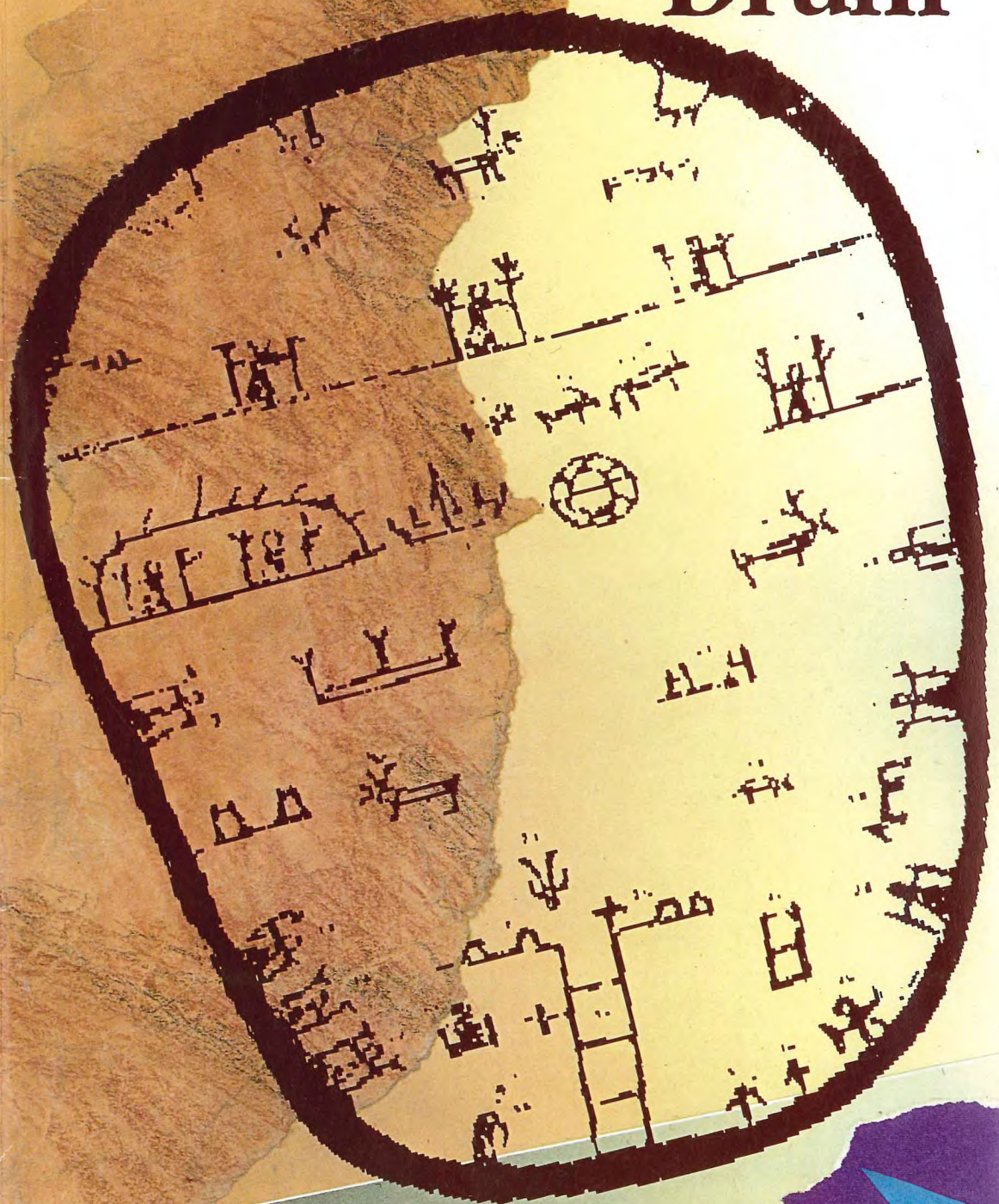


# The Saami Shaman Drum



Edited by Tore Ahlbäck & Jan Bergman



SCRIPTA INSTITUTI DONNERIANI ABOENSIS

XIV

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## THE SAAMI SHAMAN DRUM

*Based on Papers read at the Symposium on the Saami Shaman Drum  
held at Åbo, Finland on the 19th-20th of August 1988*

Edited by

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## Editorial Note

The Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History organized a symposium in Åbo (Turku), Finland on August 19–20, 1988. The title of the symposium was The Saami Shaman Drum. Like the symposium on Encounters between Religions in Old Nordic Times and Cultic Place Names on August 19–21, 1987, it was planned as a continuation to the inventory of Nordic research into old religions in Scandinavia and Finland which began with the Donner Institute's symposium on Saami (Lapp) religion on August 16–18, 1984.

The symposium on The Saami Shaman Drum was planned as a symposium for experts in the field appealing to a limited circle. Invitations to participate in the symposium were sent to representatives of a number of different disciplines that might have an interest in the topic; these included archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, history, art, religion and missionary work, musicology and the history of religion. The purpose of the symposium was to cast light on the Saami drum from as broad a perspective as possible. In the call for papers, drawn up by the organising committee of Rolf Kjellström, Håkan Rydving and Tore Ahlbäck, it was pointed out that there were a number of different ways that the Saami drum might be approached, e.g. an analysis of drum illustrations or individual drums, categorisation by region and/or type of Saami drums, the role of the drum in Saami society and religion, the significance of drum music for the shaman's ritual ecstasy, drum illustrations as a source of information on the Saami world-view compared with drums and drum illustrations among other Arctic peoples, etc.

It was further noted that the approx. 70 drums that have been preserved constitute an extremely important source of data for the study of Saami culture and religion; however, their interpretation remains an area that still awaits research.

In the present volume of *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* eight Nordic scholars present the latest research into different aspects of

the Saami drum The editors hope that the work will serve the Donner Institute's aim in arranging the symposium: to stimulate Nordic research into the Saami drum and to contribute to giving this research international publicity

The translation and language checking for this volume has been carried out by John Skinner (University of Turku)

*Tore Ahlbäck*

*Jan Bergman*

# The Drum in Shamanism

## Some Reflections

BY AKE HULTKRANTZ

### Introduction

In her excellent work on the ritual technique of the Siberian shaman Anna Leena Siikala writes, "The drum may be claimed to be the central symbol of shamanism, and without it a shaman is not a shaman" (Siikala 1978, 45) Siikala refers here first and foremost to Siberian and Central Asian shamanism, the classic fields of shamanism, and, with some few exceptions which we shall discuss below, her statement is applicable here Similarly, Lauri Honko declares that "from Altai to Lapland the drum is the liturgical handbook of shamanism" (Honko 1964, 169) It is more difficult, however, to accept Mircea Eliade's sweeping assessment that generally "the drum has a role of the first importance in shamanic ceremonies," and that "it is indispensable in conducting the shamanic séance" (Eliade 1964, 168) In his attitude to shamanism Eliade is a universalist, not a regionalist, and his view is therefore surprising More strongly expressed, it is simply not valid <sup>1</sup>

Eliade's opinion may be contrasted with that of Georg Nioradze, who does not consider the drum to have been an inalienable part of shamanic equipment, a view supported by Hans Findeisen (Nioradze 1925, 83; Findeisen 1957, 149) It is a strange fact that these opinions were held by two scholars who both limited their shamanic research primarily to the North Eurasian area where, as stated, the drum almost always functions at shamanistic séances

According to my own convictions, founded on circumpolar theoretical studies and practical experience in the fields of American Indian and Saami religion, shamanism is a complex of beliefs and rites closely connected with a very ancient hunting culture My conviction is shared

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<sup>1</sup> In an earlier article I have criticized Eliade for his position with regard to certain aspects of shamanism, such as his restriction of shamanizing to the soul excursions of the shaman (Hultkrantz 1983) Eliade is also vague in certain pronouncements Sometimes he attributes drums to the Eskimo, sometimes he denies they have any Eliade 1964, 176, 289 Such inadvertences must not however conceal the fact that Eliade was the foremost shaman scholar of modern times

today by many of my colleagues? It is thus obvious that shamanism has not been restricted to northern Eurasia and the American Arctic, although it was here that it received its most remarkable forms. This concept of a more universal shamanism is consonant with my definition of the shaman. This definition tries to underline the basic features of Siberian shamanism, which indeed also occur among shamans far outside the Siberian and Arctic boundaries. The shaman is in my opinion a social functionary who, with the aid of guardian or helping spirits, attains a state of ecstasy in order to create connections with the supernatural world on behalf of his tribesmen (Hultkrantz 1973, 34)

It is thus my contention that the problem of whether the drum is an integrative part of shamanism should be examined against a general, and not a regional background. In the following short account I shall present some aspects of this problem.

It is here, important, to distinguish Arctic shamanism from other forms of shamanism. Arctic shamanism has a stronger profile than other varieties of shamanism, partly because of its intensity, accentuated to a certain extent by the harsh climate and environment (exaggerated by some scholars, cf. Ohlmarks 1939), but also explained by the remarkable position of the shaman in an otherwise unstratified social structure. This Arctic shamanism was developed, for instance, among the Saami, the Samoyed, the Yukaghir, Chukchee, Koryak and Eskimo. Arctic shamanism is connected with circumpolar culture, a concept which has been elaborated by archaeologists, ethnologists and historians of religion. It is obvious that this culture has been a continuous whole, not only with regard to historical content, but also for its ecological integration of culture and religion (Gjessing 1944; Hultkrantz 1965; Graburn & Strong 1973). In Southern Siberia, Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia and the Far East shamanism has been remodelled under the pressure of influences from the higher civilizations and religious institutions south of these areas. Hierarchies of shamans, ecstatic possession, rich symbolic garments and much paraphernalia characterize this form of shamanism, which in many respects seems to have developed from Arctic shamanism.<sup>3</sup>

In Arctic shamanism, and partly in the derived shamanic forms in

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<sup>2</sup> Hultkrantz 1973, 1978; cf. Gilberg 1984; Hoppál 1985, 134 ff., Johansen 1987, 7 f.

<sup>3</sup> See also below. Basically, Arctic shamanism is a left over of palaeolithic shamanism specially formed according to the historical, social and ecological conditions of the Arctic area.



Southern Siberia, the drum is the shaman's foremost instrument. The instrument used is a membrane drum in the form of a tambourine, oval among the Saami, Yakut and Tungus, round among the Ostyak and Altaian peoples, small and round among the Chukchee and Eskimo. Its function is related to the shamanic trance and the shaman's experiences during the trance. It is thus primarily an instrument of excitation. We need not here consider the neuro-physiological effects of drumming, clearly described and analysed by scholars such as Walter (Walter & Walter 1949), Sargant (Sargant 1959) and Neher (Neher 1962). The latter feels able to state that the shamanic behaviour at drumming ceremonies is the result of rhythmic beats affecting the central nerve system. Neher is, however, a controversial scholar, whose theory has been criticized for not taking cultural factors into account (Ellingson 1987, 501 ff). Nevertheless, in the light of the musical and suggestive functions of the drum, discussed for example by Curt Sachs (Sachs 1929) and Heidi Nixdorff (Nixdorff 1971), it is natural for the drum to have served primarily as an instrument of exaltation for the shaman, a means of provoking trance, in addition to tobacco, mushrooms and other narcotic herbs. It has, however, been far more common than any of these.

### Thoughts on the Saami Drum

Saami drums are interesting because they exist in great numbers in our museums, and because, together with the Altaic drums, they exhibit such a rich array of illustrations. This abundance of drums and figures contrasts, however, with the sparseness of information on Saami shamanism. Most sources on living shamanism date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and are generally badly understood reports written by missionaries; there is, as Louise Bäckman has pointed out, not one eye witness account of a real séance (Bäckman 1986; Bäckman & Hultkrantz 1978, 80). Furthermore, detailed studies of Saami shamanism are late (Arbman 1968, 615-631, Bäckman & Hultkrantz 1978; Bäckman 1986).

The drums, on the other hand, have — as we know — been thoroughly studied. It is characteristic that when Friis (Friis 1871) wishes to describe Saami shamanism, he writes seven pages on the *noaide* (shaman), seven pages on the *angakokk* in Greenland, and no less than thirty-five pages on the Saami drum. Genuine research on the drum

began earlier than research on the shaman, with contributions by Hallström, Reuterskiöld and Wiklund since 1910 (Hultkrantz 1955, 85 ff.). The modern standard work is of course Ernst Manker's monumental *Die lappische Zaubertrommel*, the first volume of which deals with the construction and use of the drum (Manker 1938), whilst the second volume discusses the pictures on the drum-skins and their meaning (Manker 1950)

It is possible that this concentration on the drum has caused Scandinavian scholars to overrate its importance in Saami shamanism. We might compare here the descriptions of this shamanism with Eliade's account of Eskimo shamanism, where the drum is simply overlooked.

There is no doubt, however, that the drum has been an important part of Saami shamanism. Its foremost role, of course, was to serve as an instrument of ecstatic excitation. Secondly, it functioned as an instrument of divination. The drumming activated a pointer which made movements on the membrane and finally arrived at a certain figure, the symbolism of which resolved the drummer's question. We know that the oldest reproduced drums contain very few pictures connected with ecstasy, as it appears, whereas later drums have an abundance of drawings referring to what may seem to be peripheral subjects from the point of view of an ecstatic. It has generally been assumed that these differences mirror a process of evolution from the drum as a means of achieving ecstasy to the drum as a means of divination, or rather of both entrancement and divination. It has even been suggested that this process could have been synchronized with the socio-economic transformation of the Saami hunting society to a reindeer-breeding society (Bäckman 1986, 258). Be that as it may, if we may trust certain informants from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the drum — as an instrument of divination — was handled not only by shamans but also by family heads (Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1978, 49 ff.). Perhaps the difference between the two groups was not as great as has been supposed. We know that not only the *noarde*, but also other men and women could possess guardian spirits (Hultkrantz 1987). This circumstance alludes to the possibility that these people could have been inspired when handling the drum for divination. In any case, the drum has had a central role not only in Saami shamanism but also in other ritual connections where the shaman was not necessarily part of the context.

As mentioned previously, it is precisely because of their rich array of illustrations that the Saami drums have attracted attention. Both art historians and students of religion have dedicated much attention to

the figures depicted Many scholars have regarded the drum figures as an overview of the Saami aboriginal pantheon (cf Reuterskiöld 1912, 10 f., 74 ff) Martin P Nilsson, however, claimed that the drum was "not a mythological repetitorium but the repetitor of practical life" (Nilsson 1916, 309) Recently, two scholars have given interpretation a new direction, Juha Pentikäinen with suggesting that the figures of a Saami drum kept in Rome "were a kind of cognitive map for the trip of the shaman's ego soul between the three levels of the universe" (Pentikäinen 1987a, 139; Pentikäinen 1987b, 27) And Bo Sommarström argues that the Saami drum should be understood as a star chart including such astral phenomena as the twelve star constellation of the Zodiac and the Milky Way This factor, together with the arrangement of the motifs in quadrants, has convinced the author that the Saami drums, unlike the Siberian drums, were modelled on the pattern of Western stellar maps (Sommarström 1985, 149) Like Pentikäinen, Sommarström makes a holistic interpretation of the figures on the drum panel, conceiving them as symbols of the inner world met by the shaman in his ecstasy (Sommarström 1987, 245 ff) The idea of a Western influence in Saami religion has not otherwise been popular in recent research; and Øystein Johansen repudiates the old hypothesis of a Scandinavian impact on Saami religion in a new critical survey of an old problem (Johansen 1982)

The ethnographer and musicologist Ernst Emsheimer has called attention to some probable ideological correspondences in the use of the Saami and Siberian drums There are thus several circumstances which seem to indicate that the Saami, like the Siberian tribes, interpreted the drum as a bow directed against dangerous powers This idea has been stimulated by conceptions of hunting magic (cf below) Furthermore, there is reason to assume that the drum has been understood as part of the world tree — in other words, made from a tree representing the world tree (Emsheimer 1964, 28–49, 59 f) Our information from Saami sources is naturally too imperfect to allow any convincing demonstration

The same author has shown that there is an interesting conformity in the construction of the drum and the organization of the picture gallery among Saami and Siberians He points out that drums of the "angle frame type" (see Vorren & Manker 1962, 122) resemble the Abakan Tatar shamanic drums in the shaping of the handles He also finds that the division into horizontal zones is similar in both cases, with heaven, earth and underworld (Emsheimer 1964, 68–75) On this evidence, Emsheimer builds up the hypothesis that there has been an

influence from the Altai region on the angle frame drum of the Kemi Saami who, in turn influenced the "bowl" drum of the northern Saami (the latter has the same pictorial composition). Personally, I would think that hypotheses of a common origin or of similar tendencies in development would be more convincing explanations

The Saami, as most scholars think, probably arrived in the Fenno-scandic area from the east, and it is reasonable to postulate a continuous shamanic drum complex from Lappland to Siberia in ancient times. Most Saami frame drums do indeed have handles resembling those found in south-western Siberia, as pointed out by Emsheimer (Emsheimer 1973) <sup>4</sup> In many respects the membrane pictures are very similar to each other. The course of development has nevertheless caused the Saami picture galleries to deviate from Siberian forms; the role of divination for this development has already been mentioned, and local historical circumstances have been another distinguishing factor.

### Some Aspects of Siberian Drums

Siberia is the great area for shamanic drums, and there is a rich literature on the form and usage of these drums. Our attention will focus primarily, however, on the symbolism of the drums. There are some valuable accounts of this symbolism, for instance, by Eliade (Eliade 1964, 168 ff), Potapov (Potapov 1968), Jankovics (Jankovics 1984) and Basilov (Basilov 1986). In this connection, only a summary of certain representative traits of this symbolism will be presented here.

Many Siberian drums are decorated with figures like those on the Saami drums, but certainly not all of them. It is not so uncommon for drums to lack pictures (Harva 1938, 527, 534) <sup>5</sup> Altaic drums are particularly rich in pictures. They portray stars, trees — in most cases images of the world-tree —, animals, spirits of disease, and human figures, sometimes equipped with wings; we often recognize the likeness of a shaman with his drum. Frequently the painted drum-skin represents what seems to be a "mythic world map" (Paulson

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<sup>4</sup> Emsheimer divides the Siberian drums according to types of handles (Emsheimer 1973, 1658), whereas some Soviet scholars reject this principle of classification. Basilov 1986, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Among some tribes, such as the Altaic Tuba, the shaman washed away the picture gallery for each shamanizing and replaced it with a new one adapted to the new situation. Potapov 1968, 222 f.

1965, 96), the "universe" (Jankovics 1984, 150). The parallel to the new interpretation of Saami drums is obvious. The Arctic Siberians represent heaven, a wide open sky, with the Polar star as a fixed point, whereas the Altaic tribes farther south are more interested in the zodiac (Jankovics 1984, 159 f.) The Tungus design the middle of the surface as a circle, and make four half circles at the periphery to signify the four corners of the world, united with the centre by lines (cf. Sommarström 1987, 217, and Jankovics 1984, 164, 171, 172). It is my impression that the Altaic tribes are more inclined to look at single motifs than the whole. Potapov renders a Khaka shaman's description of the figures on his drum (Potapov 1968, 227 ff), pointing out various motifs, all connected with shamanism. A drawing of the Orion constellation enabled the shaman to find his way in the upper world. The cuckoo maintained contact between the shaman and the earth when he was in the heavenly sphere. A raven was his assistant on his long journey, and fetched the soul of the sick person. The birch tree helped the shaman to find out the origin of the illness. There were also pictures of the shaman himself and of seven girls through whom he could communicate with his audience while he was in trance during shamanizing etc.

Although some drums could be richly decorated in this way, there are no traces of any divination procedure connected with these figures, as is the case with the Saami. Divination occurs among the Samoyed and Tungus, however, through a drum stick being thrown up into the air; from its position when it falls, the shaman draws conclusions about whether the oracle's answer is yes or no (Harva 1938, 539; Dolgikh 1978, 346). As Crawley once emphasized, the oracular function of the shamanic drum "is always secondary to the musical or 'suggestive' use of the instrument" (Crawley 1928, 94). In Siberia, certainly, the drum is clearly intended to be a shamanic instrument of excitation.

Among the Southern Altaï the wooden handle of the drum is carved in the shape of a man, with the facial features well defined. Some drums have two faces, one at each end of the handle. Sometimes the same figure is painted on the front skin of the drum, and covering the whole space there (Potapov 1968, 223 ff). This figure has generally been considered to be "the master of the drum" (Harva 1938, 528 ff, Potapov 1968, 223 ff.). He is supposed to be the first shaman, or a shamanic ancestor, and functions as the shaman's guardian spirit.

Another idea is that the drum, as such, is a personal being. We often find that the drum symbolizes the shaman's guardian spirit, represented as an animal, for instance a deer (Dolgikh 1978, 345).

Basilov thinks that this was the original significance of the drum (Basilov 1986, 38). According to this view, it is the hide of the protective spirit that forms the membrane of the drum, and this seems to be supported by ethnographic facts<sup>6</sup> By means of particular rites, the drum is granted "life", that is, the guardian spirit takes possession of it The most common animal guardian is the reindeer in the north, the deer further south, and the horse among the Yakut and Buryat Occasionally, the soul of the shaman is identified with the guardian spirit, a common phenomenon in shamanism He is even identified with his drum

According to Basilov, the old identity of the shaman and the guardian spirit of his drum was dissolved when the drum was transformed into a horse for riding to the other world (Basilov 1986, 46 f) It is certainly very natural that, with the introduction of nomadism, the reindeer and the horse could become the animals used by shamans for riding into the sky However, the idea that a shaman could make such a journey on a bird, or as a bird, is no doubt archaic, as comparative data from American shamanism can inform us There are several examples of such aerial flights from Siberia: shamans who travel through the seven heavens on the backs of birds

The close connection between the guardian spirits and the drum is also expressed in the idea that the drum is a vessel in which the shaman may collect his guardian spirits Some drums have fictive entrances for spirits

It is a widespread notion among Siberian tribes that the drum is made from a "shamanic tree", which symbolizes the world pole or world tree Each shaman has his own shamanic tree with which his own life is associated (Paulson 1964, 126 f), and each such tree is a replica of the world tree Each shamanic tree is pointed out to the future shaman in his inaugural dreams The Yakut, for instance, consecrate the tree with animal sacrifices and pour blood and vodka on it All of this shows that the close association of the drum with the tree also includes the shaman

It was previously mentioned that, according to Emsheimer's claim, the Saami drum could be understood as an apotropaic instrument, a bow with magic arrows Comparisons were made with similar ideas among Siberian peoples, and here we find not only the idea of the drum being a bow, but that the word for drum is occasionally that

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<sup>6</sup> We are reminded here that the Yakut shaman addresses the drum as his horse and the drum-stick as his whip

for bow. On this basis, Potapov launched the theory in 1934 that the bow had been the original instrument of the shaman, being later supplanted by the drum. Even in later times, some metal pendants on the shamanic drum remind us of arrows (cf Emsheimer 1964, 28 ff; Basilov 1986, 38). Potapov's thesis has been called into question by certain Russian scholars, including Basilov (Basilov 1986, 38).

Emsheimer has however related Potapov's theory to Zelenin's evolutionist theory of shamanic etiology (Zelenin 1936; Zelenin 1952). As we know, Zelenin thinks that the diagnosis of disease as the result of intrusion (originally intrusion by an animal, later by an animal spirit) preceded chronologically the diagnosis of soul loss caused by a spirit or wizard. Emsheimer finds that the conception of the drum as a bow belongs to the first of these diagnoses. It is thus a relatively ancient idea, retained in later times as a relic (Emsheimer 1964, 32 f). Now Zelenin's relative chronology of disease etiologies was strongly supported in wide circles; even an historically inclined scholar like Robert Lowie defended the temporal precedence of the intrusion diagnosis. Careful investigations by Ivar Paulson and myself, however, demonstrate that this hypothesis is not valid as far as Northern Eurasia and North America are concerned. The two diagnoses are contemporaneous and refer to two different types of disease, diseases of the body and the mind, respectively. This is the case, although regionally a certain tendency towards a uniform patterning of one of the two diagnoses may have occurred (Paulson 1958; Hultkrantz 1953, 289, 448 ff; Hultkrantz 1962-63; Hultkrantz 1984). We should not presuppose any development from one diagnosis to the other, and Zelenin's theory cannot therefore support Potapov's theory of the evolution of drum interpretation.

### **The Weakening of Drum Shamanism outside the Eurasian Area**

The Eskimo have a developed shamanism, but the drum is not as strongly emphasized in this form of shamanism, nor is it circumscribed by numerous rules and supernatural ideas like the Saami or Siberian drum. Potapov's bold reconstruction of the history of the Siberian shamanic drum has its counterpart in Erik Holtved's reconstruction of the history of the Eskimo drum. According to Holtved, drum shamanism among the Eskimo has superseded an older technique of divination (oracular answers from lifting weights etc.). The drum

is nevertheless named after this old technique (Holtved 1967, 26 f) Holtved's argument seems less probable, however, since the common term for both phenomena, *qila*, may simply indicate the reference to magic

There are some signs of the lesser importance attached to the Eskimo drum. Firstly, few drums are painted, and only among the Chugach Eskimo of Southern Alaska are all drums painted. Secondly, all shamanic drums are also used for entertainment. Thirdly, among the Chugach shamans, rattles have partly taken over the role of drums (for a survey, see Haase 1987, 165-170). The rattle is, as we shall see, the general shamanic instrument in large parts of America.

In the great variety of shamanic forms which exist south of the Arctic Subarctic zone, the drum, with a few exceptions, does not have such a prominent role. In particular, mention must be made here of Southern Siberia and Central Asia, where northern shamanism and southern influences from the high culture fused together. These latter influences are responsible for the high elaboration of ceremonialism in shamanism (even among such northern people as the Tungus), as well as for the conversion of former shamanic areas to Buddhism (Lamaism) and Islam. Representatives of the old Vienna school were jumping to hasty conclusions when they located the homeland of shamanism in southern agricultural regions. In conformity with this theory, Wilhelm Schmidt, relying on A. Gahs, claimed that the Tibetan double drum had served as a model for the shamanic drums of Northern and Central Asia and finally reached the American continent (see the discussion in Eliade 1964, 176, 502 note 23, with references). This reconstruction is too speculative, and the perspectives must be broadened to embrace a general palaeolithic background, as in the following account.

The position of the drum in other areas south of the Arctic obviously depends upon the position of shamanism. We know that where horticulture and agriculture supplanted old hunting cultures shamanism gradually retreated, living on for a short while among the mounted pastoral nomads, but finally succumbing here, too. Priests and cult servants replaced shamans who, for some time, may have been reduced to fortune tellers and folk healers. Shamanic soul journeys become less common as diagnoses of soul loss fell into oblivion. The drum that paved the way for the trance was no longer necessary.

As an example of this deterioration of the shamanic drum we may consider the case of the American Indian.



### The American Shamanic Drums

We have seen how in North America the Eskimo certainly maintain Arctic traditions regarding the shamanic use of the drum, although in a weakened form. As we go further south, the frame drum becomes more uncommon, and there are fewer sources attesting to its shamanic use.

