a Second Life version of the Sami tent and Second Life-related learning activities developed around the Sami tent

The Sami people

The Sami people (also known as Lapps, although this term is considered derogatory) are the indigenous people of northern Europe inhabiting Sápmi, which today encompasses parts of northern Sweden, Norway, Finland and the Kola Peninsula of Russia but also in the border area between south and middle Sweden. Their ancestral lands span an area the size of Sweden in the Nordic countries. The Sami people are among the largest indigenous ethnic groups in Europe. Their traditional languages are the Sami languages, which are classified as members of the Finno-Lappic group of the Uralic language family.



Traditionally, the Sami have plied a variety of livelihoods, including coastal fishing, fur trapping, and sheep herding. However, the best known Sami livelihood is semi-nomadic reindeer herding - which about 10% of the Sami are connected with and 2,800 actively involved with full-time. For traditional, cultural, and political reasons, reindeer herding is legally reserved only for Sami people in certain regions of the Nordic countries. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sami_people>

Cosmologies

Many circum-polar peoples (northern Eurasia, northern America) have broadly similar ideas about spiritual and physical space. There is this world; the world above; and the world below. These may also be thought of as the realms of sky, earth and water/underground.

Shamans

- Normally only shamans may visit these other worlds at will.
- The shaman's tree (e.g. his or her shaman staff; the central tent pole) may link these three realms.

Cosmological landscapes

Water and rivers also have cosmological significance. Places, people or animals which link or cross realms are thus special. Thus many Sami people were buried on islands. Rapids can also be seen as liminal zones between earth and water. Certain animals are associated with particular realms: birds with the sky, reindeer the earth, for example.

Belief, space and place

- These belief structures may be very long-lasting and may date back several thousand years. The focus of much rock art in northern Scandinavia is at places near rapids or on islands, and the symbols also show much continuity.
- Thus the whole landscape is imbued with meaning and will be associated with events, beings and spiritual as well as physical travel.

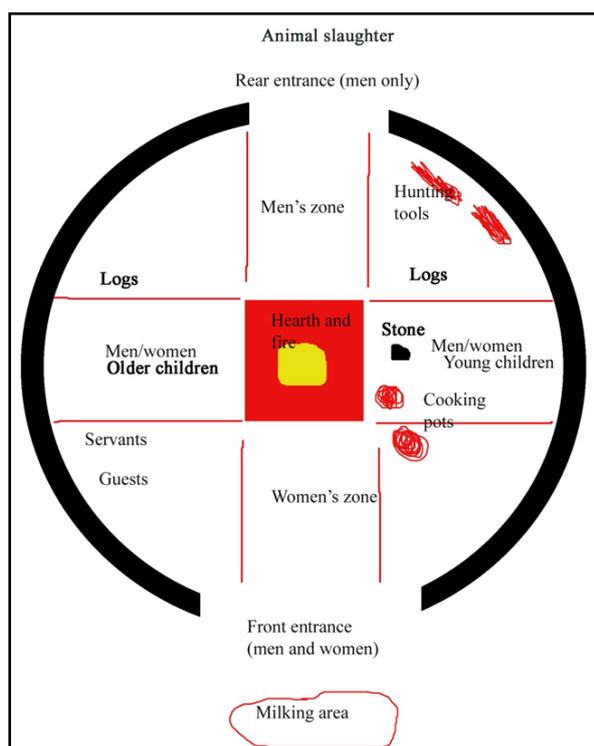


Background to this OER

The original Sami tent in Second Life

The original Sami tent in Second Life was generated by the MOOSE project (MOdelling Of Secondlife Environments, www.le.ac.uk/moose) at the Beyond Distance Research Alliance, University of Leicester.

Forming part of an archaeological theory module in the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at Leicester, student avatars were required to engage with Second Life artefacts such as the Sami tent through a series of SL-tivities.



Originally, this part of the module – focusing on gender roles within the Sami community – had been taught using the 2D representational model contained on the handout, which was emailed to students.

The Sami tent in SL offered the alternative of a rich, immersive 3D experience, allowing archaeology students the opportunity to engage fully with the artefacts within the Sami tent and, through the switching of land permissions, the nature of gender roles within the Sami culture.

Once placed on a SL island, the SL-moderator can adjust the permissions of the 'land' and thereby switch the genders of the avatars as they enter the tent.

The OTTER Sami tent OER

The OTTER project <www.le.ac.uk/otter> at the Beyond Distance Research Alliance in the University of Leicester has produced a version of its Sami tent (see below) for free distribution within Second Life (SL) as a repurposable open educational resource (OER).

The Sami tent is available in two clearly identified forms:

1. As a single SL artefact, where all discrete items have been linked together to make a whole. A user in SL can take the artefact, deposit it in the appropriate spot and engage with it immediately.
2. As a number of discrete SL artefacts. In this case, the user can take the basic Sami tent package (i.e. tent, floor and smoke) and then add the separate artefacts (fire, rugs, logs, etc.) as required.



In both cases, the artefacts have full copy/modify/transfer rights.

SL users can find both versions by following the SLURL to the Media Zoo island. They are located at the entrance of the original Sami tent.



<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Media%20Zoo/177/222/24/>

This is also a good opportunity for visitors to wander around the original Sami tent and the other areas of the Media Zoo island.