The following survey is based on information provided by Helen Roberts (Roberts, 1936), Clark Wissler (Wissler 1938), Joseph Howard (Howard 1967) and others. These three authors present their material within culture area configurations, thus enhancing our possibilities of comparing drums of different areas. The information on the shamanic use of the drum is, however, most uneven.

The tambourine drum is used by Canadian tribes of the Subarctic area, from the Yukon and Mackenzie Athapascan tribes to the Algonkians (the Naskapi and Montagnais) in Labrador. Among the latter it is part of the hunting ritual: just as among the Saami, a small object is placed on the drum head. The spectators watch it move around as the drum is beaten, indicating in what direction game may be found (Tanner 1944). Here is one of the many enigmatic parallels which may be found between the Saami and north-eastern American Indians (cf. especially the similarities in the guardian spirit complex, Hultkrantz 1987).

On the Northwest Coast medicine men handle frame drums covered by deer hide. "Rattles are put inside and out to impart special powers" (Howard 1967, 41). Wooden rattles are also used, as elsewhere in North America. Frame drums are also found both on the Plateau and the Plains. Small drums are used by doctors, for instance among the Omaha, who stretch a skin over a small hoop.

In the areas under discussion there is a certain connection between the shaman (or medicine man — the boundaries between the two functionaries are vague) and the frame drums. Occasionally there are even echoes of Siberian drum ideology. In his visionary experience the young Coast Salish Indian at Puget Sound listens to the sound of drumming out in the woods. He follows the sound and comes to a "trembling" cedar from which he receives his guardian spirit song and his healing power. Later in life he returns to the same cedar and forms from a pair of curved branches so-called "power boards" which possess the power to influence human beings (Jilek 1982, 138 f). At the initiation dance each dancer brings a pole or staff which is placed in a hollow cedar representing the world tree (Jilek 1982, 137 f). In

other words, we have here a "shamanic tree" identical to the world tree — as found in Siberia

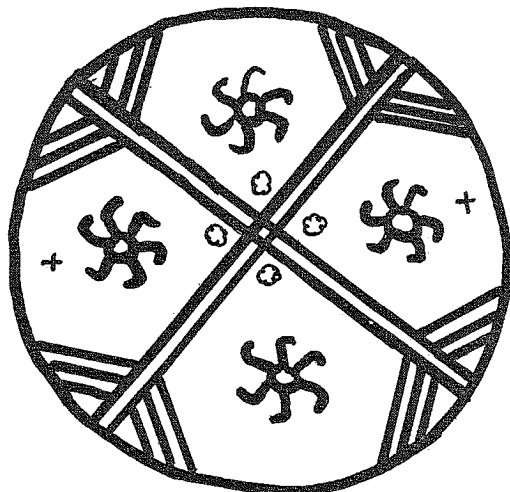
It was pointed out that drums may have rattles inside, and the boundary-line between rattle and drum is not clear in North America; musicologists even talk about "rattle drums" The more common shamanic instrument in the United States is the rattle The Eastern Indians, for instance, use rattles made of turtle shell, horn, or bark cylinders The prevalence of the kettle drum and the water drum in the Southwest seems to have precluded a traditional association between the medicine man and the drum

If rattles predominate in North America, wind instruments are the common musical instruments in South America There are few single-headed frame drums As Lawrence Sullivan succinctly states, "In South America, the shaman's drum does not have wide use" (Sullivan 1988, 831 note 185) It would seem that over wide areas of South America excitation through drumming has been replaced by the use of intoxicating herbs; nowhere on earth have drugs and psychoactive, narcotic herbs been used as much as among the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent

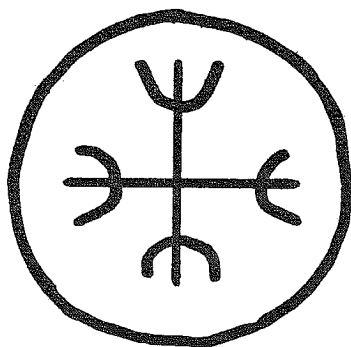
On the south western coast of South America, however, we find to our great surprise an almost Arctic shamanism with an almost traditional shamanic drum The Araucanians of southern Chile, or the Mapuche, are responsible for this sensation In his classic book on shamanism, Eliade deals with Araucanian shamanism as if it were typical of South America (Eliade 1964, 323-336) It is not, however, and represents a striking exception

This is not the place to describe Mapuche shamanism in all its detail Let us merely state that the shaman — or shamaness, for today the functionary is usually a woman — practises ventriloquism, transvestitism and sleight of hand tricks She demonstrates her skills at a ceremonial initiation act which, among other things, has the purpose of establishing a symbiosis between the novice and the sacred trees The central part of the initiation involves the *machi*, or shamaness, climbing a tree which has been stripped of bark and notched to facilitate ascent This is the world tree, and it has seven levels Standing on the highest level the *machi* prays to the high god, and sinks into a trance Mapuche shamanism has been described and analysed by several authors (Métraux 1942; Titiev 1951, Faron in Steward & Faron 1959, 281 ff., Grebe 1973, 24 ff, Böning 1978, 838 ff, Brech 1985; Schindler 1988)

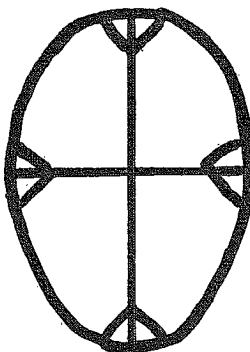
Our main interest concerns the Mapuche drum Strictly speaking,



A



B



C

- A Mapuche drum from Schundler 1988, 64
- B Mapuche drum drawing, Schundler 1988, 71
- C Dolgan drum drawing, Jankovics 1984, 171 (after Ivanov)

this is a kind of kettle drum, but it is handled and represented as a Siberian drum. The drum, *kultrum*, has the skin of a dog or a horse stretched over its wooden frame. It is held in one hand and beaten with a drum-stick. The drum-skin has curved or straight lines at the periphery, signifying trees. Four lines forming a cross divide the drumhead into four quadrants representing the four parts of the world. The square at the centre of the drum symbolizes the middle of the world.

As we see, the resemblance to the Siberian drum is obvious. The Mapuche drum could well pass for a Tungusian, Manchu or Dolgan drum (Potapov 1968, 228; Emsheimer 1973, 1659; Jankovics 1984, figures 1, 5: 1-5; Sommarström 1987, 217). Métraux points out that both the appearance of the drum and its use is almost Siberian (Métraux 1949, 589). Regarding the shamanic background, Faron states "These shamanistic practices, though typical of Siberia, are known elsewhere in America only in the Arctic. Why any of these, let alone the whole complex, should occur in South America only among the Araucanians is inexplicable" (Steward & Faron 1959, 281). The problems involved can only be discussed tentatively here and certainly deserve more detailed study. Métraux has provided some guidelines: with regard to Mapuche shamanism, he believes that it is not a relic from an ancient time when this people and the Siberian peoples shared the same culture, but rather reflects a convergence between Mapuche and Siberian shamanism during the last four hundred years (Métraux 1967). On the other hand, the Mapuche drum "is one of several traits linking the Araucanians to North America which seem to have followed the Pacific Coast long before the development of the high cultures of Peru" (Métraux 1949, 594). The latter hypothesis is plausible. But why could not the total complex of shamanism be explained in the same way?

We may refer here to the findings of Erland Nordenskiöld, who was able to establish the probability of an archaic hunting culture in northern North America and southern South America, the culture brought by the first immigrants (Nordenskiöld 1931). This old culture shows affinities with the circumpolar Arctic culture where "classic" shamanism belongs (cf. Hultkrantz 1981).

### Conclusion

This short summary of the role of the shamanic drum in different ages and cultures is of course only a preliminary sketch, and can as such hardly be used for drawing conclusions regarding the ideological history of this drum. My intention has been to provide an overall — or almost overall — survey, since areas such as South East Asia and Oceania have not been considered. By comparing Arctic and American forms of shamanism, we have been able to conjecture the main characteristics of the story of the shamanic drum. We may reach a probable hypothesis, but no more.

It has become evident that the palaeo-Indian hunting culture preserved among such ethnic groups as the eastern Algonkians in North America and the Araucanians in South America constituted a continuation of the palaeolithic hunting culture that was once diffused over the whole of northern Eurasia and has survived until modern times among the circumpolar peoples. The Araucanian drum, and the whole Araucanian shamanic complex, is basically a part of this North Asian shamanism. How should we then interpret this fact? As implied above, I believe the best hypothesis would be to presume that we are dealing with a heritage from the ancient immigration period. The cultural conservatism of the Araucanians, and their isolation in the Chilean archipelago — they were not conquered and placed on reservations until a century ago (Steward & Faron 1959, 273 ff) — have contributed to the preservation of their ancient religion, including shamanism.

Evidence of such widespread diffusion makes it obvious that we cannot be satisfied with the dates for the age of the shamanic drum rashly proposed in the past — 500 B C, or the Bronze Age, etc. Furthermore, we seem to face the fact that the drum was part of the original heritage of shamanism.

If this supposition is correct, the problem of the age of the shamanic drum becomes the problem of the age of shamanism. I have tried to answer this question in another article (Hultkrantz 1989). Shamanism apparently forms part of the oldest culture of man, the hunting culture, but with certain restrictions. In its typical forms it does not occur in middle and southern Africa, among negritic peoples and the Australian aborigines. Ter Ellingson points out correctly that there are no drums in the "religious music" of such peoples as the Pygmies and Bushmen of Africa, the Veddas in Sri Lanka and the Australian aborigines (Ellingson 1987, 494). However, this does not mean — as

he presumes — that the drum originated in “later cultural systems of sedentary agriculture and urban civilization” (Ellingson 1987, 494) In view of the material that he himself amassed, moreover, his views are surprising

The ideas hitherto expressed regarding the age of the shamanic drum are indeed many and bewildering Even discussion of the age of the drum in Siberia, a relatively well-researched field, is confusing Hans Findeisen says that the widely diffused drum is “selbstverständlich” much younger than the shaman’s dress, whereas Bo Lönnqvist — with great justification, in my opinion — concludes that it is the other way round (Findeisen 1957, 148; Lönnqvist 1987, 152, 155, 156)

The evidence we have tells us that the drum is an ancient shamanic symbol in hunting culture In later shamanism outside the Arctic area it has gradually lost its significance

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# The Saami Drums and the Religious Encounter in the 17th and 18th Centuries

BY HÅKAN RYDVIING

In one Lule Saami tradition the term used for the pre Christian period is SaaL *goabdesájgge*<sup>1</sup> "drum-time", while the period of religious encounter and confrontation is referred to as "the time when one had to hide the drums" (ULMA Gruvvisare). A Saami awareness of the central role the drums played in indigenous Saami religion thus lived on long after their use had ceased. Most of the Saami oral traditions about drums, however, only refer to someone who had seen or heard about a drum and give little information about how drums were used or how the drum figures were interpreted (Hallström 1910b; Demant Hatt 1928). For the historian of religions, therefore, the traditions about drums are of much less value than, for example, those about sacrifice (cf Mebius 1972). When the drums are to be discussed, it is the written source material from the 17th and 18th centuries that we must use.

Several works on Saami religion have dealt with the drums (Reuter-skiöld 1912, 10 f, 115 ff, Itkonen 1946, 121 ff, Karsten 1955, 68 ff, Mebius 1968, 13; Bäckman 1975, 38 ff, Lundmark 1982, 8), but their value as sources is debatable. As silent, non-written sources they are impossible to interpret and use without help from the written source material. Depending on how the written sources are valued, what analogies are used etc, the significance of the drums and drum figures in studies of Saami religion varies. Both individual drums and drum types have been dealt with,<sup>2</sup> as well as single motifs and drum figures.<sup>3</sup> My purpose here, however, is to discuss the essential difficulties and

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<sup>1</sup> Saami words are written in accordance with the present literary languages.

<sup>2</sup> See, apart from Manker 1950, 137 ff and the literature referred to there, the more recent interpretations of the South Saami drum type (Nootboom 1961; Bergsland 1956-78, 456 f, Sommarström 1985; Sommarström 1987) and drums No 45 (Lundmark 1983) and No 53 Pentikäinen 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Different motives are discussed in Manker 1950, 15 ff. More recent examples are

prerequisites in using the drums and the drum figures as sources. In order to do this, it is necessary first to outline the confrontation of the Saamis and the authorities over the drums, and how the Saamis defended their use of them.

### 1 The drums as symbols of Saami resistance

From the end of the 17th to the middle of the 18th century much of the confrontation between indigenous Saami religion and Christianity was focused on the drums. To be sure, the Saamis of both Denmark-Norway and Sweden-Finland had been christianized for decades. They were baptized, married and buried according to Christian ritual. Many of them met the clergyman only once or perhaps twice a year in connection with the markets, it is true, but they were nevertheless integrated into the ecclesiastical organisation. Quite a few Saamis used both drums and the old sacrificial sites, however, and this state of things was discovered on various occasions during the decades around 1700. The main problem for the Church authorities turned out to be that of making the Saamis abandon their indigenous religious customs, not making them believe in, or at least learn to repeat Christian dogmas by rote, or getting them to perform certain rites in the churches. From the end of the 17th century, an intense period of propaganda and coercion began to make the Saamis abandon these non-Christian elements in their religion. Special attention was accordingly paid to the drums.

The role of the drums as symbols of Saami resistance is well attested in the sources from the 17th and 18th centuries. For the Saamis, the drums represented their threatened culture, the resistance against the Christian claim to exclusiveness, and a striving to preserve traditional values — i.e. “the good” that had to be saved. For the Church authorities, on the other hand, the drums symbolized the explicit nucleus of the elusive Saami “paganism” — i.e. “the evil” that had to be annihilated.

To give an idea of this confrontation it will be sufficient to provide illustrations from court records. These records are important, as it is through them we have access to Saami attitudes towards, and interpretations of, this religious encounter.

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studies on the skær motif (Manker 1952; Lid 1956) the “realm of the dead” motif (Strömbäck 1956; Ränk 1981, 14 ff), sun figures (Sommarström 1967; Lundmark 1982, 39 ff), the equestrian motif (Mebius 1968, 116 ff, Ränk 1981, 28 ff) and moon figures (Lundmark 1982, 71 ff).

In the winter of 1671 many "sorcerers were revealed" in Kemi *lappmark*<sup>4</sup> (northern Finland) They were forced to hand over their drums, which are reported to have been so big and wide that they could not be removed, but had to be burned A Saami, who in the records is called Aikie Aikiesson, was sentenced to death, but he died before he was executed Hence, the authorities could not use the execution as the warning they had planned (Tornæus 1772, 22; Handlingar 1910, 385)<sup>5</sup> Two decades later, however, they would have their opportunity, although in another region

If one is to believe the records preserved, it was the Pite Saamis who were most explicit in their defence At the sessions in Arjeplog in February 1682 the Saamis protested They refused to obey exhortations to abandon the customs of their forefathers, and declared that — in future — they also would summon their gods (ULMA Trolldomsrannsakingar, 143 f)<sup>6</sup> This type of argumentation was by no means uncommon, although only in exceptional cases was it as outspoken as this Very occasionally it even happened that a drum was protected by force: when the clergyman, Petrus Noræus, in Silbojokk (also in Pite *lappmark*) deprived a Saami of his drum, he was attacked on his way and the drum was recovered (Handlingar 1910, 339 ff)

During the second half of the 1680's, the hunt for drums was intensified in Sweden-Finland The penalties for possession and use were reinforced, and the Saamis were exhorted to hand in the drums to the district courts<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the authorities searched for a scapegoat as a warning to others; in the "Relation om Lapmarkernes Gudztjänst" [Account of worship in the *lappmarks*] of 1686 the Härnösand consistory wrote: "If someone is found to have trafficked with such gross idolatry as to merit capital punishment, it would be meet that such a person were presented and there *in loco* suffered his punishment as a warning to others, which would much ease the work, since the Lapps in themselves are trembling and fearful" (Handlingar 1910, 371)

At one District Court, "an old, good-tempered man" explained in

<sup>4</sup> Swe *lappmark* denoted an administrative district within the confines of Sweden-Finland inhabited by Saamis (Lapps). In the 17th century the *lappmarks* were (from the south) Ume, Pite, Lule, Torne and Kemi

<sup>5</sup> Record from the District Court of Kemi *lappmark* 8 March 1671

<sup>6</sup> Record from the District Court in Arjeplog 7 Feb, 1682 Cited in Edsman 1985, 129 f

<sup>7</sup> As means of evading the decree, there is evidence at least in Jokkmokk that newly made drums were handed over to the authorities, while the old inherited ones were kept ULMA, Trolldomsrannsakingar, 414

court that the Saamis used the drum “in the simple belief and opinion thereby to obtain good fortune or otherwise learn whether some good or evil fortune is approaching them, before they betake themselves to the woods in order to catch animals or otherwise practise their fishing [ ]” (Bergman 1891, 222 ff)<sup>8</sup> The same ideas reappear in Saami arguments in other places, too. In Jukkasjärvi it was said that they “to this day used drums or kábdes [SaaL *goabdes*, SaaN *goavddis* ‘drum’] in simple mindedness only, after the ancient custom of their forefathers, with the purpose of gaining good fortune”, and in Jokkmokk that they had “hitherto used drums, with which they however said that they had not done anything evil, but merely wished to see beforehand what evil or good would befall them, likewise how it would fare with their forest hunting and fishing and also with their livestock” Only in the easternmost Kemi *lappmark* were the drums no longer in use, because of the zealous activity of the clergyman, Gabriel Tuderus, in the first half of the 1670’s (Bergman 1891, 224 ff)<sup>9</sup>

An argument sometimes used was that the drums only functioned as a type of compass, and therefore should be allowed. Olof Sjulsson, county sheriff from the *lappby*<sup>10</sup> of Vapsten, “[ ] was bold enough to make an excuse for the Lapps, that they did not mean much with their drums, but that these were like a compass for them in the wild woods” He wrote a petition in 1688 and pleaded for the right of the Saamis to use the drums. His petition provoked quite a number of responses, the authors of which wondered how a person with several years of varied schooling could have such “wicked” views (Steuchius 1983, 82; Handlingar 1910, 343 ff). The Saami arguments on behalf of legalizing the use of the drums were received with astonishment and dismay — the lack of understanding for Saami views was total<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Record from the District Court in Lycksele 11 Jan, 1687

<sup>9</sup> Record from District Courts in Jokkmokk 27–28 Jan, 1687, Jukkasjärvi 31 Jan, 1687 and Sodankylä 4 March, 1687; the Jukkasjärvi record also in Handlingar 1910, 388

<sup>10</sup> Swe *lappby* was the official designation of a group of Saamis with their lands. The division probably had its roots in the indigenous Saami *siida* organization.

<sup>11</sup> Apprehension over the drum among the clergy was at that time rather uniform. It was called “the bible of the devil” (Kildahl 1910, 89), “instrument and tool of Satan” (Forbus 1910, 87), or “their devilish instrument [ ]” (Randulf 1903, 29). Later, there are also examples of a more understanding attitude. When the outspoken Lule Saami, Anders Ersson Snadda, in the 1740’s tried to explain what negative consequences the religious encounter had had in his region, he was in the favourable position of being able to speak to the broad-minded Per Högström. Snadda explained to Högström that his father “used the drum (kobdas [SaaL

In 1688 the county governor and the bishop (Swe *superintendent*) made a journey of inspection through the *lappmarks*. The Saamis were summoned and threatened with "temporal and eternal punishment" if they did not hand over their drums and "idols". Persons who delivered their drums "confessed that they had been seduced by their forefathers, not knowing anything but that it was permissible to use such drums"; those who were denounced but denied possession were brought before the district court sessions. Several were sentenced to imprisonment and flogging, but no one to death (Kruse & Steuchius 1910, 330 ff). One of the Saamis who handed over a drum in this year was the Pite Saami, Lars Nilsson. When he later lost his son, he used a drum in a futile effort at bringing him back to life<sup>12</sup>. He was prosecuted, but at the district court sessions he explained outright that he would "observe and use the custom of his forefathers, in spite of what higher or lower authority in this case would now or in the future prohibit him from doing". He was sentenced to death, the judgement was ratified by the court of appeal, and he was thus decapitated and burnt at the stake "together with the tree idols he had used and the divination drum and the tools belonging to it". The execution was held in the presence of his kinsmen, who had been summoned to attend. Thus Lars Nilsson died a martyr to his religion. The authorities had obtained the example they wanted, and the local clergyman (the above mentioned P. Noræus) wrote afterwards that he hoped it should "be a notable force and warning for other idolaters and such sinners" (Bergman 1891, 230 f). To the best of my knowledge, Lars Nilsson was the only Saami ever executed on religious grounds.

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*goabdes*]), and was well; he himself had now put it aside, but found himself not understanding anything else, but soon having to walk before others' doors [ ] He feared that [his *lappby*] Kaitom would soon be waste, if people continued to discard the old customs" (Högström 1774, 34 f.). Högström's explicit opinion was that "godlessness [i.e. the opinions of atheists and deists] is for our race infinitely more harmful than superstition [to which he reckoned Saami religion] itself" (Högström 1990, 66). He thus defended the Saamis against much of the prejudice to which they were exposed.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Randulf's story about the Saami Johannes from the parish of Ranen in Norway, who as late as 1718 was saved by his father with the help of a drum. In this case, the father had to give his life for the son before the latter recovered. Another difference from Arjeplog was that in Ranen the drum was handled by a brother-in-law. Even though the father was a great "Noyde" [SaaS *nåejtie*], it was according to his belief not possible to ask the drum himself when it was his own son who was ill. Randulf 1903, 19 ff.

in Sweden-Finland <sup>13</sup>

After the trials in 1688 and the following years, very little attention was paid for some decades to the christianization of the Saamis. The authorities thought that the intense campaign had brought an end to the use of the drums. The Saamis were now considered to be good Christians. Not until the Norwegian missionary, Thomas von Westen, revealed the truth of the matter in his letter to the Swedish clergy in 1723, and a schoolboy at a court in Lycksele in the same year reported a Saami who had used the drum,<sup>14</sup> did the church authorities pay renewed attention to the religious situation of the Saamis. Several Saamis were denounced in Lycksele in 1723 and 1724. They justified their use of the drums to find out about their hunting, their journeys, or their fishing. Since these persons had been so young — some of them not even born — during the time of the inquiry of 1688, they were sentenced to relatively mild punishments (fines or — for lack of means — flogging, and of course the surrender of the drums). Both in 1723 and in 1724 official letters were sent to the clergy in the *lappmarks*, requesting an intensified search for drums and persons using them (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1913, 130 ff) <sup>15</sup> To return to the terms of the Lule Saami tradition mentioned in the introduction, “drum time”

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<sup>13</sup> This is a noteworthy state of affairs at a time when witch-trials were common, and a rabid Lutheran orthodoxy was the ideology of the authorities. The reasons might — as pointed out by Bill Widén — have been political (cf the contemporary idea of constitutional law that inhabitants in border districts should get milder treatment than those living in the core areas of a country), fear of Saami “witchcraft” and violence, or, due to the lack of contact between the clergy and the Saamis. Widén 1962, 164 f, Widén 1980, 268 f

<sup>14</sup> Saamis who acted as informants and revealed persons who continued to adhere to the indigenous religion are naturally described positively in the ecclesiastical annals — those reported are scarcely likely to have had the same opinion. Caution increased. When Per Högström wrote his description of the *lappmarks* in the 1740's, he admitted that he had never seen any Saami drum, but his opinion was that it had not gone completely out of use “even though, because of the severe inquisitions which have been conducted in connection with it, they no longer use it, except clandestinely. Those who use it, do so in such silence, that scarcely even their own people get to know about it, as they know it is a matter of life and death, and that they could easily be reported by others who do not use them.” Högström, 1747, 203

<sup>15</sup> In Norway the penalties for “idolatry” — the use of the drum was reckoned in this category — had been repealed through the intercession of Thomas von Westen. He believed that it was not possible to obtain the confidence of the Saamis in order to influence their religion if they were afraid of punishments. In Sweden, the dean of Nedertorneå, Henrik Forbus, petitioned unsuccessfully in 1727 for the penalties for “idolatry” to be repealed in Sweden too. Bergman 1891, 231 f

seems to have been modified to "the time when one had to hide the drums" at different points of time in the different *lappmarks*: in the 1670's in Kemí, about 1690 in Pite and in the 1720's in Ume. Later, the drums also had to be hidden from kinsmen — and women.

The above examples illustrate how interest was focused on the drums during this period of intense religious confrontation. The Saami arguments which have been preserved in the court records clearly show that the drums were used in an ecological and economic context. This is in accordance with Martin P:son Nilsson's interpretation of the drums as a "repetitorium of the practical life" (Nilsson 1916, 309), but contrary to the traditional view of them as mythological compendia. The statements by those who used the drums are the starting-points for any understanding of the role of the drums in Saami society. Other assumptions easily lead to speculations and unreliable interpretations.

## 2 The drum figures as source material

From the point of view of their source value the Saami drums might be compared with other religious icons. They may be said to stand somewhere between, say, the Scandinavian rock carvings of the Bronze Age and today's religious pictures of Australian aboriginals. There are no contemporary interpretations of the Scandinavian rock carvings and they are therefore either ignored (as impossible to interpret) or interpreted with the help of analogies from much later written sources, whereas it is possible to get an interpretation of an Australian stone arrangement or a painted *churunga* by asking the artist. Most drums are in this respect as silent as the rock-carvings from the Bronze Age, but some explanations and early interpretations of drum figures have been preserved. At least some of these have been made by the help of the artist and ought therefore to be reliable. Not all the drum figures then are "pictures without a commentary by the producer of the pictures", but in spite of this they can "lead the interpreter dreadfully astray" (Mebius 1968, 13).

If one compares the earliest description of figures on a Saami drum with the figures on the drums preserved from the 17th and 18th centuries, the differences are striking. The only figures on the drum described in *Historia Norvegiæ* from the end of the 12th century were animals (a whale and a reindeer) and means of conveyance (skies and a boat with oars), probably representing the helping spirits and facilities



the SaaN *noardi* used on his ecstatic journeys (*Historia Norvegiæ* 1880, 86; Nor transl in *Den eldste Noregs-historia* 1921, 17)

Most scholars believe — referring, amongst other things, to *Historia Norvegiæ* — that the original function of the drum was as a means of assistance when the *noardi* had to fall into ecstasy, while the use as a means of divination was secondary, owing to either Scandinavian or Christian influence (see for example Hultkrantz 1978, 53 f)<sup>16</sup> Also the drum figures have been understood as Scandinavian loans, for example as imitations of rock-carvings (Bing 1922), the pictures on the Gallehus horns (Reuterskiöld 1928), runes (Agrell 1934) or the symbols of the zodiac (Sommarström 1987)<sup>17</sup> To me, these connections seem anything but completely clear. It is no longer a matter of course to interpret elements in Saami culture as loans. The drum figures could as well be seen as a Saami innovation. The few figures on the drum described in *Historia Norvegiæ* are in sharp contrast to the rich worlds of figures on the drums preserved. My hypothesis is a proposal to perceive the drum figures as an internal Saami development, to see them as a consequence of the encounter with a religion making demands for exclusiveness, thus forcing reflection about their own religion together with a need to structure it. The cosmos was possible to grasp through its microcosmic representation (cf Wiklund 1913, 178) on the drumhead. Through the figures of “the others” on the drum, the alien and coercive world of the Christians also to some extent became possible to understand (cf fig 1).

## 2.1 Preparation

Against this background it is clear that using the drum figures as sources is both a difficult and delicate task. In order to interpret them it is necessary to clear away much earlier interpretative lumber. The first requisite is an “Entmythologisierung”, a clearing away of the mythologizing interpretations which see most of the drum figures as “different mythological characters from the Saami religion” (Steffensen

<sup>16</sup> Contrary opinions are Steen’s idea about the divinatory use as original (Steen 1960, 3) and Emsheimer’s view that the drums were originally used for apotropaic rites (Emsheimer 1964, 31)

<sup>17</sup> In some rare cases the Saami drum figures have been used to throw light upon phenomena among neighbouring nations. Cf for example Friis’ theory about Kalevala’s *Sampo* as a drum (Friis 1868; Friis 1871, 47 ff), or Kabell’s interpretation of the Old Scandinavian poems known as “shield poems” as descriptions of drums (Kabell 1980)

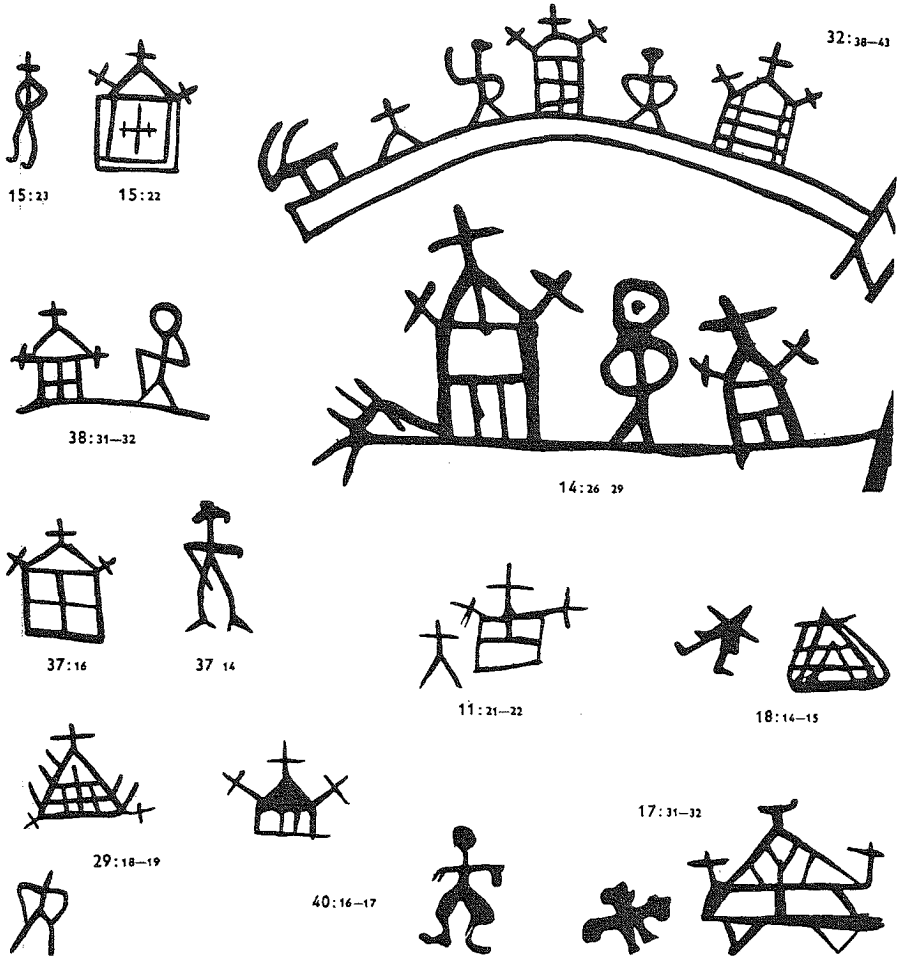


Fig 1 "The settlement or the church village with buildings, men, cattle etc , the figures are often placed along a line called *ristbalges* [SaaS *ristbaelkies*], Christian path" (Manker 1950, fig 34)

1985, 107) Instead of the 17th and 18th century explanations of figures as illustrating hunting, fishing and reindeer herding, Manker for example tries to find a more cultic or mythological meaning, and instead of figures of Christian phenomena he finds pre Christian Saami characters. The owner of drum No 30 (Fig 3) explained, for example, that figure No 5 represented “the sun if it will shine and it will be fair weather”, while Manker interprets it as “probably the wind, Bieggolmai [SaaS *Bieggkálma*j] or Bieggagalles [SaaS *Bieggkegallies*], who usually stands at this place”. Figure No 12 is said by the owner to be a “ferry boat”, but by Manker “the boat offering”, No 17 is according to the owner a “Finn’ [Saami] in an ‘ackja’ [Saami sledge]”, but according to Manker “the assumption is not unreasonable, that we are here witnessing the [ ] owner of the drum, on a major duty in the spirit world [ ]”. Drum figures that in the sources are said to represent Christian phenomena are often reinterpreted as figures from Saami mythology. On drum No 71 (Fig 2), figure No 7 is in Manker’s view not a cathedral, but perhaps a reflex of the notion of *sáiva* (the world of the spirit helpers in Saami belief), No 9 is not St Anne, but the goddess *Máttaráhkká*, No. 10 not St Mary, but a counterpart to the goddess *Sáráhkká*, etc. Even though we are well aware of the fact that Saami religion at the time when the drums were collected was by no means uninfluenced by Christianity, many interpreters have tried to explain away the figures which do not represent Saami mythology. Both St Mary and St Anne (as well as many other Christian saints) were well known to the Saamis, as is shown by their representation on Saami calendars from the same time period (Granlund & Granlund 1973, 76 ff). The “Christian” figures have however been explained as political calculation or they have been dismissed as obviously incorrect. According to Ljungberg “the confusion of pagan and Christian pictures shows with clarity the magical character of the drums. In a living cultic use, such a form of syncretism does not occur” (Ljungberg 1947, 149). Reuterskiöld, for his part, asserts that it is no wonder “if one or other *náide* [SaaN *noaidi*] considered it safest to adopt the Christian god on his drums” (Reuterskiöld 1912, 11), whereas Nilsson believes that the drums illustrated a wonderful ability to mix pagan and Christian, to mask one’s religion during inquiry (Nilsson 1916, 307). The reductionistic procedure of removing those elements in the sources considered to resemble — and consistently interpreted as being borrowed from — Scandinavian or Christian religion, in order to gain access to “the primordial Saami religion” is, in my opinion, not convincing.

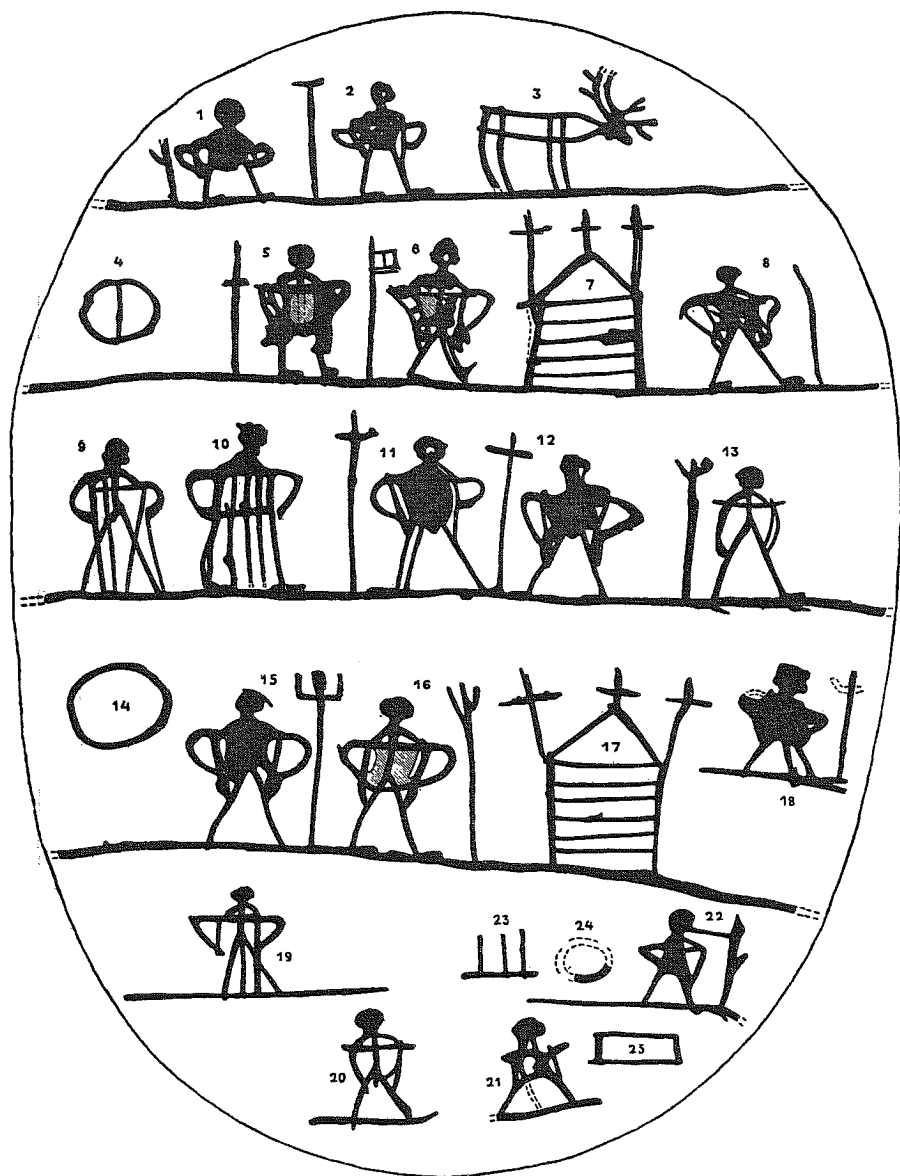


Fig 2

*Fig 2* Comparison of the owner's own interpretation and a recent interpretation of drum No 71 (Manker 1950, fig 153) Explained by the owner Anders Poulsen in 1691 Abbreviations: *AP* = Anders Poulsen's explanation (according to Kildeskrifter 1903 68 ff) *EM*: = Ernst Manker's interpretation (Manker 1950, 430 ff)

1 *AP* [ ] *ilmari*s, it is storm and bad weather [ ], *EM*: the wind, *Bieggolma* [SaaN *Bieggolmmái*] [ ]. 2 *AP* [ ] *diermes* [SaaN *Dierpmis*], it is the thunder [ ], *EM*: the thunder, *Tiermes* [SaaN *Dierpmis*], with his hammer 3 *AP*: [ ] it is a wild reindeer [ ], *EM* whether the figure actually represents a wild reindeer, *godde* [SaaN *goddí*], or a tame male reindeer, *sarva* [SaaN *sarvuis*], is difficult to say Maybe it should be conceived as a sacrificial animal 4 *AP*: [ ] it is the sun [ ], *EM*: the sun *Beve* [SaaN *beawi*] 5 *AP* [ ] it is God's child [ ], *EM*: a correspondence to *Radien pardne* [SaaN *\*Ráddebárdni*], "the ruler's son", in Christian interpretation "God's son" 6 *AP* [ ] it is God the Father [ ], *EM*: a correspondence to *Radien attje* [SaaN *\*Ráddeáhčči*], "the ruler's father", in Christian interpretation "God the Father" 7 *AP* [ ] cathedral [ ], *EM*: the church of the Christians [ ] perhaps [ ] a reflex of the *saivo* [SaaN *sáiva*] concept 8 *AP* [ ] *Engil* [angel], it is God the Holy Spirit [ ], *EM*: [ ] a correspondence to the third person in the *Radien*-group, *Radienakka* [SaaN *\*Ráddeáhká*], in Christian interpretation, the Holy Spirit; a servant under *Radien-attje* (?). 9 *AP* [ ] *St Anne* [ ] *Mary's sister* [sic!], *EM*: a female divinity, one of the *Akkas* [SaaN sg. *Áhká*], maybe *Madderakka* [SaaN *Máttaráhká*] [ ] 10 *AP*: [ ] it is *Mary*, *Christ's mother*, *God's woman* [ ] *EM* a female being corresponding to *Sarakka* [SaaN *Saráhká*] [ ]. 11–13 *AP*: [ ] it is the Christmas days, the Christmas men [ ], *EM*: the three holiday men, *ailekes olmak* [SaaS *aajlegesálmah*, SaaL *ájlesálmá*, SaaN however *\*basseolbmát*] [ ] 14 *AP* [ ] the moon, *EM*: the moon, *manno* [SaaN *mánnu*] or (older designation) *aske* [cf SaaS *aske*]. 15–16. *AP* [ ] people going to church [ ], *EM*: [ ] a parallel to corresponding figures in other regions 17 *AP* [ ] church [ ], *EM* [ ] church [ ] possibly originally a place of sacrifice 18 *AP*: [ ] one, who [ ] wants to go to church, *EM* see fig 15–16 19 *AP* [ ] the woman of the bound devil [ ], *EM*: [ ] maybe one of the *Akkas* [SaaN. *Áhká*], *Uksakka* [SaaN *Uksáhká*] [ ] 20 *AP*: [ ] a devil [ ] and illness, *EM*: a correspondence to *Rota* 21 *AP* [ ] the devil, who is loose and reigns in hell and hovers around in the world [ ], *EM*: an evil demon [ ] originally belonging to the *Akka* group (?; see fig 19) 22 *AP* [ ] the devil, who was bound when God created the world [ ], *EM*: bound evil demon, the lord of the underworld [ ] originally perhaps the noid [SaaN *noaidi*] 23 *AP*: [ ] the fire of hell [ ], *EM*: fire (?) [ ] 24 *AP* [ ] the tar cauldron of hell, which boils man's soul in hell, *EM* [ ] maybe the drum of the noid [ ] 25 *AP* [ ] the grave of hell [ ], *EM*: grave, possibly originally denoting *Jabmi aimo* [SaaN *Jábmeáibmu*], the realm of the dead, or *saivo* [SaaN *sáiva*] [ ]

*Fig 3* Comparison of the owner's own interpretation and a recent interpretation of drum No 30 (Manker 1950, fig 111) Explained by the owner Bendix Andersen and Jon Torchelsen at the beginning of the 18th century Abbreviations: *BA/JT* = Bendix Andersen s and Jon Torchelsen s explanation (according to Kildeskrifter 1903, 65 ff, "Finn" or "Find" is here the old Nor designation for Saami) *EM* =

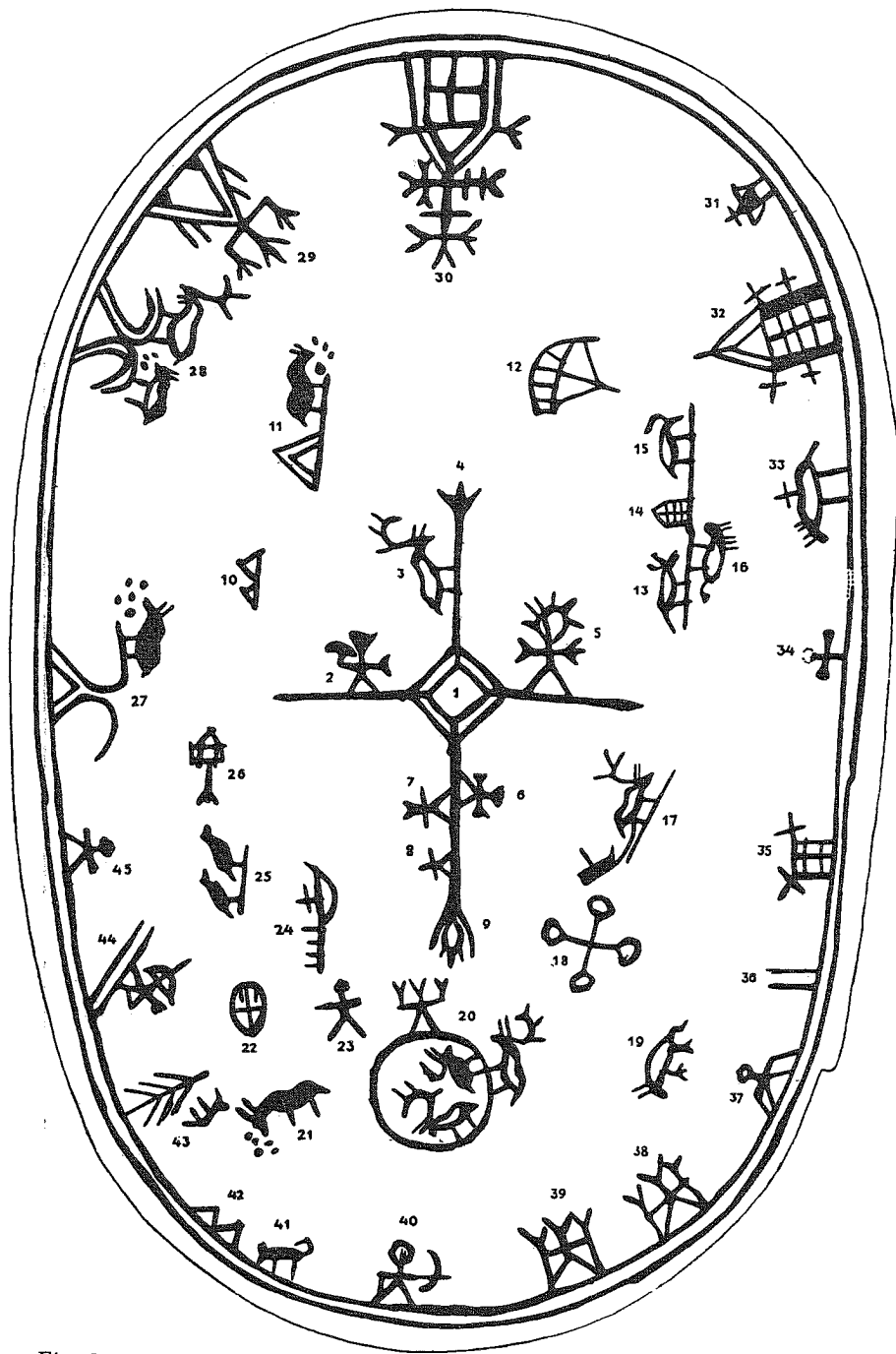


Fig 3

Ernst Manker's interpretation (Manker 1950, 307 ff)

1 *BA/JT* -, *EM*: the sun, *Beve* [SaaS *bejjie*] 2 *BA/JT* the devil, *EM*: the thunder, *Horagalles* [SaaS *Huvrengaallies*], with the thunderbolt, the hammer. 3 *BA/JT* the reindeer which has been lost in the fells, *EM*: probably reindeer as game or perhaps a sacrificial animal. 4 *BA/JT* -, *EM*: a conclusion of the ray, which perhaps aims at its spreading 5. *BA/JT* the sun if it will shine and it will be fair weather, *EM*: probably the wind, *Biegg-olma* [SaaS *Bieggkålmaj*] or *Bieggagalles* [SaaS *Bieggkegaallies*], who usually stands at this place 6-8 *BA/JT* (6) "Gand Find" who has learned to send out "gand" [evil power], (7) "Finn" searching for the lost reindeer, (8) -, *EM*: The three ailekes-olmak [SaaS *aajlegesålmah*], the holiday men 9 *BA/JT* -, *EM* as fig 4 10 *BA/JT* "Finn" village, *EM*: Lapp village with cots 11 *BA/JT* if the wolf has been in other villages and done damage to the reindeer, *EM*: [ ] rather a bear eating berries 12 *BA/JT* the ferry boat, *EM* the boat offering 13-16 *BA/JT* the settled country, that is villages where the peasants live, *EM*: the settled country or the church village with houses (14) and cattle: goat (15), cow (13) and horse (16) 17 *BA/JT*: "Finn" in "ackja" [Saami sledge], *EM*: perhaps [ ] the vehicle the Lapp travels daily in, but the assumption is not unreasonable, that we are here witnessing the noid [SaaS *nåejtie* 'the Saami "shaman"'], the owner of the drum, on a major duty in the spirit world, driving with his noid-herke [Not a SaaS. word SaaS *hærkie* means 'horse', not 'castrated reindeer (used as draught animal)' as SaaL *hærgge* A SaaS equivalent would be *nåejtiesråantjoe*] 18 *BA/JT* "gand" fly to hurt people, *EM*: "Hexenschuss" [bewitching power], "gand" fly 19 *BA/JT* the "goup" [probably lynx] animal, *EM*: lynx or another predatory animal 20 *BA/JT* the fence where the "Finns" have their reindeer collected [ ], *EM*: enclosed pasture for reindeer with herd and herdsman 21 *BA/JT* the bear, *EM*: bear eating berries 22 *BA/JT* the drum whose figure indicates whether the drum predicts truthfully, *EM* the drum seen from underneath [ ] 23 *BA/JT* one "Finn" comes to visit another, *EM*: probably the noid [cf 17] 24 *BA/JT* fishing boat with the net behind, *EM* fisherman with boat and net 25 *BA/JT* birds' courting-ground: a place [ ] where [gallinaceous birds] during springtime come together and court with one another, *EM* forest birds on their courting-ground 26 *BA/JT* the storehouse, built in the forest on 4 at the top lopped-off trees 10 à 12 ells from the ground, where the "Finn" hides his provisions and best articles [ ], *EM*: *njalla* [SaaS *njalle* 'storehouse on a pole'] on a well-rooted pole 27 *BA/JT*: the mountain where the reindeer go, *EM*: predatory animal in the fells, bear or wolf 28 *BA/JT* the wolf and the reindeer in the fjeld, *EM*: one of the figures in the Lappish trinity [ ] maybe originally *Radien-akka* [SaaS *Raediennaahka*], "the ruler's old woman" or wife 30 *BA/JT* God, the Father, *EM*: the main figure of the Lappish trinity, *Radien attje* [SaaS *Raediennaegtjie*], "the ruler's father" [ ] 31 *BA/JT* [the figure is missing], *EM*: maybe a servant of fig 32 32 *BA/JT*: God's son, *EM*: the third figure in the Lappish trinity, *Radien-pardne* [SaaS *Raediennaarnse*], "the ruler's son", God's son. 33 *BA/JT* if old horses are shot dead at the farmer's [ ], *EM*: Rota mounted 34 *BA/JT* "gand" fly to harm the cattle, *EM*: [ ] [Andersen's and Torchelsen's] interpretation [ ] is to be regarded as the right one [ ] 35 *BA/JT* church, *EM*: probably Christian grave or burial ground, originally *jabme aimo* [SaaS *jaamsehaajmoe*], the Lappish realm of the dead 36 *BA/JT* the "Finns'" burial ground in the fells, which is often

in a cleft or cave, where they place their corpses, dressed in everyday dress, *EM*: Lappish grave 37 *BA/JT* the "Finn" bitch: the "Finn" woman, *EM*: probably the wife of the Lapp (the owner of the drum) [ ] 38-40 *BA/JT* the men who guard the reindeer (38-39), the "Finn" goes hunting (40), *EM*: Sarakka [*SaaS Saaraahka*] (38), Uksakka [*SaaS Oksaahka*] (39), Juksakka [*SaaS Juoksaahka*] (40) 41 *BA/JT* ermine, *EM*: the dog at home by the cots 42 *BA/JT* the "Finn" cots, *EM*: camp with cots. 43 *BA/JT* trees in the forest; the squirrel [ ], *EM*: squirrel in a spruce 44 *BA/JT* the "Finns" go bear-hunting, *EM*: hunter with bow out hunting 45 *BA/JT* "Finn" woman plans to go to the storehouse, *EM*: perhaps Lapp woman at home, corresponding to the man out hunting

Secondly, an "Enttheologisierung" would be necessary. A re-evaluation of the early sources shows that it is necessary to take the theological position of the source authors into close consideration. We have to reckon with the fact that the interest of the missionaries in mythology and their theologizing interpretations were, more than is generally assumed, determined by opinions of alien religions at that time. Anker Steffensen has forcefully — but probably quite correctly — even supposed that "the Saami world of gods first and foremost [is] a result of the way the missionaries interrogated the Saamis" (Steffensen 1986, 96). To take just one example, the question about the grouping of the world of gods in several layers. This grouping of the Saami deities in the sources (it varies in different places) is usually taken as proof that the Saamis made a division of the cosmos similar to that of several Siberian peoples. According to this argument, drum No 71 plays a certain role as the only drum which has the drumhead divided into 5 spheres. The owner's explanation of the figures is thus completely ignored. It is however doubtful whether it is possible to draw these conclusions. The division of the Saami gods into groups instead probably exemplifies von Westen's knowledge of the learned groupings of gods prevalent in his day. K. B. Wiklund has already indicated this, although his argument that the system demands "a higher stage of culture" (Wiklund 1910b, xxxv; cf. Reuterskiöld 1912, 74 ff) than the Saamis' must of course be rejected. He refers to Franciscus Pomey's, *Pantheum mythicum, seu fabulosa deorum historia*. But, Pomey's grouping into Dii Cælestes, Dii Terrestes, Dii Marini and Dii Inferii (Pomey 1701, [xv]) is hardly the one adopted by von Westen. In any case, drum No 71 provides no clarification of whether the Saamis (or some group of Saamis) regarded the world as divided into five layers or not.

Thirdly, the drums have to be regionalized and typologized. This



is an important task<sup>18</sup> One cannot compare all the drums with one another, without really considering where they came from, but must restrict comparisons to within regions Some of the sources already emphasize the regional and individual variations of the drum drawings,<sup>19</sup> and in this century the drums preserved have been classified regionally (Hallström 1910a; Wiklund 1930; Manker 1938, 82 ff) A simplification of the prevalent classification is to divide the drums into Southern, Central and Northern Saami drums: nearly two thirds of the more than seventy drums preserved are Southern Saami, nearly one third Central Saami and about one seventh Northern Saami There were also drums among the Eastern Saamis, but no drum from the Kola peninsula has been preserved and nothing is known about the type(s) used there

An awareness of the regional differences is not however sufficient, as there also were distinct types within the different regions, in addition to great individual variation A source from the early 1690's mentions two types with different functions and states that the figures on the two types were different (Steuchius 1983, 82), and the Pite Saami Anders Hultlock commented on the drum that had been bought by the inspector of mines, Hans Philip Lybecker, saying that it was only "a half drum," used to seek fortune with regard to fish, birds, reindeer and other forest animals He therefore drew for him a "true drum" on paper (Manker 1935, 101)

## 2 2 Basis

Most of the early interpretations of the Saami drum figures are secondary in the sense that they have been made by persons who had never used any drum It is notable, however, that (at least) two explanations by owners have been preserved; but these two explanations have been almost totally neglected, as they do not agree with opinions of what "should" be pictured on the drums: Saami gods and mythological characters I see no reason, however, to disagree with K B Wiklund, who, commenting on the owner's explanations of the figures on drum No 30, states that these "were undoubtedly correct and true in their time, and it is by no means impossible that they were so too for the maker of the drum" (Wiklund 1910a, 92)

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<sup>18</sup> This was already emphasized by Hallström 1910a and Wiklund 1930, 91 ff

<sup>19</sup> E g Graan 1983 11; Randulf 1903 21 Skanke 1945 181; von Westen according to Hammond 1787, 446

From the point of view of source value there are four groups of drums: (1) preserved drums with explanations by the owner; (2) preserved drums interpreted by someone other than the owner (or by an unknown interpreter who might have been the owner); (3) lost drums for which drawings and/or interpretations are preserved — it is not known if these were made with the help of the owner or not, although none of them were expressly made by the owner;<sup>20</sup> (4) preserved drums without contemporary interpretations

Of the first group, drums with explanations by the owner, only the two drums mentioned in the previous paragraph — No 30 and No 71 — are preserved. Drum No 71 is probably from Ohcejohka (Fin Utsjoki) and had been made and used by Anders Poulsen who lived in Varanger (in Norway). He had, according to his own testament, learnt to use the drum from his mother. This is striking, as women — at least young women — were forbidden even to touch the drums. Probably Poulsen's mother had already reached the menopause when she started to use the drum. Anders Poulsen was sentenced to death but was killed by "a madman" before the execution had been carried out. The drum is a unique specimen, the only one of its type, and it cannot therefore be used as a model for interpreting other drums. It is even uncertain whether, as is usually assumed, it represents a special Finnmark type of drum. It is more possibly an example of a very personal drum type.<sup>21</sup> It must be taken into consideration, however, in the discussion of religion in Finnmark at the end of the 17th century. Drum No 30 is different. It is of a common type, the South Saami drum type with its characteristic sun rhomb. The owner of this drum was one Bendix Andersen from the county of Nordtrøndelag (Norway), and the drum had been in his family for generations.<sup>22</sup> There are five drums in the second group, drums with interpretations by someone other than the owner; No 1 (interpretations on the drumhead, probably from 1688, and by the first vicar

<sup>20</sup> That these drawings, unfortunately, are not absolutely exact and reliable is shown by the differences between the two drawings of the drum discussed in the Nærø manuscript (cf. *Kildeskrifter* 1903, 63 f.), and also by the drawing of drum No 30, which differs from the drum itself in several points (cf. *Kildeskrifter* 1903, [64a]).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the discussions of Poulsen and his drum in Agrell 1934: 135 ff., Itkonen 1946, 132 ff., 145 ff., Karsten 1955, 80 f., Edsman 1982, 47.

<sup>22</sup> It was common for the drums to be inherited — the older the drum, the more effective it was considered to be — but there are also isolated reports according to which drums were placed on the grave (Handlinger 1910, 309) or in the grave (Itkonen 1946: 165, note 1) on the death of the owner.

of Lycksele, Olaus Stephan Graan, himself of Saami stock), No 22 (some figures interpreted on the drumhead), No 31 (some figures interpreted, possibly by Thomas von Westen), No 39 (most of the figures interpreted on the drumhead, probably during the first half of the 18th century) and No 45 "Linnæus' drum" (interpreted about 1730 by the missionary, Arvid Thuresson Bistock, and the clergyman, Zacharias Plantin)<sup>23</sup> The third group, interpretations and drawings of lost drums, consists of four drums: "Lybecker's drum", "Rheen's drum", the drum of the Nærø manuscript and the "Skanke Jessen"-drum For the rest of the drums, no contemporary interpretations are known, i e they belong to the fourth group (Manker 1950, 139 ff)<sup>24</sup>

Of the interpreted drums, six (No 1, No 22, No 30, No 31, No 39, the "Skanke Jessen" drum) belong to the Southern Saami type, four (No 45, "Lybecker's drum", "Rheen's drum", the drum of the Nærø manuscript) to Central Saami types and possibly one (No 71) to Northern Saami types

### 2.3 Interpretation

When the symbolic character of the figures is discussed, it seems suitable to use a simple semiotic screen in order to make clear where the problems of interpretation are (Fig 4) If drum figures are regarded as conventional, it means that they are based on tradition — and therefore also possible to understand for others than those who drew them, if the interpretative code is known The figures on at least the Southern Saami drums are set out according to a certain conventionality, but, as Louise Bäckman has emphasized, the drums "expose conceptions of an individual character that makes it very hard to interpret them as hiding a common religious belief system"

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<sup>23</sup> Early interpretations — or rather; learned speculations — of a more dubious value also exist for drums No 43 (interpretation in Rudbeck 1689) and No 64 (one figure interpreted in Schefferus 1673, the whole drum interpreted in Rudbeck 1689)

<sup>24</sup> Schefferus' drums B and D "Utterus' drum" (possibly in accordance with Manker, not a real drum but a compendium of drum figures) and Olof Rudbeck's speculative interpretations of five lost drums have no source value but are nevertheless interesting for the history of ideas

		1 iconic	2 justified	3 arbitrary
A	causal	A1	A2	A3
B	conventional	B1	B2	B3

*Fig 4* Types of figures (cf Malmberg 1973, 26)

(Bäckman 1987, 57) These causal signs are unique and impossible to interpret with any certainty

If the distinction between conventional and causal figures can help us in grading the strength of arguments based on drum figures, the awareness that the figures could be both iconic, justified and arbitrary demand great circumspection in any attempt to interpret the figures. Is, for example, figure No 3 on drum No 30 iconic (a reindeer), justified (if so, the reindeer figure pictures something else with some connection to a reindeer — in the same way as a cross can represent Christianity) or arbitrary (it could then illustrate anything)? Is there any other way to obtain an answer than to use the interpretation of the owner, who states that the figure represents “a reindeer which has been lost in the fells”? What reason is there to doubt this information, and interpret the figure as “[ ] perhaps a sacrificial animal”?

In any case, the possibility that figures depend on general or regional patterns, i.e. on a comprehensible convention, is diametrically opposed to the possibility that they are unique and casual inventions of the artist. When figures resemble something, they are seemingly easy to interpret. But, it is by no means certain that our notion of resemblance agrees with that of the maker and users of the drum. To be aware of these difficulties is extremely important. It is all too easy to build whole systems of interpretations on ready-made ideas about the drums, systems which are self-confirming because of the multitude of possible interpretations of each figure. Instead of starting from such an idea, however well-founded it might seem to be, the only accessible method is in my opinion to start from the other end, with a critical evaluation and comparison of the preserved Saami explanations and interpretations of single drum figures.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> By contrast with Reuterskiöld's opinion that the notes on the drumheads “are

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The drums had a twofold role to play in the religious encounter. They were both foci of the confrontation and sources documenting and structuring it. The fight between old and new beliefs is to some extent possible to follow in the records from the district and county courts. These records give us access to Saami arguments and views of the importance of the drums in Saami society. The function of the drums as instruments for a Saami description of the encounter is more difficult to make out. The drum figures are difficult to interpret and there are a number of alternative ways of understanding their meaning. It is therefore material that can only be used with utmost caution. I have here pointed to one alternative, where the starting-point is a regionalization of the drums, combined with what I have called an "Entmythologisierung" of current interpretations and an "Enttheologisierung" of the information from the source authors.

Both the drums and the Saami explanations and interpretations of them came into existence during the most intense period of religious encounter. It seems very likely that an awareness of this fact would give us better possibilities in analysing the sources and in composing our lamentably fragmentary picture of the religious ideas and practices of the Saamis during both "drum time" and "the time when one had to hide the drums".

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### ABBREVIATIONS

Fin	Finnish
Nor	Norwegian
SaaL	Lule Saami
SaaN	Northern Saami
SaaS	Southern Saami
Swe	Swedish

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Gruvvisare P A Recording 4114 A 2, B:2 Transcribed and translated by H Grundström 17829

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[ ] without real value for the interpretation of the drum, as they only illustrate that the Lapps when sober do not reveal the real meaning of the characters" Reuterskiöld 1928, 213 f, cf Kildeskifter 1903, 67

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# The Snake and Zig-Zag Motifs in Finnish Rock Paintings and Saami Drums

BY EERO AUTIO

In articles about Finnish rock paintings particular attention has been paid to the significance of shamanism (e.g. Siikala 1980; Miettinen 1982). The emphasis on shamanism leads in practice to the conclusion that a composition in which there is a man and a snake, or a snake like zig-zag figure, depicts a shaman and his helping animal.

The explanation follows the traditional concept of arctic shamanism and gains support from Skanke-Jessen's statement about this motif on Saami drums. In many cases I have found, however, that the use of shamanism as the most significant basis for interpretation does not lead to plausible results in the study of pictographs (rock paintings) and petroglyphs (rock carvings). The location of the figures of a snake or zig-zag on the surfaces of the Åsele-type drums is also puzzling. I am not convinced that this can be co-ordinated with the Scandinavian Nidhöggr as Bo Sommarström (Sommarström 1987, 223) has suggested.

In the Finnish pictographs the figures of a snake or zig-zag can only be found in the rock paintings of Sarakallio in Laukaa (in Central Finland), Juusjärvi in Kirkkonummi (near Helsinki), Kolmiköytinen in Ruokolahti (on the eastern shore of lake Saimaa), Mertakallio in Iitti (in Southern Finland) and Haukkavuori (in eastern Finland).

One of the snake figures on the rock at Sarakallio is situated very near another figure which has been supposed to represent some kind of lizard, (Fig 1a). An almost similar drawing can be traced in the Karelian petroglyphs (Fig 1b). Both figures seem to belong to the cult of the phallus, which was popular, especially in the bronze age. If the snake and the phallic painting at Sarakallio can be linked together, then the composition has a counterpart in the old Celtic world (Fig 1c). The man in the picture has been thought to represent some god, most likely Cernunnos, because that god was depicted with a snake in the petroglyphs of Val Camonica (MacCana 1983, 39, 42).

Another zig zag motif from Sarakallio can be seen in fig 1d. Below the zig zag there are two boats and on the right human figures standing



*Fig 1a* Rock paintings at Sarakallio (MV Miettinen & Miettinen 1978)



*Fig 1b* A rock carving on Lake Ääninen (Raudonikas 1936-38 1, tab 4)



*Fig 1c* A god with a snake (Schlette 1976, 125)



*Fig 1d* Rock paintings at Sarakallio (MV Miettinen & Miettinen 1978)

one behind the other. My initial idea, on examining the human figures from Sarakallio, was that almost the same kind of "acting" can be found in the Karelian rock carvings, especially at the mouth of the river Uikujoki (Vyg) (Fig 1e). The Karelian "scene" is so vivid that anyone can see what is taking place in the picture.

The function of the kind of copulation performed by the human beings is magical and it belonged to the cult of fertility (Autio 1981, 89). The animal masks of the human beings also indicate this. The statement fits well with the observation that the quantity of elk bones at the sites of the comb-ceramic culture is smaller than in the earlier phase or so called Suomusjärvi culture. The explanation for this is that the elk was becoming rare (Salo 1984, 72).

Just under the boats there are two human figures, as if they are holding up the boats. Almost similar compositions can be seen in the Scandinavian petroglyphs (Fig 1f). The archaeologist Göran Burenhult has proved by reference to the Egyptian votive boats to the dead and above all by Danish prehistoric finds (Fig 1g), that the motif of the so-called "boat-carrier" represents a votive offering to the fertility-goddess (Burenhult 1979, 17 ff). It seems to me that the composition of the Laukaa picture also depicts a votive-offering. The suggestion would obtain support from the information provided by Rheen. According to this, the Saamis used to make a boat of birch bark, pour some fat into it and hang the "the boat-offering" on a tree for the spirits hovering at Christmas (Manker 1950, 57).

Probably "the hovering spirits" were the ghosts of the dead, which were believed to enter the world of the living between the old and the new year. The belief was common in Europe before the Christian faith (James 1959, 140 f, 316 ff) and the kindred peoples of the Finns in Eastern Europe also knew it and entertained their ancestors and dead relations according to this custom (Waronen 1895, 110 f, 115, 118 ff, Holmberg 1914, 41 ff, 51).

In the composition of Sarakallio there are two human beings, while in the Swedish parallel there is only one. I assume that the figures of Sarakallio depict a man and a woman. If this is so, then the man and his wife in the painting are serving together. The explanation would agree with the information I obtained from Oula Näkkäljäjärvi and Iisko Sara in Turku (20.8.1988) that the father's and mother's family and their ancestors are of equal importance to the Saami people. This information also explains the meaning of the two boats in the composition: one is for the man's ancestors and the other for the woman's. As far as the equality of men and women is concerned, the



Fig 1e Rock carvings on the river Uikujoki (Savatejev 1983, 122)

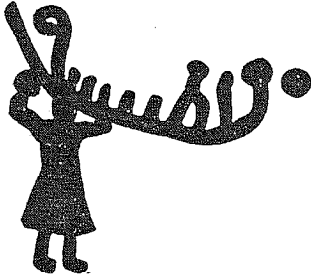


Fig 1f "The boat carrier" by O Almgren (Burenhult 1979,17)

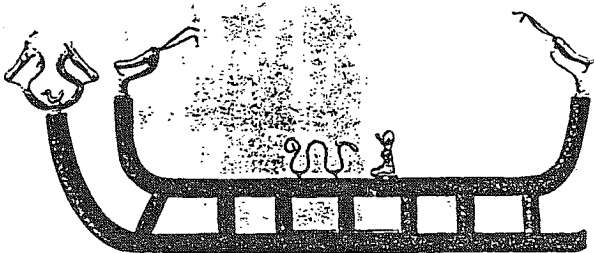


Fig 1g A reconstruction of a Danish votive offering boat (Burenhult 1979, 18)

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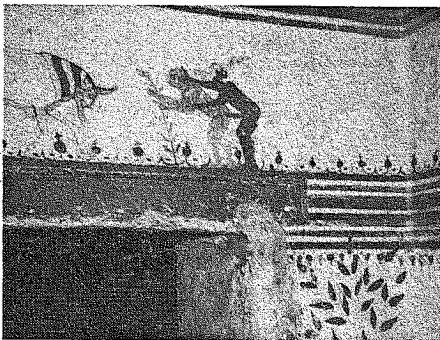
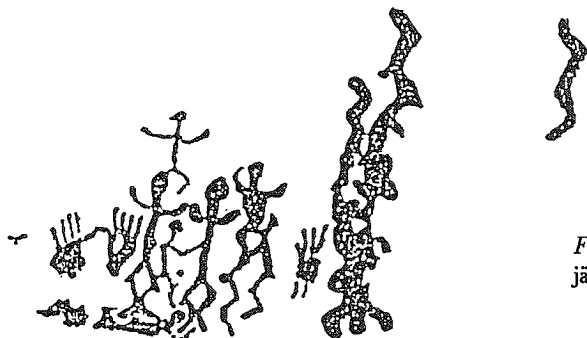


Fig 1h An Etruscan tomb-painting Photo: S Autio, 1982



*Fig 2* Rock paintings of Juusjärvi (Luho 1964, fig 6)

explanation gains support from the use of the 3rd person pronoun in all the Fenno Ugrian languages: there is only one word for man and woman instead of two (he and she) We do not place men and women into separate categories as in the Indo European languages

The zig-zag motif of Sarakallio can be simultaneously associated with the cults of ancestors and fertility In the past these two spheres have not been separate, as may be seen from Etruscan tomb-painting (Fig 1h) The fertility and ancestor cults were carried on side by side in the old calendar festivals like "kekri" in eastern Finland Behind the traditions there seems to have been a belief, held for example by the Votyaks, according to which ancestors, as well as the gods, were able to help their descendants (Holmberg 1914, 51 f) This matches well with further information obtained from Oula Näkkäläjärvi and Iisko Sara regarding the terms for ancestors in lineal descent The words in use for the 3rd and older generations are "mättar áhkku" on the mother's side and "mättar áddja" on the father's Both of these words may be associated with the gods, according to Näkkäläjärvi and Sara This was so in every Saami dialect (Ränk 1949, 189)

As the zig zag in the composition is not vertical but horizontal, this may also have some meaning Perhaps it is worth noticing that there are seven bends in the figure This number also occurs in the Uralian counterparts

In the rock paintings of Juusjärvi, fig 2, the snake like figures are on the right No doubt they have some meaningful connection to the other figures The interpretation based on shamanism seems to be possible, especially as one of the human figures in the picture seems to resemble a hybrid of snake and man The figures of two palms on the left, if they symbolize "the spirit of hands or the place", as Anna Leena Siikala believes (Siikala 1980, 186), would support the explanation based on shamanism

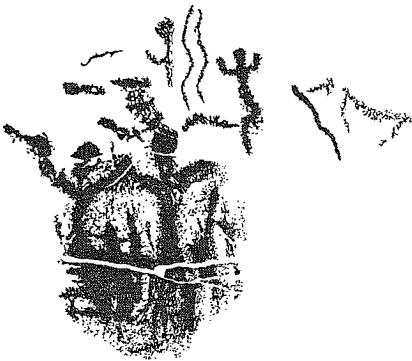


Fig 3a. Rock paintings at Kolmiköyti nen (TY Miettinen 1987)

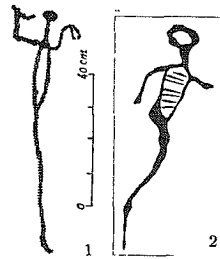


Fig 3b Long-legged human being in the petroglyphs of lake Ääninen (1) and on the river Tom (2) (Raudonikas 1936-38, 1, tab 28; Okladnikov & Martynov 1972, 210)

But two palms with the thumbs touching each other may mean quite different things: it may be possible that an ancient painter wanted to indicate the number 'ten'. This number had a very great significance in the past. A Soviet scholar, B. A. Frolov, has studied the frequencies of numbers in palaeolithic art and why certain numbers have been used more frequently than others. His conclusion is that the number 'ten' was often used, because it was the number of the fingers and showed the length of pregnancy, which lasted ten Lunar months (Frolov 1974, 131 f).

The number ten can be identified in the ornaments of Finnish comb-ceramic pottery. Although the few reconstructions are not sufficient evidence, they invite us to consider other possibilities than those based on shamanism. For this reason, I agree with the archaeologist Ville Luho, according to whom the Juusjärvi paintings may in some way be associated with the magic of fertility (Luho 1962, 71).

In the paintings at Kolmiköytinen in Ruokolahti there are figures of a snake and an almost similar hybrid to that in Juusjärvi (Fig 3a). Timo Miettinen (TY Miettinen 1987) has suggested that the Kolmiköytinen hybrid depicts a shaman on the way to the other world. The figure with a long-looking leg also occurs in the petroglyphs of Nämforsen (Hallström 1960, 349), in Karelia, and on the River Tom in Western Siberia (Fig 3b). According to A. P. Okladnikov, who is a well-known expert on rock art, these kinds of figures may represent some spiritual being (Okladnikov & Martynov 1972, 210). Since the large-sized human figures at Kolmiköytinen, as if they were dancing, emphasise

the ritualistic nature of the paintings, shamanism might be a possible explanation. The snake close by the figure of an elk has a counterpart in Siberian petroglyphs. According to Okladnikov the combination belongs to the cult of fertility (Okladnikov 1966, 118).

In the paintings at Mertakallio in Iitti (Fig. 4a) the figures of a zigzag and a human being may be seen. Below these there is another human being although very unclear. About 1.5 m above the drawings in the picture there is the figure of an elk. The combination of a human being and a snake may also be seen in the rock paintings of Haukkavuori in Enonkoski (Fig. 4b) if we agree with Timo Miettinen, who considers that these may possibly be explained by shamanism. Although Miettinen emphasises the significance of shamanism, he also considers hunting magic and the cult of fertility. In his own words the latter was "deeply understood, behind everything" (Miettinen 1982, 11).

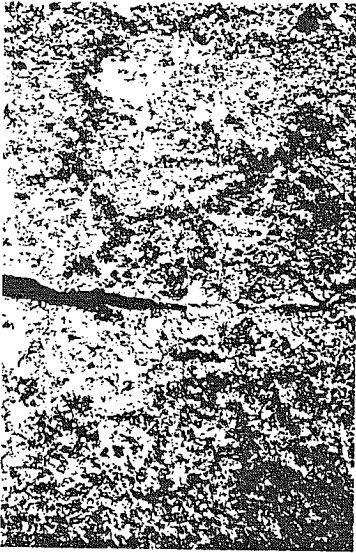
In order to create a broader perspective for the subject, we must consider at least the Scandinavian, Karelian and Uralian rock pictures. In Scandinavia the motif was common, especially in the bronze age, and has a clear connection with the cult of fertility (Figs 5a, 5b; see also fig. 1g). The most interesting but "hardest to interpret", as Hallström (Hallström 1960, 17) puts it, is the group of paintings from Hästskotsjärn (Fig. 5c). At first glance, the combination of figures is very shamanistic: one of the snakes has even been placed on the head-dress of the man. But the man seems to me to be happy or cheerful rather than frightened. The hips, the ray-like lines coming from them and a carving in Alta fjord, the "Kvinne som sitter på et reinsdyr" (Fig. 5d) incline me to believe that the composition of Hästskotsjärn has a mythical background and a connection with the cult of fertility.

The snake motif also appears in Alta<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 5e). According to Dr Knut Helskog, the figure of the human being may depict a mythical being or a shaman in a trance (Helskog 1988, 110). The latter interpretation would be supported by some Siberian petroglyphs, e.g. fig. 5f, which has been interpreted as a shaman (Okladnikov 1966, 137). But in Alta, even on the same rock, there are figures of human beings inside which there has been placed another human being or a reindeer or something else (Helskog 1988, 66 f). For this reason, and because of two reindeer which seem to belong to the composition, I think that the explanation of "mythical being" is more plausible than

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<sup>1</sup> Knut Helskog (Helskog 1985) in his article on rock carvings and Saami drums does not treat the snake motif separately.





*Fig 4a* Rock paintings at Mertakallio in Iitti (Ojonen 1973, 39)



*Fig 4b* Rock paintings at Haukkavuori in Enonkoski (Sarvas & Taavitsainen 1975, 135)



*Fig 5a* A snake motif in Tannum (Hagen 1976, 80)



*Fig 5b* A snake and a man in Tannum (Burenhult 1979, 32)



*Fig 5c* Rock paintings in Hästkotsjärn (Hallström 1960, Pl 1)



*Fig 5d* Rock carvings in the Alta fjord (Helskog 1988, 83)



*Fig 5e* Rock carvings in the Alta fjord (Helskog 1988, 67)

*Fig 5f* "A shaman" in the Siberian petroglyphs (Okladnikov 1966 137)



that of "shaman"

In the Karelian petroglyphs the snake may be seen extremely clearly both at the river Uikujoki and on the eastern coast of Lake Ääninen (Onega). In the main group of carvings at Old Zalavruga (Fig 6a) one snake is on the left of the athletic man standing in the middle. It has been supposed that the man may represent a great shaman or some deity favourable to hunters (Linevski 1939, 179; Raudonikas 1936-38, 2, 48)

At the bottom of the picture there is another snake. It is situated by the hind leg of the sixth reindeer from the right. This unusual combination has given me reason to compare it with the Ingrian rune of "Elk and snake" (Autio 1984). The motif was popular in the Middle Ages in Europe but goes back to antiquity. According to this motif, the elk kills the snake; according to the Ingrian verses, the elk only kicks the snake in the ribs. Whilst the snake is moaning on its side, Margaret's mother comes and milks it and the milk falls onto the ground, at which trees and nature begin to prosper. I assume that the snake in the rock carvings had some kind of positive meaning for those who made the pictures at Zalavruga. The same may be the case with the snake figures in the southern group at Zalavruga (Fig 6b), although the man in the composition seems to be warding off the snakes.

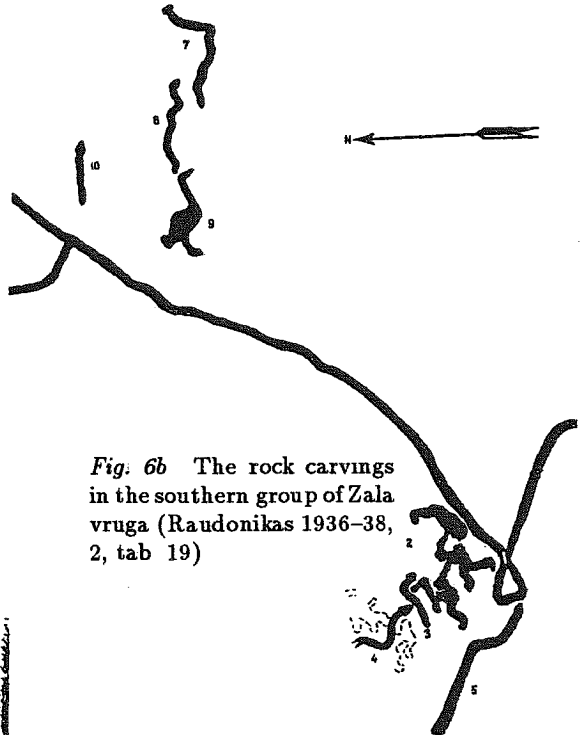
The third example of the Karelian rock carvings is from Lake Ääninen (Fig 6c). I have chosen this because of the short lines or "appendages", found in the bends of the snake. These feature can also be seen in the snake of Juusjärvi (Fig 2) and in the Urals (Figs 7a, 7b).

The zig zag motifs, like those in the pictures just mentioned, are characteristic of the Urals. V. N. Chernetsov, the archaeologist and linguist, found counterparts to these kinds of motifs in the ornaments of the Ob Ugrians, in the decorations of bronze age ceramics and on a neolithic spear head found in Shigirski (Chernetsov 1971, 37, 107 f.). He usually interprets zig-zag motifs such as those in figs 7b and 7c as depicting catching fences (Chernetsov 1964, 24; Chernetsov 1971, 64 ff). Although I question the interpretation, at least in these cases, I am not able to say whether the motif has any connection with the snake either.

A plain snake, as in fig 7d, is rare in the Urals. According to Chernetsov, the whole group depicts the hunting of water birds (Chernetsov 1964, 39 f.). The position of the snake makes me doubt this interpretation. The snake motif appears in the Urals as early as the palaeolithic wall painting in the cave of Jamazy Tash (Fig 7e).

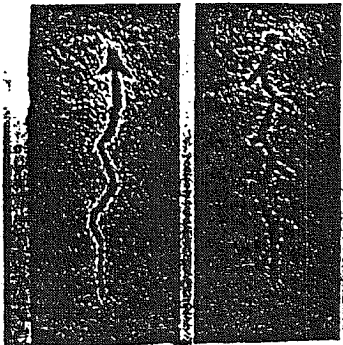


*Fig 6a* The main group of Old Zalavruga  
(Raudonikas 1936-38, 2, tab 2)



*Fig. 6b* The rock carvings  
in the southern group of Zala-  
vruga (Raudonikas 1936-38,  
2, tab 19)

*Fig 6c* The snake in the  
petroglyphs of Lake Ääninen  
(Estonian copies in the Kare-  
lian Rock Art Exhibition in  
Kotka 1986 Photo: E Au-  
tio)



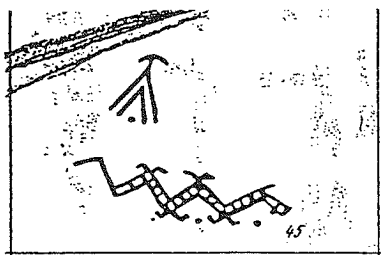


Fig 7a A zig zag motif in the Urals (Chernetsov 1971, tab 14)



Fig 7b A zig zag motif in the Urals (Chernetsov 1964, tab 26)

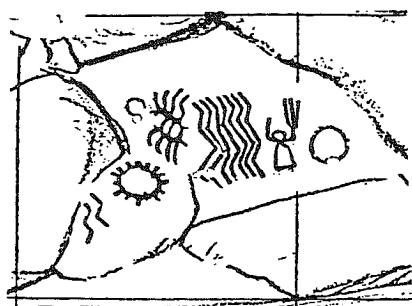


Fig 7c Rock paintings in the Urals (Chernetsov 1964, tab 23)

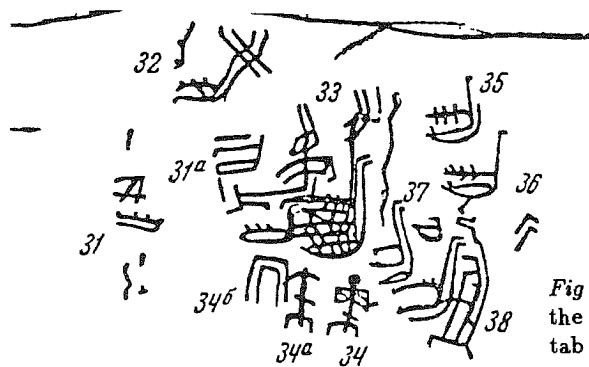


Fig 7d Rock paintings in the Urals (Chernetsov 1964, tab 19)



Fig 7e Palaeolithic paintings in the cave of Jamazy-Tash (Okladnikov & Petrin, 1983, 53)

Okladnikov and V T Petrin, who have examined the paintings in the cave, have noticed that "the magical number seven" can also be seen on the bends of the snake (Okladnikov & Petrin 1983, 54) It is worth mentioning that the same number occurs very often in the later paintings of the Urals and also in our figs 7a and 7c

I have extended my survey to the Urals and even farther, because "it is to the east we must look for the hunters' and fishermen's cultures" (Gjessing 1978, 21, Aspelin 1877) On the basis of the evidence, Chernetsov has pointed out that the Uralian rock paintings were made by the ancestors of the Voguls The ancient comb ceramic culture in its different variants stretched from Western Siberia to Northern Scandinavia, and the commercial links of the time are not without significance: evidence of this is a spoon made of Siberian pine discovered in Laukaa

The Ural world supposedly has a great importance for Saami drums, too The similarities in the languages of the Saami and the Ob Ugrians, the matriarchal features of their deities, and other similarities in their religions, observed by Gustaf Ränk and many others, support this conclusion And it is not mere chance that solar symbolism plays a central part both in the Saami drums and in Uralian (also Siberian) rock art The Ob Ugrian model of the three worlds, the underworld, this world and the upper world, is a detail, which can also be identified on the Saami drums

\*

The Saami drums can be divided into those in which the symbol of Päivö, the sun, with its reins (labikies), is situated in the middle of the drum heads, and those whose illustrated surfaces are separated into two or more sections The first mentioned, or so called Åsele type, is considered to be of an older style than the others It is therefore more suitable from the point of view of rock pictures and deserves our chief attention The pictures and statements concerning the drums are from Ernst Manker's *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel* I-II, unless otherwise stated (Manker 1938; Manker 1950)

The snake or zig zag motif occurs in 30 Åsele drums and is situated on the left of the symbol of Päivö (Tab 1A) There are only two exceptions In drum 36 (the undefined zig zag) it is on the right, up by the figures of Radien attje, the highest god, and a tree supposed to be the symbol of growth The other one is drum 32 in which the

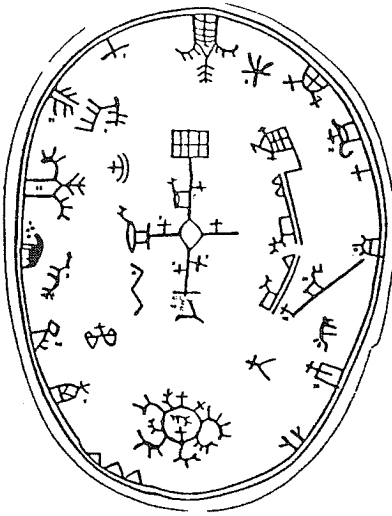


Fig 8a. Drum number 35  
(Manker 1950).

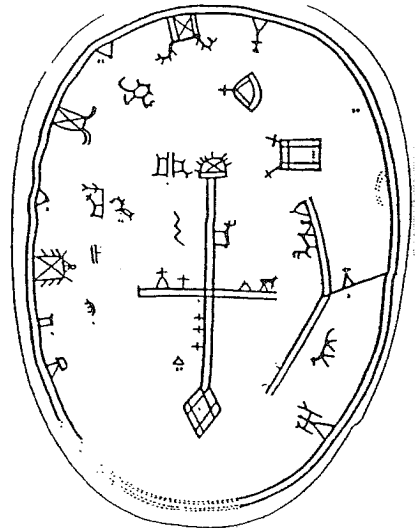


Fig 8b Drum number 2  
(Manker 1950)

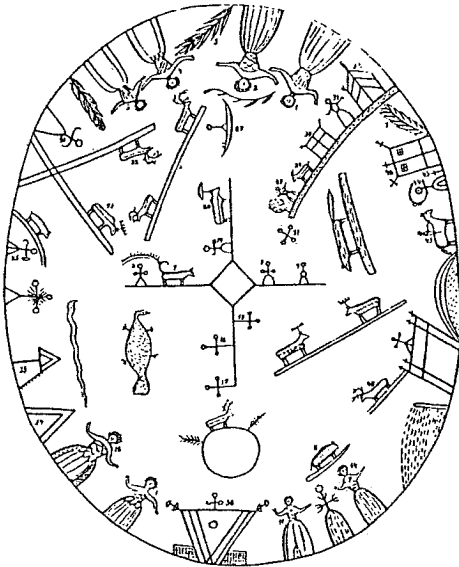


Fig 8c Frees' drum 2  
(Manker 1950, fig 79)

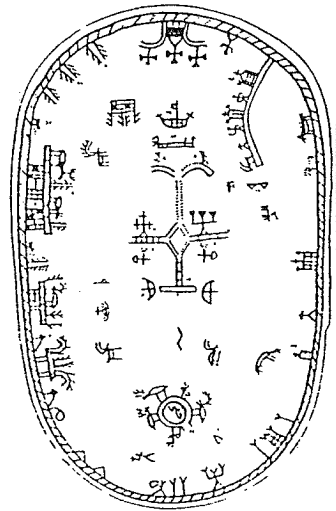


Fig 8d Drum number 32  
(Manker 1950)

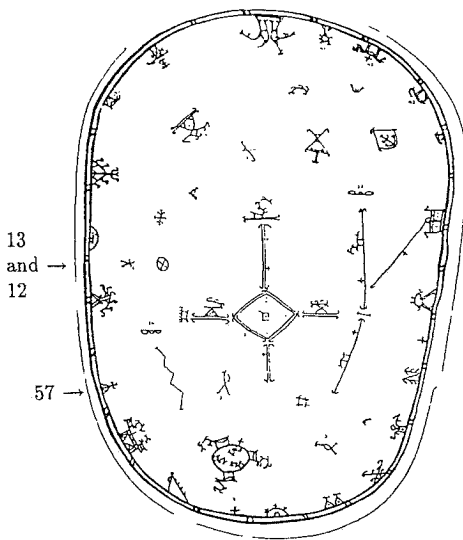


Fig 8e Drum number 19  
(Manker 1950)

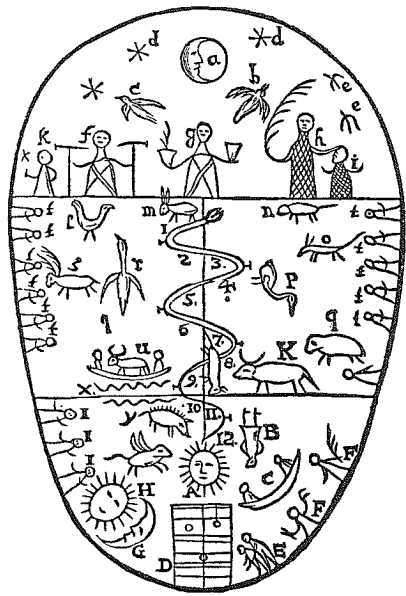


Fig 9 Drum L (Manker  
1950, fig 16)

motif is situated below the symbol of the sun but quite close to its "rays" (Fig 8d)

I have counted the motifs surrounding the figures of the snake or zig zag and the numbers are recorded in tab 1B. As may be seen, the most numerous is the Saami village or Saami hut (kota), on 17 drums, but two of the interpretations of the figures are not clear. The following items in the list are the offering place (16), the sacrificial animal (13-1), the reindeer/reindeer herd/reindeer-fencing (10), the man/skier/fisher (8-1), the storehouse (6), fishing net/fishing boat or lake (9-4). The category "some divinity" includes various deities: four of these are Ailekesolmaks (the men of the festival) and one is supposed to be some god or shaman.

The last mentioned is figure 57 in drum 19 (Fig 8e). As figures 13 and 12 on the same drum are explained as "a shaman and a drum" figure 57 is therefore "a god" rather than "a shaman". The identification "a shaman and/or his drum" has been mentioned in 6 cases but three of these are uncertain. The shaman's reindeer (noiade sarva) or some other animal of a shaman can be found in 8-1 cases (Tab 1B).

"The underworld/otherworld" occurs in comments on three drums



and in all of them with question marks, meaning that the statements provided are not certain. On drum 11, according to Manker, it is the four cornered figure at the end of the sun's rein (*labikie*) that points downwards. In the other one, drum 12, the figure formed by curves and lines is so unique that no help may be derived from the signs on the other drums. Nor does the location of the figure help, because it is too unusual to be a place in the underworld.

The motifs of the bear and beaver are puzzling, since, in addition to being hunting objects, they also had mythical meanings. A common feature in most motifs near the snake or zig zag is that they are connected with the everyday life and material existence of the Saami people. The same is also true of the sign of the sacrificial animal for Horagalles (*Tiermes*), because this god was the oldest, very highly honoured and believed to be the protector of reindeer (Andelin 1858, 242 f.)

Some interpreters have referred to the snake by the words "noiade kärmai", shaman's snake or "guolle", the fish, but they have mostly used only the word "snake". According to some informants, the snake was a disgusting creature (*em verabscheutes Lebewesen*), and there is no reason to doubt the statement. The people's attitude towards the snake was so hostile in Lapland that they would kill even an innocent lizard as well as a snake, says T. I. Itkonen (Itkonen 1948, 373). But we must bear in mind that all the comments about the snake are from the last two centuries and therefore relatively late.

In the Åsele drums the figures of the snake do not at all correspond to the attribute 'disgusting', as may be seen in tabs 1A and 1B. And besides this, there is another notable feature: on the Åsele drums the snake is on the opposite side to the other- or underworld, *Saivo*-, *Jabme*- or *Rota-aimo*, whose figures are to the right of the sun symbol. The only exception, drum 36, even seems to confirm the rule, if the sign of a tree is really the symbol of growth (*Wachstumsymbolen*) and the zig-zag means a snake.

Anders Andelin, in his article "Kertomus Utsjoen pitäjästä", offers a piece of information which may help us to understand the location of the snake-motif on the drum heads. According to Andelin, the Saami believed that the dawn was made by *Radien* and evening twilight by *Rota*, and also that the sign of twilight was painted near the figure of *Rota aimo* (Andelin 1858, 264). This information corresponds well with Frees' drum II (Fig. 8c). Here, the sign of morning glow (fig. 3) is in the *Radien* group and the sign of sunset glow (47) on the right quite close to *Rota aimo*. In another drum, Rudbeck's L (Fig. 9), the

figure marked by the letter k standing in the upper section on the left has been identified as "the servant" (Diener), whose job was to hang up the morning star. In the other drums, such as numbers 43:17 and 64:5, these interpretations are not so reliable.

The information provided by Andelin, Frees and Rudbeck prompted me to examine the drum from such a position that the upper part of the drum head faces towards the south. The right side of the drum then points towards the setting sun, and the signs of the other world and underworld are then also in the west.

The scheme suggested would not be in conflict with the beliefs according to which the underworld is literally a subterranean place. In petroglyphs, the boats with an elk head or some other symbol of the sun in the prow may be understood only with the help of Osiris's sun boat and the beliefs associated with it. The sun-boats in the rock pictures in the Caucasus, Scandinavia, Finland and Siberia (e.g. Formozov 1966, 45) show that ancient man needed an explanation for the daily route of the sun. If the sun set in the west and rose in the east, it had to get from the west to the east through the subterranean space which was imagined to be like a sea. This is why the other world could be in the west and under this world.

The figures of some boats on the Saami drums may be relics of this belief. The Scandinavian word "Ringhorna", used by Rudbeck, refers to this. The figure of a reindeer or its antlers inside the sun-symbol may be another relic from the past. If the figure inside means the animal which had to be sacrificed to the sun, then how is it possible that in drums 17<sup>2</sup> and 63<sup>3</sup> there is a picture of a human being in the same place? It is more consistent to see the figures of both reindeer and human being as images of the sun personified. Then the figure may also depict the Kolta-Saami's Mandash-pyrre, the mythical reindeer, whose golden antlers shone like the sun (Charnoluskij 1965, 74, 80; Okladnikov-Martynov 1972, 227).

These are not the only ancient features in the pictures on the drum head. Perhaps the most significant likeness can be found in the figure combination where a god holds similar spade-like objects, placed on either side of him (Fig 10a). There is an analogous scheme, xAx, in the composition of the so called "pole carrier" in the petroglyphs of

<sup>2</sup> Because the figure is like other signs of gods, it does not depict the owner of the drum, cf fig. 45.

<sup>3</sup> The figure hardly depicts a bird cf fig. 20. See also the signs in drums 5:11, 42:1 and 69:2.

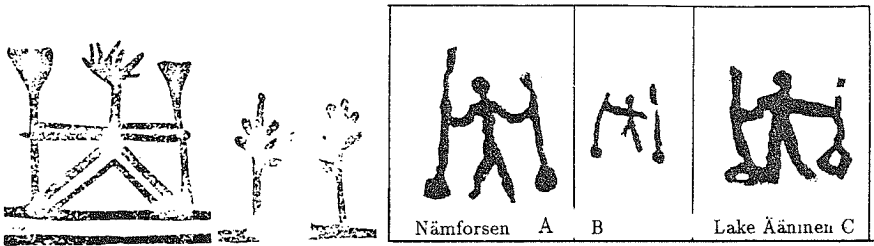


Fig 10a Figures of gods (Manker 1950, 5:b, 64:2)

Fig 10b "The pole carrier man" in the petroglyphs of Nämforsen A-B and Äännen C (Hallström 1960 319)

Äännen and Nämforsen (Fig 10b) A similar iconographic scheme is found in some Ob-Ugrian silver plates, although the things in the hands of the man are swords (Spitsyn 1906, figs 5 and 7) The scheme can also be recognized in the iconography of the famous Cretan Snake-Goddess

The fourth archaic feature seems to be in the figures of gods with three horns or vertical lines in place of the head (Figs 11 a-f) Almost identical figures can be seen in the rock pictures of Alta, in the Kola-peninsula, at Hossa in Finland, in the Urals and in Siberia, but not in Southern Scandinavia (Figs 11 g-k) The motif also occurs in the Permian bronze works, Ob Ugrian plates, in the Western Siberian bronze age cultures, and in Buryatian ongons (Figs 11 l-p)

The analogies in the pictures on drum heads and in petroglyphs lend additional support to the conclusion that the other world of the Saami people was previously situated in the west From this, it follows that the east was not an evil or unfortunate direction as it seems to be in the world of the Edda (Tynni 1980, 12) The location of the snake in the direction of the rising sun therefore meant something good.

Two sculptures of a snake fig 12, found in graves in the region of Äännen and dated to the end of the mesolithic era show that beliefs associated with them had a positive meaning No mourning relative puts anything unpleasant into a grave For this reason, and for the meaning attached to the snake in the Scandinavian petroglyphs and in the Danish votive offering, I shall pass over the beliefs coloured by Christian faith as well as the Scandinavian serpent, Nidhoggr

In ancient Egypt, "the primeval Serpent, the most Ancient One" was the symbol of creation and held all subsequent creation within its folds at the beginning of the world In coffin texts the words of the Gods were announced from the mouth of the Serpent (Clark 1960,

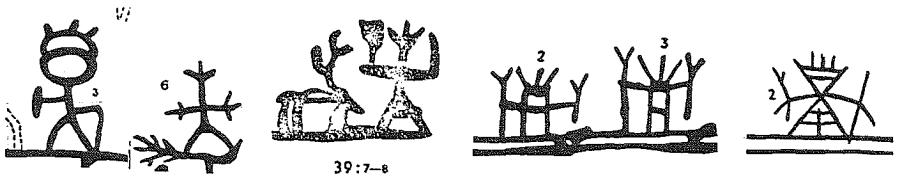


Fig 11 a-f Three horned gods in Saami drums (from the left: 69:3, 31:6, 39:8, 50:2-3, 47:2) Also in drums 5, 30, 51, 54, 55, 59, 60, 61, 69, 68 (Manker 1950)



Fig 11 g-k Three horned human like figures in rock pictures, from the left: Hossa in Finland (Taavitsainen 1979, 110); Alta (Helskog 1988, 66); Kola peninsula (Gurina 1980, 126); the Urals (Gjessing 1978, 24 f); Siberia (Ivanov 1954, 97)

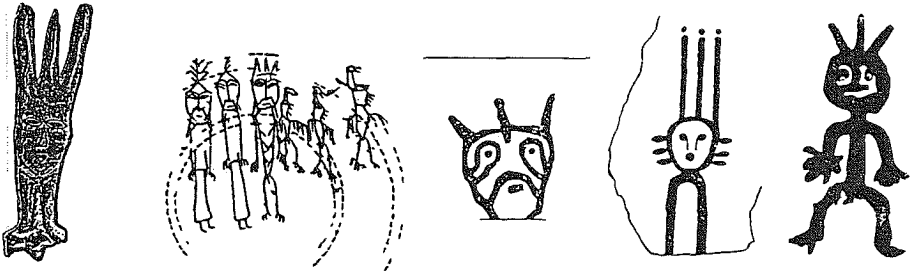
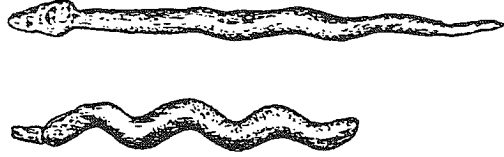


Fig 11 l-p Three horned human-like figures, from the left: a Permian bronze work (Aspelin 1877, 129) an Ob-Ugrian plate (Chernetsov 1953, 157); a Minusinskian carving (Studzitskaja 1987, 81); in the pottery of Samus IV culture (Studzitskaja 1987 79); in a Buryatian ongon (Ivanov 1954, 708)

51 ff, 75, 95, 106 f)

One of the best known deities of ancient Crete is the Snake Goddess. At Knossos, in a private house, there seem to have been small cups for feeding the snake, which was honoured as the spirit of the house personified. The snake was also the symbol of the underworld and of fertility, and it had the same function in Mycenaean Greece (James 1959, 129 f). The snake emblem of Pallas Athene symbolized the vegetative powers and also the duty of guardian maintained by the goddess (Levy 1946, 221). The ancient Celts had almost similar beliefs: in

*Fig 12 Snake sculptures from the ancient semetary of Peura-saari on Lake Ääninen (Gurina 1956, fig 133)*



their iconography, the snake depicted fertility and, as the emblem of Bridged, its function was to ward off evil powers (e.g. Cooper 1983)

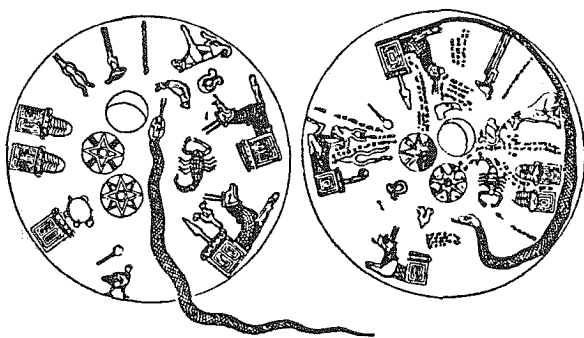
According to Finnish folk poetry, the snake seems to appear in the role of guardian of the underworld, and even as messenger, in the rune "Sun and Moon" (Finnish 1977, poem 31). The snake was kept in the cow sheds, and particularly in folk beliefs a horn or crown headed snake was the omen of fortune and wealth (Ruuttu 1929; Haavio 1939, 46 ff). The same kind of beliefs existed in Estonia. According to information recorded in Viljandi, the snake brought wealth and fertility, and helped to maintain links with ancestors (Meri 1983, 125)

\*

In the drum heads divided into two or more sections the figure of a snake or zig zag is marked in 13 of them, table 2. Most usually it is situated in the lower or lowest sections and has a clear connection with the underworld or other world (Jabme or Rota aimo) or the Orre Sea, the place where the sun and moon were believed to be during winter.

In drums 61 and 70 the snake is near the figures of the moon. According to Frolov, the combination can be seen in the pre historic material up to the bronze age (Frolov 1974, 125). The ability of the snake to slough its skin has been associated with the phases of the moon, its death and rebirth and also with the idea of renewal.

A fairly interesting snake figure for its location is to be found on drum 69, and especially on the drums, Rudbeck K and L. On these, the snake is situated on the central line of the drum head, as in drum L, fig 9. According to Rudbeck, the three lowest bends (12-10) of the snake symbolize the darkest time of the year and the upper ones (9-1) the other months. The idea that the snake was connected with the passing of time is not entirely impossible, as suggested above. At



*Fig 13* Babylonian drawings supposed to be old signs of the zodiac (Tallqvist 1943, 10)

least, it had a quite outstanding place in the oldest signs of the zodiac, fig 13.

There is another feature in the snake on drum L and also on Rudbeck's K which may have some significance. These are the small appendages at the bends of the snake and zig-zag. Although they are not quite identical to the figures in the petroglyphs, figs 2, 6c and 7a, they may help us to understand one more function of the figures under discussion during the time of the petroglyphs.

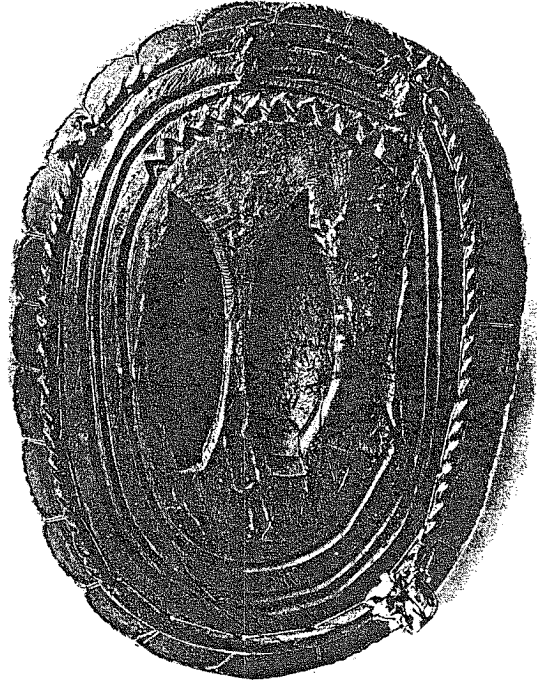
The snake and zig-zag motifs are used in the decorations of the wooden bowl like trunks of some drums (17, 51, 55, 59-63, 67 and 71). In one of them, fig 14, the zig-zag carving seems to go round the middle part of the bowl. It is worth mentioning, however, that these kinds of decoration do not occur in the pure Åsele-type. The motif was also used in the decorations of some hammers.

Some informants have called the ring or cluster of rings (*vuorra*, arpa = a lot) by the words "snake" or "frog". The words may be relics, however, since there is nothing in the shape of these objects which could resemble a snake or a frog.

\*

The main problem with the interpretation of Finnish rock paintings is the significance of shamanism, as I stated in the introduction. After surveying the "most shamanistic" motif in the rock art and Saami drums I am ready at least for the following conclusions:

1) There are other possibilities besides shamanism for constructing an interpretation of the rock paintings. The votive offer in the composition at Sarakallio shows clearly enough that the ancient hunters also absorbed influences from the south. In this, I agree with Okladnikov and Formozov, who have pointed out that ideas could travel from



*Fig 14* Drum number 71.  
(Manker 1938)

south to north as easily as “the Siberian pine to Finland” (Okladnikov & Martynov 1972, 237–42; Formozov 1966, 124 f; Formozov 1987, 40 f) Furthermore, the composition in which the human beings are copulating like animals has a counterpart in the south but not in the Urals or in Siberia

2) The copulation scene and votive offering at Sarakallio show clearly that ancient man did not resort to the shaman but to magic and to the cults of fertility and ancestors. The number of elk bones in the comb-ceramic culture indicates that the hunters were very skilled in catching their prey. Their greatest problem seems to have been the numbers of animals and this explains the need of the fertility magic.

3) These observations and conclusions lead me to doubt whether the compositions in which there is a human being and a snake are to be explained only on the basis of shamanism. If the ancient hunter had different human-like gods or mythical beings, he had to show them by emblems like the snake, horns etc (also Formozov 1987, 92–6). Only the hybrids of a human being and a snake in Juusjärvi and Kolmiköytinen seem to indicate shamanism, but there is also a possibility that they may depict some imaginary spiritual being unknown to us. In those compositions in which the other figures

near the snake or zig zag indicate fertility or ancestor cults, the snake belongs to the same complex of beliefs. The figures of snake and elk together probably refer to magic or to the cult of fertility.

4) The statements concerning the snake motif on Saami drums are not directly applicable to the rock paintings. On the Åsele type drums the location of the snake and zig-zag motifs and other figures near them seems to follow some older tradition. This is indicated by the position of the snake on the left side of the drum heads, because it can be seen as the direction of the rising sun. The figures of Lapp village, sacrificial site etc near the snake give support to the idea that the older meaning of the snake was in some way positive, and that it had a connection with prosperity. There are also other figures on drum/heads which seem to be relics from the past. The most indisputable of these are the figure of a god with spade like emblems on both sides and the gods with "three horns".

5) On the drum/heads divided into two or more sections, the snake, its connection to the other motifs, and snake like zig-zag decorations on the trunks of some drums seem to support the hypothesis of Skanke Jessen. It is nonetheless likely that, for the ordinary user of the drum, when the purpose was to inquire into future events, the snake had a role in showing the will of the gods. In particular, the names of the ring (snake, frog) refer to that possibility. The snake's connection with time, as in drums Rudbeck K and L, may have some significance in the context of rock pictures.



**Table 1** The snake and zig-zag motifs on the Åsele-type drums

Åsele-type drums, totalling 47 drums (44 available + 3 not available) with the snake or zig-zag on 30 drums (28 available + 2 not available)

A

<i>The location of the motif:</i>	total	-unsure
on the left of the sun-symbol	28	1 <sup>1</sup>
below the sun-symbol	1	
on the right of the sun-symbol	1 <sup>2</sup>	1
near the sun-symbol	12	
farther from the sun-symbol	18	

B

<i>The motifs near the snake or zig-zag</i>	total	-unsure
Saami village/hut (kota/lager)	17	2
offering place/holy-mountain (passe/passevarre)	16	
sacrificial animal (to Horagalles)	13	1
reindeer/reindeer-herd/reindeer-fencing	10	
man/skier/fisher	8	1
storehouse (njalla)	6	
fishing net/fishing boat/lake	9	4
some divinity	9	1
shaman/drum	6	3
shaman's reindeer (noiade sarva)/other shaman		
animal	8	1
bear	5	2
beaver	5	2
fur-bearing animal	4	1
underworld/other world (Saivo-/Jabme-/Rota-aimo)	3	3
tree	1 <sup>3</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> Drum 14 figure 18; the interpretations: "Wasserlauf Fischgewässer (? ev. Schlange)"

<sup>2</sup> Drum 36, figure 8, The undefined zig zag

<sup>3</sup> Drum 36, figure 24, the interpretation: "Wachstumsymbole, Baumgeister (?)"

Table 2 The drum heads divided into two or more sections

<i>Drum number</i>	43	47	51 <sup>1</sup>	61	62	63	69	70	I	II	III	IV	V	Sum	-un sure
<i>number of sections</i>	3	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	7	3	2	2		
<i>location of the motifs</i>															
uppermost section				1 <sup>2</sup>											1
middle section							1	1			1				3
lower/lowest section	1	1	1	1 <sup>2</sup>	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	11	1
<i>motifs near the snake or zig zag:</i>															
sun								1			1 <sup>3</sup>	1 <sup>4</sup>	1 <sup>3</sup>		4
moon				1				1							2
offering place/seita	1										1				2
Saami village/hut (kota)		1									1				2
underworld/other world	1	1?	1		1	1			1 <sup>5</sup>		1	1 <sup>5</sup>	1	9	1
some divinity	1	1				1	1			1 <sup>6</sup>	1	1	1	8	
shaman					1?						1			2	1
man/hunter					1?		1							2	1
shaman's animal														-	
some other animal				1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	8	
boat (Ringhorna)											1		1	2	
storehouse (njalla)			1											1	
lake			1											1	

I = Schefferus, Trommel A (Rudbeck A)  
 II = " " " G  
 III = Rudbeck " G  
 IV = " " K  
 V = " " L

<sup>1</sup> Figure 22 with the zig-zag line; interpretation: "Fischgewässer", "Bach"

<sup>2</sup> There are many zig zag motifs, the snake fig 13

<sup>3</sup> The sun in winter

<sup>4</sup> Two suns: one in winter and the other as usual

<sup>5</sup> The Ordan Sea

<sup>6</sup> Tod (döden)

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# The Saami Shaman Drums

## Some Reflexions from an Archaeological Perspective

BY INGER ZACHRISSON

The Saami shaman drums from northern Scandinavia can be discussed from many different points of view. For an archaeologist there are other questions of interest than those which generally occupy the historian of religions.

One important question is *how old* the known Saami drums and drum types are.

Relatively little is known about the age of the drums that have been preserved. Scholars have been more interested in how late they were in use. The well known drum from Nordtrøndelag, now in Meiningen, Germany, is said — according to a statement from the first decades of the 18th century — to have an age of four generations, i.e. it dates from the beginning of the 17th century (Manker 1938, 596 ff). The known drums are as a rule assumed to be from that century or the eighteenth, when most of them were collected. It has also been thought that, because of the materials they are made of, drums could not have been preserved any longer. But is that so certain? The older a shaman drum was, the greater trust was put in it (Manker 1938, 600).

No datings by the 14 C method, dendrochronological analyses or the like, have been made for any Saami drum, as far as I know — rightly so, as these methods have until now demanded too much material.

But today there is a new method for 14 C datings; the so called tandem accelerator only needs 0.1 gram of organic material in order to determine age. Would it be of interest and advisable to carry out such tests on some drums? The question which ought to be answered is whether some drums in fact date from earlier than about the 17th century.

Another perhaps more interesting question is how old the known *types* of Saami drums might be. When did they acquire their 'classical' form? What did the Viking Age Saami drums look like, for example?

There is general agreement that the drum as a religious attribute is of great antiquity.

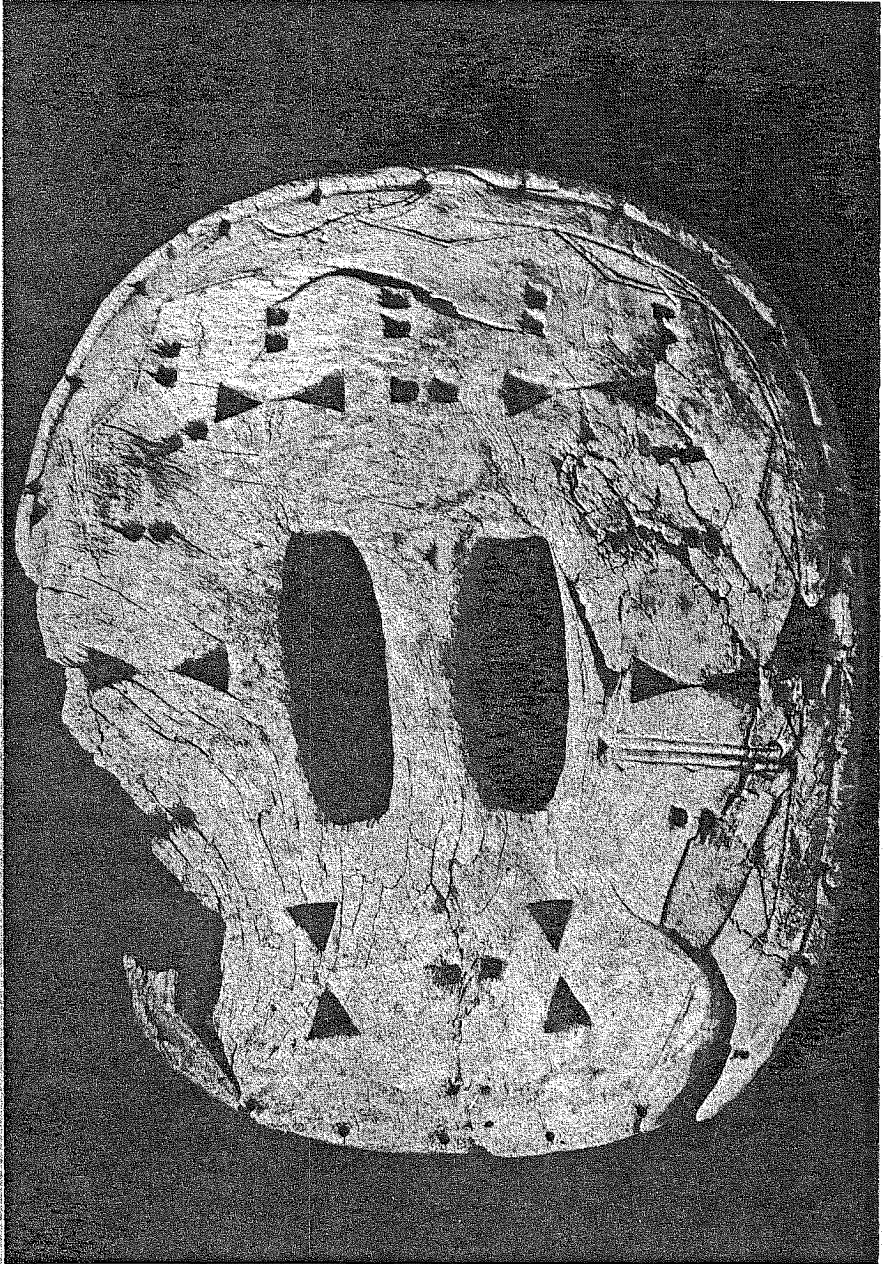
The preserved Saami drums mainly belong to two types. The oldest is considered to be the so-called 'frame (sieve) type', most of which have a frame consisting of a single strip of wood bent into a circle. According to Manker, in the Saami area this type of drum was gradually displaced, principally southwards, but also northwards. In its place came the so-called 'bowl type', which thus seems to have developed from the former, and is known only from Saami culture. Already at the time of the first reliable illustrations of drums, the 'bowl type' was more widely dispersed than the 'frame' one. The replacement of the latter is therefore thought to have taken place at an early date (Manker 1938, 167 ff.)

Why and when, therefore, did a specific type of drum develop in the Northern Saami area, if this theory is correct? The question is of interest in a wider perspective. There are other differences between the Southern and Northern Saami areas of Sweden, regarding both the language and certain aspects of religious life during the pre-Christian era. Examples in the archaeological material of religious differences may be seen in grave customs during the Iron Age, the way of depositing bear bones at least at the beginning of the post-medieval period, and perhaps also in sacrificial sites from the Viking Age—Early Middle Ages (see Zachrisson 1988; Zachrisson & Iregren 1974, fig. 79; Zachrisson 1984).

Such differences may have developed gradually at various times. One reason why Saami culture evolved along different lines in different parts of Scandinavia might be the geographical situation. In the Southern Saami area there were probably many opportunities for culture loans between the Saami and Nordic cultures. Many Iron Age Saami graves in this area reflect Nordic grave customs. Further north, Finnish culture may have played the same role.

On the other hand, it is well known that the borderland of a culture tends to retain more ancient traits than the central area. Accordingly, one would expect the Southern Saamis to preserve older traits longer than the Northern Saamis. This seems to have been the case as regards traditional dress. It could also explain why the drum types — as well as the language — reveal a connection between the Southern Saami area of the Scandinavian peninsula and Finland.

Now I would like to present a *new find* of a drum. It is of the 'bowl type', the skin missing, and decorated with open 'hour glass' motifs. Through these holes the spirits were thought to pass in and out. It



*Fig 1* Saami drum of the 'bowl' type from Sepirjokk, Jokkmokk parish, Lappland, found in 1983 Photo: G Jansson



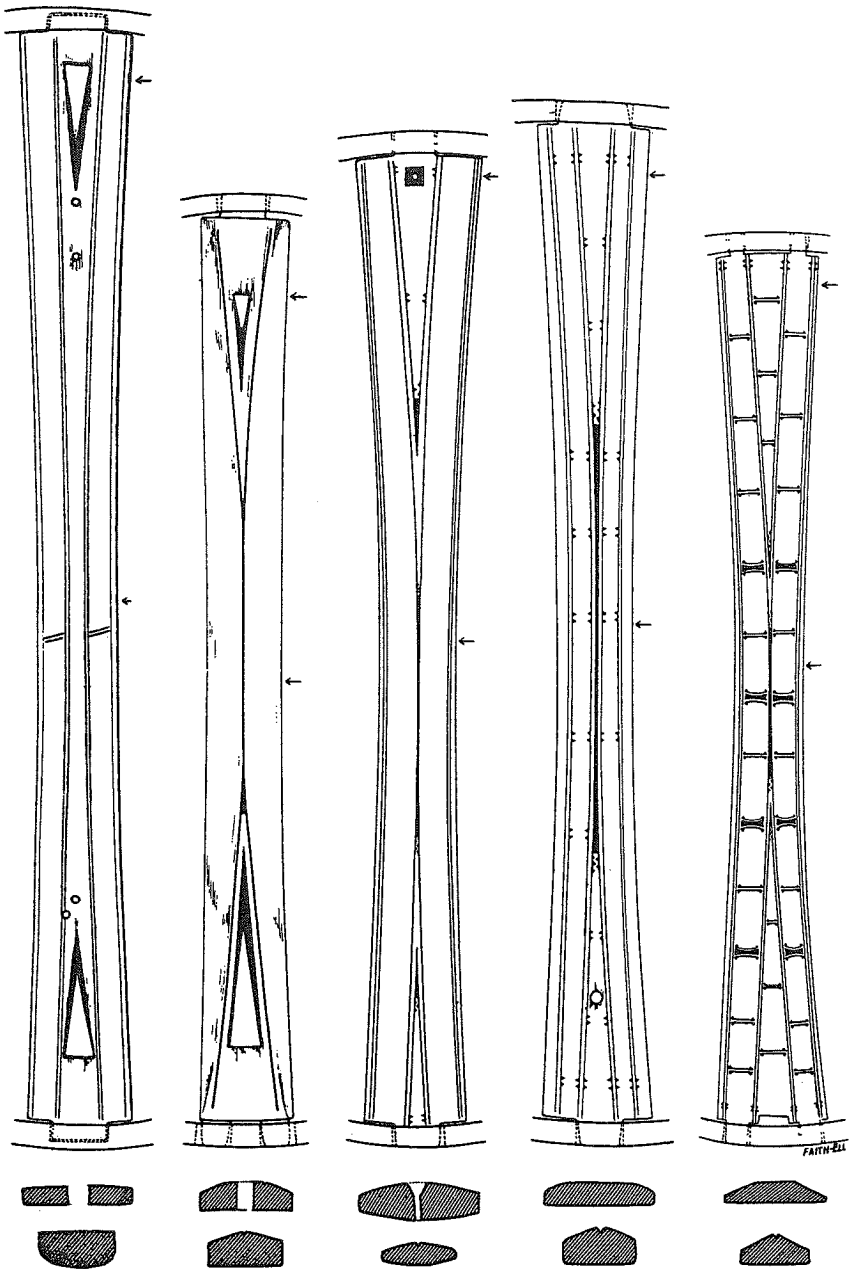
was delivered to the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm in 1983 (Fig 1). It was found hidden in a cave-like opening among lime stone rocks at the outflow of the River Sepirjokk into Lake Kutjaure, Jokkmokk parish, Lappland. It has now been deposited in Ájtte, Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum in Jokkmokk.

An indication that *drums of the 'frame type'* may have been made wholly according to traditions stemming from at least the Viking Age is given by *the ornamentation of their handles* (Fig 2; after Manker 1938, 226–266, Abb 85–91, Abb 256–262). Several of them are decorated in what can be called the Saami Geometric style, the earliest known examples of which can be seen on objects of antler/bone from two Saami dwelling sites on the island of Kjelmøy in the Varanger Fjord, Finnmark, northern Norway. This style continued on Saami objects of antler, wood and pewter, but was more or less totally replaced by the plaited band motif some time during the Viking Period or Early Middle Ages (A D 800–1300). The latter motif became dominant on such objects from then on until the present time (see Zachrisson 1984, 86 ff, 123).

The 'hour glass motif', characterizing the ornamentation of several of the drum handles, is also to be found on the antler plates of the hilt of a Nordic sword from Rösta in Ås, Jämtland, dateable to the 11th century (Fig 3; after Kjellmark 1905). Here the motif dominates over the simple plaited bands along the edges. It is probably Saami work because of the ornamentation as well as the technique that has been used, viz the lines of the pattern are filled with a dark substance. The use of such a special technique is probably more decisive for the interpretation of ethnic affiliation than is the ornament itself.

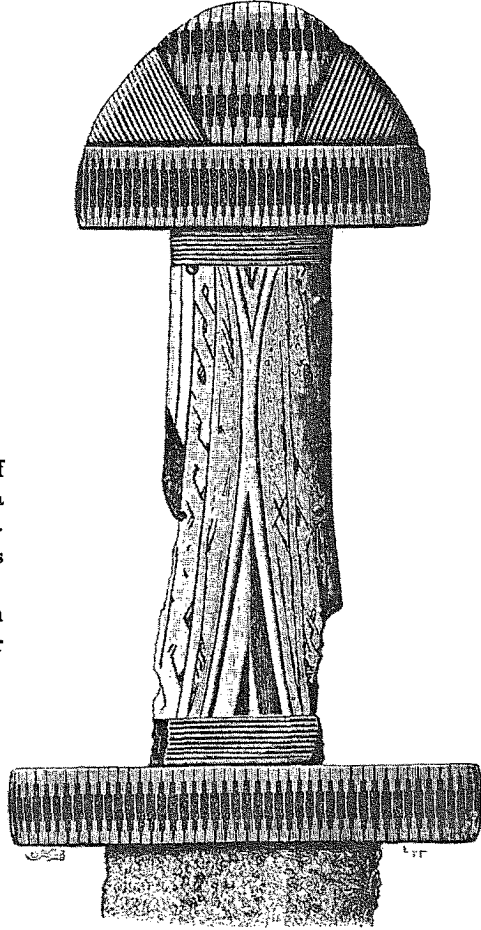
The filling of the lines of a pattern with harpax in order to highlight it has characterized typical Saami objects from at least the Middle Ages, and it is especially typical of the plaited band motif, for example on bag snaps. The technique is described in the written sources on the Saamis from the 17th and 18th centuries. Among the many combs from the Viking Age centres of Birka in Lake Mälaren and Hedeby in Schleswig (northern Germany) there are a few which are decorated with the plaited band motif. Only those seem to have had the lines of the patterns filled with a black substance (Zachrisson 1987d).

It is not advisable to draw far-reaching conclusions from ornaments only. It could be interesting, however, to test the hypothesis that the plaited band motif is not found on the handles of drums of the 'frame type' — and not on Saami drums in general either (Manker 1938, 262) — because the handles of this type had already acquired their



*Fig 2.* The ornamentation of some handles of Saami drums of the 'frame type'  
 Note the 'hour-glass' motif After Manker 1938

*Fig 3* Antler plate on the hilt of a sword from the 11th century, a grave find from Röstas, Ås, Jämtland, decorated with the 'hour-glass motif' and a simple plaited band. The lines of the pattern have been filled with a dark substance. After Kjellmark 1905



definitive form *before* the plaited band motif became dominant within the Saami culture.

In the well-known report of an ecstatic Saami shamanistic seance in *Historia Norvegiae*, written down in c. A.D. 1170/90, there is a description of a drum, like a sieve and with some simple figures painted on the drum skin: a whale, a reindeer, a ski and a small boat with oars. With the help of these, the 'gandr' of the shaman, his free soul, could travel over fell and fjord. He held the drum high, we are told, danced and sang 'galdrar' until he fell down. Through their 'gandr' Saamis could also make prophecies which came true (Nesheim 1970, 7 ff).

The author of *Historia Norvegiae* provides far more information about Eastern Norway than any other part of the country. The

chronicle therefore seems to have been written by someone specially familiar with this part of the country, Østlandet (Halvorsen 1987, 62) It is possible that he also knew best the Saamis of this area, such as those in the then remote Opland The drum described was evidently a drum of the 'frame type'

In the 17th century Schefferus distinguishes between the drums of the Finnmark Saamis, which were 'of another kind and meant for another purpose' and the drums in Sweden What did he mean? In both cases he seems to refer to drums of the 'bowl type', with a hammer (drum-stick) and pointer (index) How could they be used in different ways? The drum as a teller of fortunes is always secondary to the drum in its function as an instrument of exaltation Its use in Sweden might have represented a 'new' emphasis on this secondary function

Or was the difference that the Finnmark drum skins had 'various artless figures' (according to Ole Worm) while the Swedish ones had a swarm of figures, with Christian and Swedish symbols prominent (Schefferus 1956, 165 ff)?

This adoption of Christian and Swedish symbols can also be seen as a result of the confrontation between the Saamis and the overwhelming Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish cultures The Saamis may have wished to magically incorporate their opponents' symbols of power into their own culture in order to gain access to these same sources of power (Odner 1983, 63 ff)

The pointer could perhaps have been used in a 'new' way, as a fortune-teller instead of a sound amplifier No hammer or pointer is mentioned in *Historia Norvegiae* At least the former, however, is probably of some antiquity; there are two finds of early *hammers* from Norway It is difficult to find a reason to doubt their attributions, as some have done (orally)

The decorated object of antler, found in 1939 at Nordset in Øvre Rendal, Hedmark, Opland, East Norway (Fig 4), was interpreted as a Saami drum hammer by Gjessing (Gjessing 1945) and Manker (Manker 1950, 442, Abb 156) Gjessing dated it to the 11th century on the basis of the Nordic style pattern on one side; the other side is decorated with a plaited band motif of Saami character Today's foremost expert on Nordic ornamentation, Signe Horn Fuglesang, dates the object to c A D 1000-1200 (Fuglesang 1980, Cat No 95 and personal communication)

The dating of this object as well as its Saami affiliation thus seems to be certain A similar object, from Myklebostad, Sørsjøna in Nordland,



*Fig 4* Saami drum hammer from Øvre Nordset, Rendalen, Hedmark (Norway), dated to c A D 1000–1200 Photo: Universitetets Oldsaksamling, Oslo

has been interpreted in the same way (Gjessing 1945; Manker 1950, 442, fig 155)

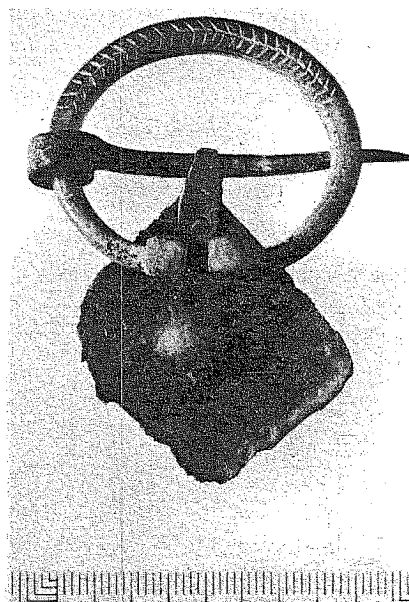
The Nordset hammer was found in a cairn of fire cracked stones. Other things in the cairn have been dated to the 15th century (Gjessing 1945, 103 f, cf Manker 1950, 442 f, Abb 157). Stones cracked by heat are often the main component of prehistoric and medieval rubbish heaps.

The minor excavations later carried out on the site strengthen the impression of an early dwelling site. The Norwegian archaeologist, Guro Syversen, also interprets the Nordset cairn as a rubbish-heap from the 15th-16th centuries, not as a sacrificial site, as was suggested by Gjessing and Manker. She emphasizes that the heap had been situated beside a church, moved in c 1660. The presence of the hammer in this particular spot might have had a connection with the proximity of the church. There are reports that when the Saamis were christianized, everything belonging to their pre-Christian religion was either burnt or buried in the earth. If the burial of the Nordset hammer was the result of christianization, it assumes that Saamis were living in the vicinity. About one kilometre to the south lies a valley named 'Finndalen'. Finds in the district of iron arrow heads of Saami type from c 1000-1200 might also be indications of the presence of Saamis (all according to Syversen, see Fredriksen 1983).

The Borgarting Law and the Eidsivating Law, the two oldest East Norwegian Christian law sections, thought to have been written down in A D 1120 at the latest, are also the only known Nordic laws which prohibit Norsemen from going to the 'Finns' to have their fortune told (Nesheim 1970, 7). Saami shamanism thus seems to have been a current issue in Eastern Norway at that time.

The object from Nordset with its southern provenience is in any case important as an indication of the formerly wider dispersal of Saami culture in Norway. Other data also support this view. Otherwise, the southernmost reference to a Saami drum on the Norwegian side of the border is from Tydalen in Sørtrøndelag. From Sweden there are oral traditions that drums in recent times were used as far south as Idre in northernmost Dalecarlia, 8 kilometres directly east of Rendalen, and in two places in northern Härjedalen (Manker 1938, 105, Abb 67).

Two other Saami antler/bone objects from Norway, dating from about the same time, might be *pointers* belonging to shaman drums. They were found in excavations at Eiterjord in Beiarn and at Vestvatn in Misvaer, Nordland, both doubtlessly Saami dwelling sites from A D 1000-1200. The objects are decorated with the plaited band



*Fig 5* A possible drum pointer: a pendant of copper sheet has been threaded onto the pin of a bronze penannular brooch from the 11th–12th century. From the Saami sacrificial site at Vindelgransele, Lappland. Photo: G Hildebrand

motif. The larger one, from Eiterjord, still has four trapezoid pendants of sheet bronze; the other has holes for something similar (Munch 1967 and pers. comm., cf. Odner 1983, 68; Zachrisson 1984, 10). They can be compared with two pointers of reindeer antler from Nordtrøndelag and from Sweden, possibly from Åsele (in south Lappland), which exhibit similar decoration and are of similar form and size, with sheet pendants, some of them trapezoid, in the same places (Manker 1938, Abb. 573, 577). Gerd Munch does not regard the two objects as pointers because all the offshoots are perforated and provided with bronze fittings. She may be right, but as long as the objects remain unidentified, the possibility that they are pointers still exists. Some pointers are known to have holes and notches (see for example Manker 1938, fig. 576).

Very reminiscent of another kind of pointer, depicted by Manker (Manker 1938, 365 ff., Abb. 586–588), are two joined objects from the Saami sacrificial site at Vindelgransele in Swedish Lappland (Fig. 5). A large, decorated bronze pendant was threaded onto the pin of a bronze penannular brooch of eastern type from the 11th–12th centuries (Serning 1956, Pl. 56, 4).

Stones could also function as pointers. Tuderus talks of a stone as ‘Los-Instrument’ (pilot-instrument) on the drum (Manker 1938, 373).

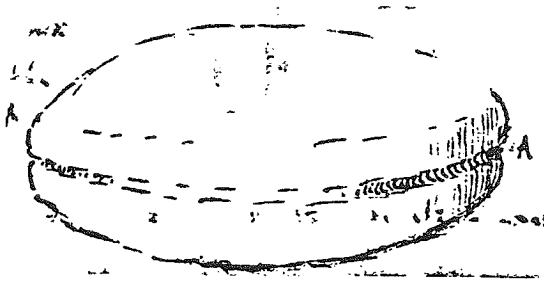


Fig 6 An Iron Age strike-a-light of quartzite, depicted by Schefferus in the 17th century According to him, such stones could function as drum pointers After Schefferus 1956

Emilie Demant Hatt reports from Frostviken (Demant Hatt 1928, 55; cf. Manker 1938, 373): "On the drum *rairengerge*, thunderbolts, were used, most of them red, some grey or brown spotted like ptarmigan eggs, but the size of thrush eggs "

Schefferus says that the Saamis 'predict their success in fishing with the drum, but in a somewhat different way than otherwise, for instead of the copper pointer they place on the drum a stone shaped in a certain way When this shows good luck in fishing, it hangs attached to the drum, even if the latter is turned upside down If one immerses the stone in water when one is fishing, half of it will float above water, as long as the fishing is successful But when luck runs out, the stone sinks The Lapps worship the stone by greasing it with fish fat The picture shows what it looks like Litt A indicates the small groove round the stone' (Schefferus 1956, 304 f, a Latin addition to Schefferus' own copy of *Lapponia*)

What Schefferus depicts (Fig 6) is a so-called oval strike-a-light of quartzite These date from c AD 100/300–600/800 and are known from all over northern Europe They could be carried on the belt, by means of the groove along the narrow sides

This is not the only example of such Iron Age strike-a-lights being used by Saamis in recent times A worn one was found on a Saami dwelling site from the 17th–18th centuries at Paulundsvallen on the River Ume, Lycksele parish, Lappland (Zachrisson 1976, 111 ff, 98, 26 f)

At least some twenty oval strike-a-lights of quartzite are known from northern Sweden (north of the River Indals) Most were random finds, but many were found on or beside dwelling sites of Stone Age type, which thus seem to have been inhabited right up to the Iron Age and



the Middle Ages by Saamis. The many stones of the same type from northern Finland were found in similar places principally along the Rivers Ule and Kemı, and they can probably be interpreted in the same way (Serning 1960, 27 f, Zachrisson 1976, 25 f)

Was it the fire kindling ability of such stones that was the secret of their power? Were they also called thunderbolts by the Saamis, like the stones Demant Hatt speaks of? Maybe this is the explanation of this name? This would imply, however, that about one thousand years after the manufacture of the strike a lights, their original function was known. On the other hand, it is not impossible that such stones were already used during the Iron Age by the Saamis for other purposes than fire kindling, magical purposes, for example.

Or was it the material, quartzite, which possessed special qualities in itself? An egg shaped stone of white quartzite, of about the same size as the oval strike a lights, functioned as a *seite* on the Saami sacrificial site at Vidjakuoika in northern Lappland (Manker 1957, 171 f, and furthest to the right on Bild 134)

White quartzite in particular seems to have had a special meaning in the past. There is proof of this from different places in northern Europe from as far back as the Stone Age, as, for example, at the well-known megalithic grave of Newgrange and other passage graves in Ireland (Bergh 1988, 32)

In Scandinavia it is especially in graves from the Migration Period (A D 400-550) that white quartzite with a probable connection to grave rites has been observed. It has been associated with the custom of placing 'sacred white stones' on or in grave mounds. Chosen stone material of other colours might have had similar meanings (Lamm 1973, 47 f, with references given there; cf Zachrisson 1987c)

How old then are the *pendants* of the drums preserved? They are, as a rule, of metal, and seem to have been essential attributes of the drums. They seem to have been hung on the bottom of the drums successively and may for this reason be of different ages. The preserved pendants thus do not necessarily give any reliable information about the age of the drum they belong to. The drums in general once had many more pendants than those that survive today, but most of them were removed when a drum was transferred to the next owner. The Meinngen drum has today 134 thongs, 110 of which are whole and provided with a metal ornament in the end (Manker 1938, 267 ff Abb 365-378, 710-711)

Pendants of metal are especially common on drums of the 'frame type', while they appear less frequently on drums of the 'bowl type'

(Manker 1938, 267 ff) This in itself speaks for the view that the use of such pendants is ancient. It is difficult to date simple pendants of sheet copper alloy, but it is remarkable that many of them are of exactly the same types as the pendants in the Saami metal deposits from around A D 1000–1350 (Zachrisson 1984; cf Serning 1956)

An unbroken tradition from the Viking Period or Middle Ages also seems to be associated with *how the pendants were attached to the drums*. As a rule they hang on long thongs of leather or wool, around which pewter thread is tightly wound (Manker 1938, 267 ff, 287, Abb 351–360). There are also reports of leather thongs with coloured woollen yarn wound round them (Manker 1938, 287, 645, 649 ff and other)

The pendants from the Saami sacrificial sites in northern Sweden have evidently hung on woollen threads. Most can be dated to the 13th–14th centuries, but some are from the preceding centuries. In addition, many of these woollen strings were long and had pewter thread wound tightly around them (Zachrisson 1984; Serning 1956; cf Zachrisson 1987a, 61 f)

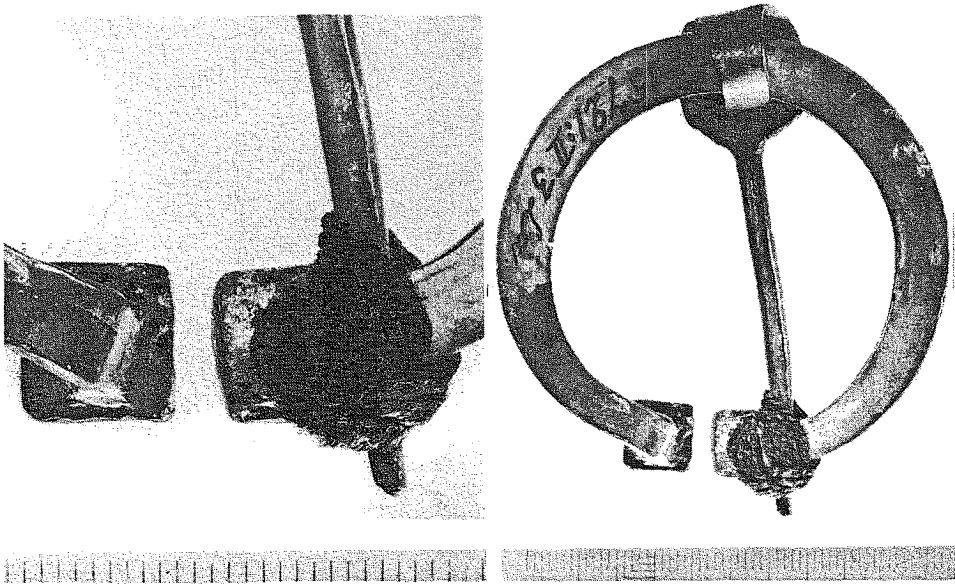
The correspondance between features of the pendants from the sacrificial sites on the one hand and those from preserved drums on the other, in respect of their types and, to a certain extent, their modes of attachment, makes it reasonable to work with the hypothesis that the pendants from sacrificial sites also derive from Saami shaman drums.

Magical power has been ascribed to *woollen thread* in traditional Saami culture (Nesheim 1970, 13, with references there). Coloured woollen yarn could be tied onto the sacrificial animal. The colour white was thought to have supernatural powers. Woollen yarn has been used by Saamis as amulets (Elgström 1922, 332 f), wound around a sick part of the body such as a finger (Anne Janbell Heikka, written communication 1984)

There is also an example from the preserved drums where a collection of small pieces of woollen cloth instead of a metal pendant has been hung at the end of string encapsulated in pewter thread (Manker 1938, Abb 389–390). Small pieces of woollen cloth constitute part of the material from the Saami sacrificial sites in the north (Serning 1956)

During the Viking Age–Early Middle Ages woollen thread was used by Saamis at least in northern Sweden in a special way. It was wound around the point of the pin and the frame of penannular brooches.

In the material from the sacrificial site at Unna Saiva there are woollen threads still left on eight brooches (Serning 1956). On a large



*Fig 7* Pennanular brooch of bronze from the 11th–12th century, from the Saami sacrificial site at Unna Saiva, Lapland. Note the woollen thread wound around the point of the pin and the frame of the brooch. Photo: G. Hildebrand.

silver brooch dating from the 11th–12th century, the thread is wound several times and in a decorative loop (Fig 7).

Another example of the same phenomenon is a pennanular brooch of the 11th century from one of the graves on Långön island in north-west Ångermanland. These graves have been interpreted as Saami (Ambrosiani & Iregren & Lahtiperä 1984, 62 f, Zachrisson 1987b, 78 ff).

All these examples show that archaeology may be able to throw light upon different aspects of Saami pre-Christian religion — or at least pose new questions. And every year more archaeological material comes to light!

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# An Excursion on Linnaeus's Drum from Sorsele

BY BO LUNDMARK

## Iter lapponicum anno 1732

June 2nd

"All this land of the Lapps was mostly bog, *hinc vocavi Styx* The priest can never describe hell, but that this is worse Never have the poets been able to portray Styx so vilely, so this is not viler We went forth into the wilderness, without knowing where a bog (Lycksmyren, since a stream runs from here to Lycksele, *cur non* Olycksmyren?) full of ochre and water with a coating on it "

June 3rd

"We waited long into the day towards 2 o'clock in the afternoon for the Lapp we had sent, who finally returned quite exhausted, having sought so many habitations in vain. With him came a person, I knew not if it were man or woman; I do not think that poet ever portrayed a fury that was not better presented by this person, who, not without reason, one must believe was come from Styx She looked quite small, her face was quite blackened by smoke, her eyes were brown and shining, her eyebrows black, her hair as black as ink and matted on her head I was afraid at first sight of her But the fury herself speaks to me with tenderness and compassion 'Oh you poor man, what harsh decrees of fate have brought you here, where none have ever dared to tread before, I have seen no stranger yet?' I asked how far it was to Sorsele — 'That we know not' she answered, 'but you will not arrive before seven days hence in these conditions, my husband said'" (Linné 1961, 54)

Carl von Linnaeus had begun the arduous journey on May 31st after high mass in Lycksele church He intended to get to Sorsele church village on the Vindel river (Linné 1961, 46) The spring floods and the wet bogs nevertheless forced him to turn back When the retreat began, he was in a Saami tax district called Blåberg, in the name of Enwaldh Tomesson, whose wife was probably the "fury" described (Wiklund 1925, 68)



*Fig 1* Hoffman's portrait of Linnaeus from 1737 The costume of reindeer calf leather was probably from Torne lappmark In his right hand the Lappland traveller is holding a linnaea and in his left hand the drum of Anders Nilsson Pont

When Linnaeus made his journey to Holland in 1735, a Saami drum was included in his baggage. It also appears on the famous Linnaeus portrait by the Dutch master, Martin Hoffman. The original owner of the drum was the Saami, Anders Nilsson Pont of Granbyn "who lives close to Sorsele but never comes to church there" (cf Manker 1938, 700). On the actual skin of the drum is written "Anders Nilsson i Graan". In this way Linnaeus received greetings from Lycksele lappmark, where he had never set foot!

During the rest of his *iter lapponicum* our great botanist was extremely sparing with information about the ancient Saami religion. As far as the drum is concerned, it is mentioned by hearsay after his arrival on Norwegian territory. He then writes: "In Norway I heard a strange story, about how someone used to take the drums away from the Lapps, together with certain images. When he came across a drum, he used to order the Lapp to give it up, and the

Lapp refused" (Linné 1961, 111) It is not clear, however, whether Linnaeus himself had the chance to study a drum during his journey On the other hand, he made a couple of extracts from an unknown manuscript about the drum They appear as paragraphs 319-320 in his unpublished manuscripts and read as follows: "Lapp song, then, is beaten on the drum Hear the spruce wood ring and resound, rumble you good reindeer hide, runes here are rune bands (?) and a true Lapplander's song — Spruce is the wooden case, reindeer hide the skin" It also says: "A ring, a snake or a frog is laid on the drum and he beats with a hammer until he stops at one animal or another, then he prophesies Rune drum Purchased" (Wiklund 1925, 89)

### Plantin and Bistock

The most likely explanation is that Linnaeus got the drum from Georg Wallin the younger The latter, on the orders of his father Bishop Georg Wallin the elder, made a visit of inspection in 1715 As a result of this, he became very interested in the Saamis, not least in their old drums He apparently acquired the drum in question from his former teaching colleague, Zacharias Plantin, pastor of Umeå Plantin belonged to an old Norrland clerical family His forefathers included Olaus Petri Niurenius, author of "Lappland or a relation of the northerly area, inhabited by the Lapps in the remotest parts of Scandia or Sweden" This was an important source, as we know, for Johannes Schefferus's *Lapponia*, published in 1673

Plantin was born in Luleå in 1680 and was active as a teacher in Härnösand from 1711 In 1723 he became pastor of Lövånger and in 1730 was transferred to Umeå Here he died three years later His interest in the Lapland mission is evident, amongst other things, from the report he made to the diet of 1723 (see Haller 1896, 27 f) There is no clear evidence, on the other hand, that Plantin had any close personal contact with the Saamis or any detailed knowledge of their old religion (cf Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 143 f) Nevertheless, there is a manuscript about the drum in his own hand This contains a description with interpretation of the Sorsele drum, and is dated Umeå, March 24th 1731 In addition, the Wallenstråle manuscript collection contains another interpretation of the drum's symbols, made by Arved Thuresson Bistock Both manuscripts were originally found in the posthumous papers of Georg Wallin the younger



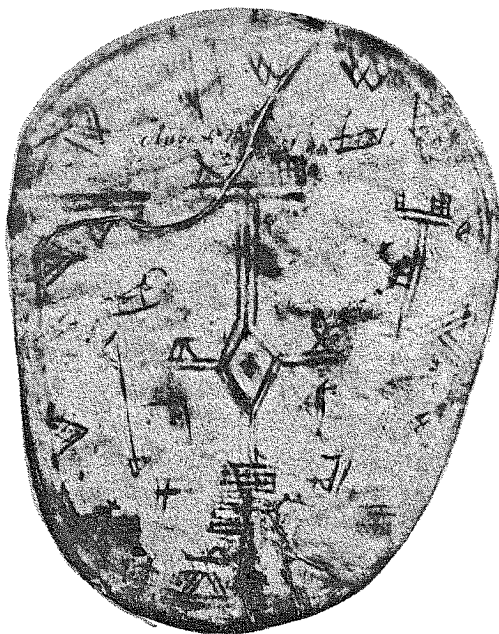


Fig 2 The Sorsele drum Pont's name appears up on the left hand side of the membrane

At the end of his account Plantin writes:

*"The drum came from Lycksele Lappmark; but the explanation is by a schoolmaster from the Norwegian mission called Arved Thuresson, who for ten years lived in Norwegian Lappmark, and thus become an expert in these matters, in consequence of which one should not so lightly cast doubt on their authority"* (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 140 f)

From this alone, it appears that Plantin was strongly dependent on the account of Arved Thuresson Bistock. The type of paper used in the two manuscripts is identical and might suggest that Bistock's undated manuscript was written during a visit to Plantin at the beginning of the 1730's, "it can also be surmised that they met somewhere in the Lappmark" as K. B. Wiklund points out (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 144)

Who then is the Arved Thuresson referred to? There can be no doubt here that he is the same person as the catechist employed by Thomas von Westen for the Saamis of Rana and Vefsen. This area also borders on Lycksele lappmark. Judging from von Westen's letters, his colleague was born in Finland, with Finnish as his mother

tongue, but in spite of this he matriculated as a Swedish student. During the period of the Great Strife he seems to have fled from his homeland to Norway, where he wandered around for some time. After a journey to Copenhagen, he visited von Westen in Trondheim "begging employment at the mission." He was allowed to stay with von Westen for a time, amongst other things to study Lappish under the guidance of Isak Olsen. In the process, he apparently "learned so much Lappish that the Finns understood him."

He completed his first year of service among the mountain Saamis of Vefsen. During his journey of 1718 von Westen discovered "that among the mountain Lapps of Vefsen all was exceptionally well organized this year with Arved Bistock, who had visited, taught and found greater love and obedience in them than he had expected." It is also said that the Swedes were to be thanked for some part of their healthy spiritual condition, for they spent the winter with their reindeer in Ume lappmark. After this, Bistock had to go to Rana, but he was subsequently also to teach the Saamis of Vefsen and Bindalen before they moved to Sweden for the winter. He was also to "help the Böyde Finns", that is the impoverished mountain Saamis who kept to the Norwegian side all the year round. He therefore probably acquired his notions about pre-Christian religious ideas through his activities among these Saami groups. It also seems likely that Bistock was acquainted with von Westen's comprehensive study in manuscript, "Missionsanstalter for Nordlandene", and that he had been influenced by the account of this "apostle of the Lapps."

Bistock could also confirm that the country's border did not constitute any barrier to the practice of religion among the Saamis. This experience is described by von Westen himself in his letter to the clergy of Jämtland on March 11th, 1723:

"for I have only too clear evidence that the Swedish Lapps and the Finns are still subject to the same heathendom as ours, and in many places among us the Swedish Finns and Lapps are far more versed in magic than ours, and are the masters and guides of our own Lapps and Finns" (Källskrifter 1910, 4)

As far as Bistock's analysis of the signs on Linnaeus's drum is concerned, one more point should be observed. In von Westen's missionary methods the drum had a central place: thus Reuterskiöld writes that

"of von Westen's working methods, we soon find that what allowed him, once he had won the Lapps' confidence, to acquire such a thorough knowledge of

their religious doctrines, was the fact that he made the drums the basis of his study. We see how in every place the 'Rune drum', through some strange new figure, gives von Westen a further insight into the secrets of the Saamis. We see clearly that, without this, we would hardly have obtained any knowledge of their religious ideas, however familiar he was otherwise to become with their habits and customs" (Källskrifter 1910, VIII)

Mebius therefore claims:

"This is probably the only completely reliable way of obtaining an idea of their drum pictures. It is valuable from the point of view of source criticism that we have as clear a picture as possible of how von Westen acquired his knowledge of Saami religion" (Mebius 1968, 13)

On the other hand, Mebius urges caution when the historian of religion uses the drum figures as a source. "Pictures without comment by the artist are fragile material, which can easily lead the interpreter on a wild goose chase" (Mebius 1968, 3). This writer nevertheless finds it unnecessary to "go so far as J. de Vries, who regards the source value of the drums as relatively meaningless ('ziemlich bedeutungslos')" (Vries 1956, 131). It should be noted, however, that this description refers primarily to the relevance of drum symbolism in the study of Germanic religion (see Lundmark 1982, 8). Bäckman also adopts a cautious attitude towards the drum's iconography and its interpretation. She writes: "Because of the uncertainty and constraint to which the Lapps were subjected, we also have reason to believe that a certain 'political calculation' may be observed in the picture gallery". She also assumes that "the symbols of the drum were rather vaguely experienced" by the ordinary man, and "only the *noajdi* understood the whole mystery of his own symbols" (Bäckman 1975, 41 f).

We have reason to suppose that Bistock was trained in von Westen's spirit and was careful to have the drums interpreted when he came across them (for Arved Thuresson Bistock's biography, see also Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 141 ff, cf Källskrifter 1910, 19, where Carl Solander in his 1726 account mentions Bistock as "vice Missionarius" in Rana. — According to Grape 1853, 51 Bistock married Anna Vacker, widow of the pastor of Silbojokk and Sorsele, Lars Rangius. Cf Svare 1970, 115 ff, see also Hammond 1787, 316 f, 344, 660 ff, 688, 690, 693). The idea is also supported by the introduction to the interpretation of Linnaeus's drum: "According to the account of the Norwegian Lapps I have written what is to be found on their magic drums" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 136). These "studies"

were decisive in the latter's analysis of the drum from Sorsele. We can only regret that he did not have the opportunity to go through the drum's symbols with its owner, Anders Nilsson Pont. The latter, however, died in 1723. From all the evidence, he still had the drum in his possession at that time.

### Anders Nilsson Pont

Anders Nilsson Pont, then, was from Granbyn. The family name of Bonta is known later from Umbyn in Tärna. The South Lappish *báanta* means one who is rich.

Anders Nilsson is mentioned in two court records from Lycksele, one in connection with the ecclesiastical court held by the well known dean of Umeå, Nils Grubb. Another Granby Saami, Sjul Sjulsson, was reported for beginning to "play" on his magic drum, when the schoolboy Erik Gerano was about to pray. Sjulsson confessed "saying that he had played in order to find out if he would be lucky with the animal trap he planned." Four other Saamis were denounced for the possession and use of drums. The fourth of these was Anders Nilsson Pont. According to the court record:

"Olof Pålsson of Gran witnessed that it was true and that he himself had seen the drum in his home. But the said Anders Nilsson Pont is not present at this moment" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 130; cf Manker 1938, 700)

During the period January 12-16, 1722, a district assizes was also held in Lycksele, where it became evident that a number of Saamis in Rana and Vapsten had drums in their possession and were using them. The court's judgement begins as follows:

"The district assizes, on the basis of the above examination and the personal confession of the Lapps, can do no other than find that through the use of their drums or drumming to gather information on the whereabouts of lost reindeer, and otherwise predict whether their hunting expeditions would be successful, have thereby used superstition and signs etc. and thus been liable to the penalty prescribed in his Majesty's revised Ordinance on Oaths and Swearing of October 17, 1687 & 9, and inasmuch as the Royal Ordinance decrees that the penalty should be applied according to each person's age and understanding, and all of these Lapps are now come to a ripe age; but are nonetheless foolish in their Christianity" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 130 f, cf Manker 1938, 701)

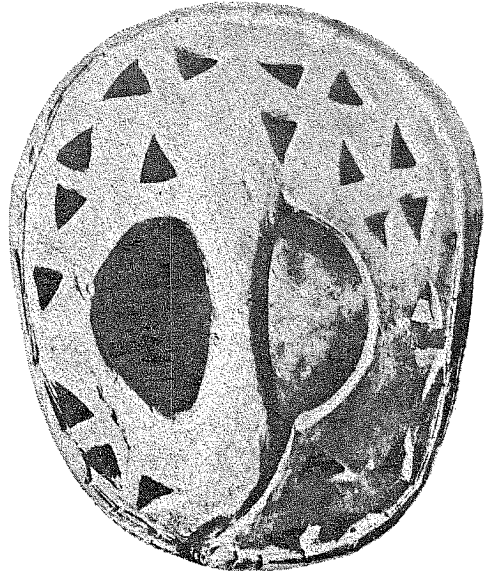


Fig 3 The bottom of the bowl drum with its characteristic handle

Abb 757. Trommel Nr 45 Bodenseite 1 2.

Di i io I ä ge 3 8 Breit 55 Tiefe ii B le 85 : li S it  
 w 14—53 l it; Plantin.; Högel ä sh gefä t y fi ge<sup>m</sup>  
 l p ti Breiteninde 80.2; Tief le 267  
 M t al d Konstruktion (Abb. 125 1133) D R 1 f Hol a t Kiet :

The Saamis in question were to hand over their drums by the following assizes at the latest, whilst the question of punishment was to be decided in the Court of Appeal Sentence was pronounced on November 28, 1723, and consisted of eight days imprisonment and one compulsory Sunday church attendance,

“and let them be solemnly forewarned to restrain hereafter from such ungodliness, if they wish to avoid a severer punishment; and they should also be made to give up their drums immediately, if this was not already done” (UUB N 348, n:o 49)

The sentence also became known on the Norwegian side and is mentioned in a letter from Thomas von Westen dated July 29, 1724 The “apostle of the Lapps” criticised the sentence and urged that enlightenment was more appropriate than secular punishment (Hammond 1787, 522) Pont avoided serving the sentence by his decease It was probably after this that the drum was handed over to Pastor Olaus Graan in Lycksele

Reuterskiöld and Wiklund believe that Anders Nilsson was a forest Saami and that his drum therefore represents a more or less current type among the forest Saami in the northern part of Lycksele lappmark (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 133; cf Wiklund 1930, 95) In this context they observed that Pont's home was at Sorsele near the church Graan or Granbyn was nevertheless a mountain Saami area Further more, the possibility cannot be excluded that Pont did not settle here until he was older In any case, it does not seem justified to limit this type of drum exclusively to the forest Saami area Nowadays, reindeer herding among the forest Saamis is practised no more within Sorsele and Stensele parishes, while it is still being carried on in the neighbouring parishes of Arvidsjaur, Arjeplog and Malå

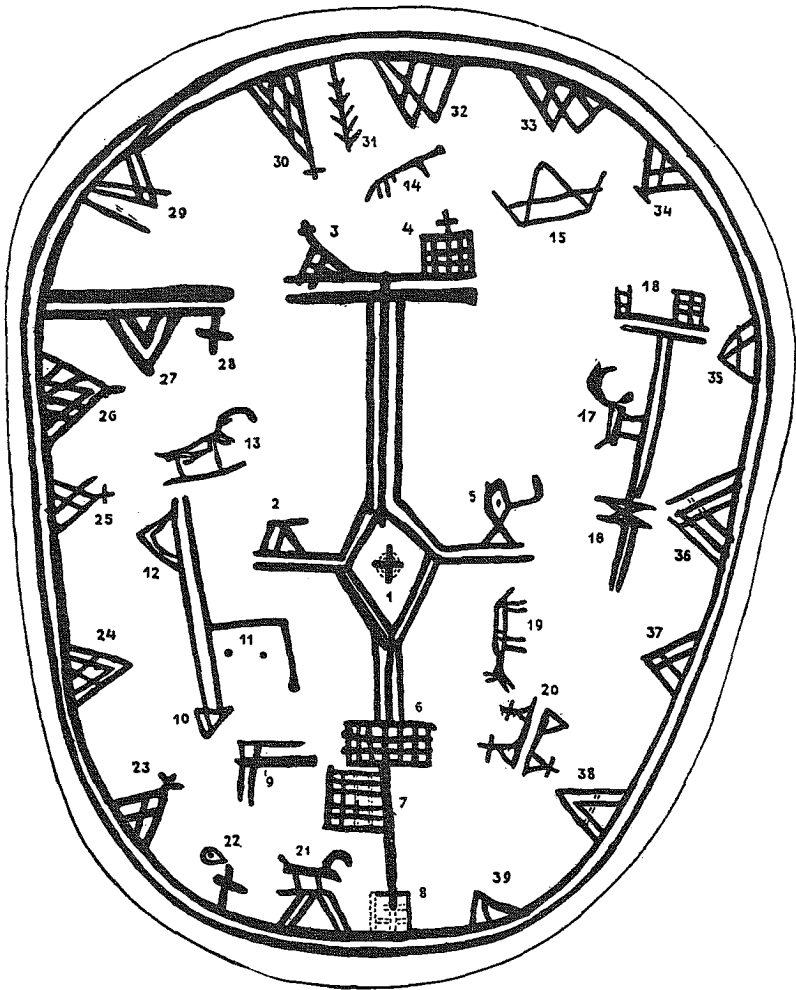
### Symbol analysis

In construction, Pont's *gievrre* is a so called bowl drum with an egg-like oval shape It is about 32 cm long by 25 cm across and made from clean pine, not spruceroot as Plantin claims in the course of his drum interpretation The skin is of reindeer hide Plantin writes:

"The cover on which the drawing is made, as with other drum skins, is probably of reindeer calf, particularly as it is fairly thin" The colour is yellowish-grey to yellowish-brown and the skin is fastened by two plaited sinews The painting of the figures has been done, as was the custom, with alder-bark colouring Plantin does not seem to be aware of this method, as he writes: "The painting is red, doubtless of human or other animal blood" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 140; cf Lundmark 1983, 79)

The Sorsele type is defined by Manker as "Schalentrommel mit Bemalung von wesentlich Åseletypcharakter; Darstellung stark vereinfacht und schematisch" (Manker 1938, 97) Of the different figures on the Linnaeus drum, it is in fact only the reindeer that are naturalistically portrayed The spatial division largely corresponds to what is normal for drums in Åsele lappmark There is no explicit tripartite division, whilst the sign of the sun dominates in the middle with two horizontal and two vertical rays There is the possible suggestion of a horizontal bipartite division, since to the left there is a double line, with another similar one on the ray of the rising sun

Right from his very first contact with the Linnaeus drum, Reuterskiöld maintained that the pictures were mainly arranged as on the



*Fig. 4* A tracing of the symbols on the Sorsele drum with the numbering made by Ernst Manker and Harald Faith Ell

The animal world is represented by the reindeer bull (fig 13), the beaver (fig 14) and the wolf (fig 19). The boat symbol (fig. 15) is a reference to the small birch bark boats which used to be sacrificed at Christmas time. There is a possible connection here with the lunar cult.

Among the female deities one may note *Rana nejte* with the distaff (fig 29), "the goddess of the first greenery" together with *Saraahka Juoksaahka* and *Oksaahka* (figs 37-39), who were responsible for man's creation and for the supervision of the newly born.

Åsele type, "but the body of the drum is of another type. Furthermore, the figures of divinities are drawn in a schematic, straight-lined way, which does not occur on any other known drum." This author only finds "Biexolmai and Gissenolmai (the summer and winter weather gods) more or less individually worked out" (Reuterskiöld 1910, 18). This is probably a reference to nos 5 and 2 in Manker's numbering. The interpretation of fig 5 also largely corresponds to Manker's "*Bieggolmai (Bieggagalles), der Wind*" (Manker 1950, 364). In a despatch from Dean Henric Forbus to the King, dated March 29, 1727, the following comment is made on the Wind-man: "summer god, presiding over weather and wind, water and sea. An offering is made to him of a wooden shovel" (Källskrifter 1910, 33). In the latter's *addenda* and *corrigenenda* from the same year, this remark is clarified: "Bieckolmai is made offerings of a wooden shovel or more precisely when an offering is made to him, a shovel is set up in his honour and left standing where it is" (Källskrifter 1910, 64). Hans Skanke provides the following characterisation of the "Wind-man" or *Bjegsgalles*: "the Wind god, who throws out weather and storms with his shovel, which they called *Korwo*" (Källskrifter 1910, 100; cf *IpS gåajvodh*, to scoop). Among the Vapsten Saami it was said that

"Veiro, the wind, shovels snow for the blizzard. Regarding Veiro, there was an amusing anecdote according to which he previously possessed a whole *gåivo*, or shovel, and then he shovelled snow so that it was impossible to live in the country, but the shovel fortunately broke, so he was left with only half a shovel, and then the country became habitable" (Pettersson 1979, 86; cf *IpS vaeyroe*).

Linnaeus's drum has the outline of a shovel. On several drums *Biegge-ålmaj* appears with two wind shovels. Bistock's interpretation of this figure is as follows: "the east of the world where things are better" while Plantin writes: "the Eastern end of the World". In his interpretation, Bistock clearly refers to Biegge ålmaj's character of a "summer god" and the east as the summer cardinal point.

Reuterskiöld's first interpretation of fig 2 as "the god of winter weather" is rejected by the writer in a later analysis. The prefix Gissen or Jisen corresponds to *jysie* in the sense of "hoar frost on the grass". Forbus writes: "Gissen Olmai, a god presiding over weather, snow and ice. Offerings are made to him so that the ice will not harm the reindeer, and so that the snowstorms will stop" (Källskrifter 1910, 33; cf Sidenius's account in Källskrifter 1910, 57). Manker's interpretation is: "*Horagalles, das Gewitter*" (Manker 1950,



362) Corresponding to fig 5 Bistock suggests: "the Western end of the world, where he is sent by the sorcerer so that he will not return to his people again" while Plantin summarises: "the Western end of the World" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 137) It is with reference to Friis's second drum and Forbus's drum that Reuterskiöld and Wiklund introduce *Hora-galles* into the discussion of this figure (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 151)

In this context we should also mention Arvid Thuresson's interpretation of figs 10–11, i.e. "the church of the evil dead one" and "the wild path on which he sends sorcerers so that they will not find their right way home again" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 138) Manker interprets figs 10–12 in a single context: "*Saivo* (?) oder *passe*, ein heiliges Gebiet, mit Koten, den Wohnstätten der Unterirdischen (10 und 12) sowie ein von dort führender Irrweg (?11)" (Manker 1950, 365) Bistock nevertheless gives no 12 as a "Christian church" and the double line unnumbered by Manker as "the way between the church of the dead and the church of the living" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 138) In the complex of figures 16–18 the double line is also ignored by Manker, whilst Bistock characterizes it as "the path to Christianity" The break below the line he interprets as "a sickbed, where the person will lie sick who has acted against the soothsayer" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 138) No 16 is interpreted by Manker, on the other hand, as "*Saivo* mit Lager" and no 17 as "Rentieren (Manker 1950, 367) Bistock claims that the reindeer figure reproduces "*áppe godo*" i.e. *áhpi-goddi* (1pN), *aabie-gedtie* (1pS) The name can be interpreted as "the wild reindeer of the sea" or "the wild reindeer of the great bog", which would also be connected with the *nájd* (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 137 f). Manker would like to interpret no 18 as "graves", whilst for Bistock it stands as "the greatest world" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 137 f.) Here, Manker's predecessor finds "the place provided on many southern drums for the '*ristabalgis*'", i.e. the Christian path (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 154)

The examples already mentioned show that the pattern of interpretation for the Åsele drums has been decisive for Manker in his reading of the signs on Anders Nilsson Pont's drum from Sorsele Analogies with the drum material from south of the Umeå river have prevented Arved Thuresson Bistock's analysis from being applicable to any great extent The latter's presumed familiarity with Rana and Sorsele drums for geographical reasons has not appreciably influenced Manker's suggestions for interpretation As an additional example we may mention fig 33 Here Bistock finds "Thor who reigns" (Reuter

skiöld & Wiklund 1912, 139) In his introduction the latter also mentions "raideie" (IpS *raejrie*) i.e. "the thunderer" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 136) As previously suggested, fig 2 is the thunder god in Manker's opinion, whilst fig 33 is interpreted as: "*Radienakka* or *Radienattje*" (Manker 1950, 371)

(With reference to the sun symbol fig 1, see the section entitled "the Sun on the Drum" in Lundmark 1982, 39 ff)

By all accounts, then, Pont was allowed to keep the drum until his death, but was not able to carry it with him to the grave Where he departed this life, we cannot ascertain If the drum was a summary of his beliefs, he was expected in one the three underworlds included in figs 6-8 Bistock's interpretation here is: (6) "nearest hell, Or as the Lapps say *Jamei aimo*, (7) middle hell, Or *siappes-aimo*, (8) great hell or *rotta land* as the Lapps call it and which is the lowest" (Reuterskiöld & Wiklund 1912, 138) In this case, the interpretation is accepted by Manker The meaning of *Tjeephes aajmoe* becomes more or less "the black world"

When Bäckman discusses Saami notions of the realm of the dead, she sees one possibility that "life after death was differentiated, since the idea that different kinds of death result in different destinations after death, was found elsewhere among the beliefs of the Finnish peoples" She also believes it probable that Ruto's kingdom is autochthonous on Saami territory, which does not exclude the possibility that Catholic preaching could have spread knowledge of a hell with its horrors, which was then applied to *Ruto-aajmoe* (Bäckman 1975, 109)

Perhaps Pont looked forward to existence in another world, like that described by Jessen, where he would be able to "carry on the same practices they had been used to, that is to divine, to hunt, to lie with women, eat, drink, dance, smoke and become merry with brandy" (Jessen 1767, 66) The latter bases his ideas on Hans Skanke's *Epitomes Historiae Missionis Lapponicae* Cf Manker 1961, 17 "A synthesis of *jabmeaimo* and *sarvo* motifs are conspicuous here")

The learned Linnaeus, to my knowledge, never tried personally to interpret the signs on the drum, any more than he made use of it to solve the mysteries of nature Although both the hammer of reindeer horn and the three pointers in the form of brass rings were already missing at the time of the journey to Holland, he nevertheless held a "seance" in Hamburg drumming with two sticks He later gave the drum to one of his disciples, Carl Petter Thunberg, before it went abroad once again, to the French National Museum in Paris From there it was returned to Sweden and the National Historical Museum

in exchange for a collection of Saami objects Since 1933, the so-called Linnaeus drum has been deposited at the Linnaeus museum in Uppsala (cf Lundmark 1983, 77 ff) But on the skin of the drum one can make out the name of the person who needed it right until the end: Anders Nilsson Pont from Granbyn at Sorsele on the beautiful Vindel river!

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### ABBREVIATIONS

lpN North Lappish  
lpS South Lappish

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# Traditional Saami Hunting in Relation to Drum Motifs of Animals and Hunting

BY ROLF KJELLSTRÖM

## Drum material

It was intended that I should deal with traditional Saami hunting in relation to the animal and hunting motifs on their drums. To begin with the latter, I have limited my material to southern Saami drums, i e nos 1-4, 6-42 and no 46 in Manker's list (Manker 1950). This makes a total of 42 drums, or just over half of those known. The reason I have limited myself to these is because it is possible to compile statistics for the position of animals on these drums, since the drums in question are fairly uniform in appearance, with a rhombus in the middle, from which there emerge four lines. Schematically, these drums can be divided into four fields, of which I have chosen to call the top left-hand one no 1, the top right hand one no 2, the lower left-hand one no 3 and, finally, the lower right hand one no 4. It was hoped that such a division, with statistics, would help in the interpretation of the drum's symbolism (Figs 1, 2).

## Previous literature

In matters regarding traditional Saami hunting, we do not, unfortunately, have very much information about the southern Saami territory. From the period in question — i e the time when the drums originated — we do not have very extensive material of any kind. Moreover, the material we have is only relevant for the area from which the information was taken, since Saami culture has assumed such varied forms — both chronologically and regionally — that it would be more appropriate to talk of Saami *cultures* rather than a single Saami culture. This lack of suitable source material obliges me, therefore, to speak of things with which we are not very familiar.

If we return to early accounts, it is only really Niurenius among the 17th sources used by Schefferus — and to a certain extent, Grahn and Lundius — who deal with southern Lapland. Niurenius writes

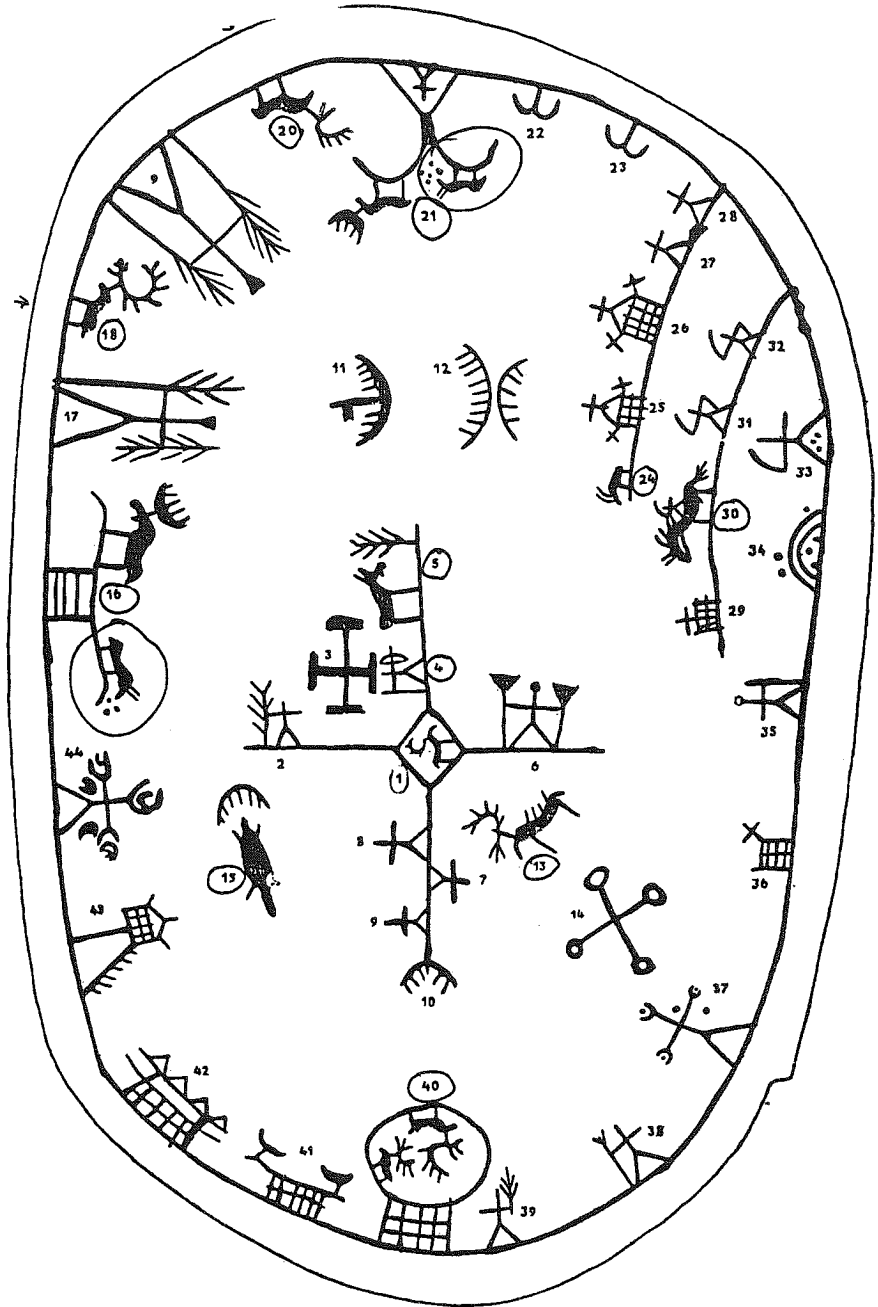


Fig 1 Southern Saami drum from Lycksele Lapp reservation, 17th century  
Nordiska Museet

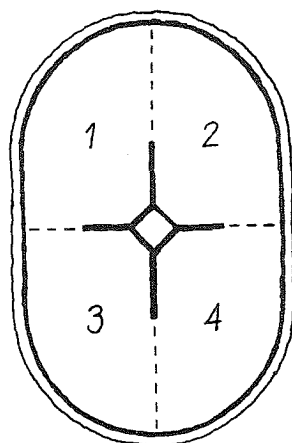


Fig 2 Diagram of the southern Saami drum

of Ume lappmark, as do Grahn and Lundius, but the latter also consider conditions in Lule lappmark. Then in the 18th century comes Linnaeus, but his experience of the southern lappmarks is strictly limited and his observations are relevant primarily for Lule lappmark.

During the 19th century there are several authors whose writings deal with the Saamis, for example Zetterstedt and Laestadius, but there is unfortunately little reference to the actual southern lappmarks (Zetterstedt 1980). More valuable here is Sigfrid Drake's book *Västerbottenslapparna* [The Lapps of Västerbotten], based in part on notes by the Reverend Nensén. Of very great value, too, are the memoirs of Kristoffer Sjulsson, which go back to the first half of the 19th century (Drake 1918; Pettersson 1979).

Then in the 20th century — in 1910 to be precise — comes Sven Ekman's extraordinary study of hunting and fishing in Norrland. This work also takes into account the older literature already mentioned (Ekman 1910).

In recent times there are a number of studies, but I should like to draw attention to the work of my colleague, Heidi Henriksson, on popular hunting and fishing in Norrland (Henriksson 1976).

As I suggested earlier, however, we are forced to admit that the material dealing with hunting among the southern Saamis is extremely thin, particularly if we limit ourselves to the period of origin — or should we rather say the assumed period of origin — of the Saami drums.

During the 18th and 19th centuries there were no major variations either. One may claim that the greatest difference lay in a hunting method, namely the one so often used of pursuit on skis.

### Preservation of the hunting method

There seems to be another fundamental aspect to hunting in the lappmarks, i.e. many of the hunting and trapping methods practised have survived over a long period of time and have a long history and tradition behind them. Admittedly, the introduction of firearms etc. has brought about certain changes in hunting patterns, but as far as the traditional Saami hunts are concerned — for predators, for example — such innovations have not noticeably changed traditional Saami methods of hunting. Right into the 20th century, the hunting of such predators as lynxes, wolves and wolverines, for example, was carried out in the form of a chase with the stick spear as the only weapon. This was regarded as being the most effective one (Kjellström 1989).

If the above arguments are true, this means firstly that we have access to a larger amount of material, since we are able to include the hunting of the Saamis and that of other country people in the same category, although this doesn't actually help us very much with regard to the early material; and secondly, that in chronological terms we can regard material gathered later as relevant for periods much earlier in time, and not limit ourselves exclusively to the period covered by the account.

### Problems of interpretation

If we now attempt to compare hunting in the historical reality of the Saamis with the picture provided by the southern Saami drums, I shall work primarily from the animals we can identify on these drums. Before I begin to interpret pictures, however, I should like to mention certain general experiences I have had in connection with this study.

One may wonder if it is possible for anyone to interpret a picture unconditionally. One has a certain ground of one's own to stand on and the question arises of whether this is the correct position, when — as in the present case — we approach another culture. We naturally include the experiences of our own culture in interpretations of another culture. Even if we try, in different ways, to adopt the point of view of another culture, we are nevertheless obliged to struggle continually with our own cultural background.

How are we to interpret reindeer horns, for example? (Fig 3). Do they represent living reindeer or merely reindeer horns, or are they quite simply symbols for both of these things together, or rather for everything connected with a reindeer? I myself don't know.



*Fig. 3* Reindeer horns

Another problem is that of actual drawing skill and the stylistic element. If I were asked to draw an animal, for example, I am very uncertain as to how others would interpret it.

One difficulty with the interpretation of pictures is that we characterize an ambiguous animal as a clearly identifiable one, if it happens to appear in the place on the drum where we have previously been able to establish with complete certainty that the animal occurs. Take a horse, for example, which normally appears in the top right hand corner. A source of error is that one believes that a hard-to-identify animal is a horse, if it turns up in the same place on the drum. Another similar example is provided by the animal in the rhombus in the middle of the southern Saami drums. It is often a reindeer, we can see, but on the other hand it is sometimes difficult to decide what the animal in question is, although in these cases, too, it is tempting to assume that it is a reindeer.

In a number of cases I have tried testing my informants with respect to animals which are hard to identify, and it has proved difficult to obtain a uniform result.

I am not trying to suggest that I have avoided errors like those I have discussed above, but I mention them because they exist for me as for everybody else. Naturally, it must help if one is on the look-out for them. In the following, therefore, I have chosen to present only those interpretations of drums of which I am fairly certain.

### Animals and hunting

#### *Reindeer hunting*

The animal that seems most appropriate to begin with is the reindeer, which is the commonest species of animal on the southern Saami drums.

Traditionally, the reindeer has occurred partly in the wild and partly in a domesticated variety. Wild reindeer more or less disappeared from the southern lappmarks in the first half of the 18th century, according to Ekman, but this does not exclude the possibility that wild reindeer were shot later in the same century and even into the 19th century. Above all, there may have been a few wild reindeer left in the fells. Otherwise one may probably assume that the reindeer which were shot

later were actually domesticated reindeer that had gone wild, which is another matter (Ekman 1910, 16)

Niurenius mentions several ways in which the Saamis hunted reindeer at the beginning of the 17th century, and Lundius describes conditions in the 1660's and 1670's, where he mentions the lure for the reindeer of the great forest bogs, which gave rise to hunts by the forest Saamis in these places (Niurenius 1905, 17, Lundius 1905, 11) From Lycksele lappmark it is also mentioned that the forest Saamis often let the fell Saamis "glide after reindeer" in the 1670's It was in the interests of the reindeer owning Saamis that the wild reindeer disappeared, since they could make domesticated reindeer feel restless and even go wild

It is clear, according to Ekman, that wild reindeer were common in the 1650's and later in certain southern Saami areas (Ekman 1910, 8 f)

Some of the hunting methods used included *stalking*, where the hunter tried to get into a certain position in relation to his prey It was doubtless customary to seek out the passes traditionally used by reindeer This kind of hunting must have been particularly effective when it was combined with *battue*, so that some hunters drove the reindeer in an agreed direction whilst others were detailed to stand at a pass Different kinds of side fencing were used on these occasions, and there was one special kind of hunting called *vuobma*, which meant precisely fence Hunting with *pits* was certainly enhanced by the fact that the reindeer were driven on so they became nervous, as a result of which they were forced to make rapid — and for them perhaps fatal — choices of direction The driving of reindeer could also be directed towards a natural ravine or something similar

Hunting with a tame reindeer as *decoy* was mentioned by Ottar, as we know, in the early part of the 19th century Even if this source refers to a completely different area, there is reason to assume that the method in question was practised in all lappmarks

Traps were also set, in which the reindeer fastened by their antlers Amongst other places, this is known from Lycksele lappmark

In addition there was a kind of shoot in Lycksele lappmark, the so called reindeer drive

For weapons, bows and arrows were probably very important Spears could also be used in certain situations

At the same time as reindeer were hunted, the Saamis also had domesticated animals Doubtless the Saamis for a long time had numbers of tame reindeer, used to entice wild reindeer, to pull loads and perhaps also to provide milk

*Reindeer on the Drums (Fig 4)*

The reindeer is the most frequently recurring animal on the drums and is found pictured on almost all the southern drums except two, where figures of reindeer horns nevertheless appear. It is possible, as suggested above, that certain horn pictures should be interpreted as reindeer, but I have chosen in the following account to start from clearly portrayed animals.

The reindeer is often excellently characterized in a simple form. It is easy to see that it is above all the male reindeer — perhaps the wild male reindeer — that has captured the artist's interest, with the antlers drawn in an impressive manner. Reindeer cows and calves are not portrayed to anything like the same extent. There aren't any large herds occurring on the drums either, but two or three figures are then made to suggest the herd.

In the centre of the southern Saami drums — in the actual rhombus — there are clearly defined reindeer in 11 cases.

Often the reindeer figures stand alone on one of the three upper rays of the sun figure, or on the left-hand edge of the drum but rarely on the right-hand side, or floating freely in the middle of the picture surface.

All in all, there are a total of 349 clearly drawn reindeer figures. As regards their position in the four distinct main fields, I have found in the centre: 11 figures; in field no 1: 118; in field no 2: 52; in field no 3: 104; in field no 4: 64.

If we divide the drum into a left hand and a right-hand side, we see that the left half has 222 figures and the right half 116. There are thus roughly double the number of reindeer figures on the left-hand side compared to the right.

It is interesting to establish to what extent and where on the drum domestic reindeer occur. Manker has described a number of combinations of figures, where he suggests that domestic reindeer are involved: for example, when the reindeer have been drawn near figures suggesting a settlement etc. For my own part, I have found several Iron Age sites in the Swedish fells, where it has emerged quite clearly that the inhabitants of the settlement had lived very close to trapping areas for wild reindeer, so I would not dare to share Manker's interpretation in this particular case. Another element in the figures where I have not adapted Manker's interpretation, either, concerns what Manker regards as a reindeer enclosure, and which occurs on the Åsele drums. I believe that Manker's interpretation may very well be correct, but

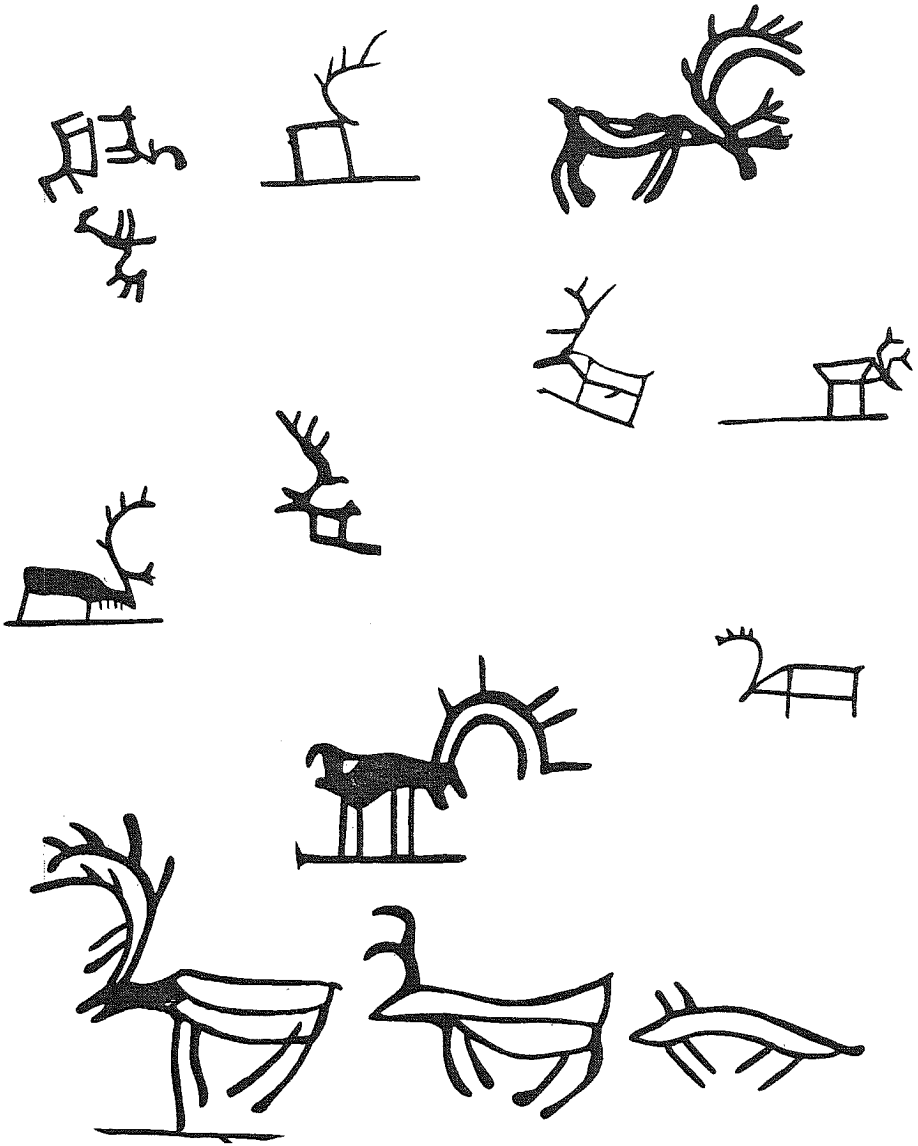


Fig 4 Reindeer figures.

as it happens to be the case that constructions similar to reindeer enclosures were also used in hunting wild reindeer, I have not wished to commit myself to the same interpretation as Manker

For my own part, I have only been willing to regard the figure as a tame reindeer when one sees the reindeer figure in front of a sledge (Fig 5) We have 13 clear cases of this in the material, distributed over three of the drum's fields — but not however in field number 3

I have not been able to identify any milking scene

We will leave the reindeer by pointing out that, of the more than 600 figures I believe I have identified on the southern Saami drums, over half of them or, more precisely, 58% are reindeer

## *Elks*

### *Elk hunting*

The elk has been, and still is, an important quarry, occurring in the rich traditional lore of the Saamis, where it also constitutes one of the Saami constellations

The strange thing about the elk is that it disappeared from the lappmarks for a time — at least from the southern ones — to return around the 1860's Whether the presence of the elk varied as much in former times as it has done in the last 100 years is something we do not know for certain But we do know that, for a long time previously, the elk had been an important quarry Hunting with a dog doubtless played a part at a fairly early stage, whether it was allowed to run loose or kept under control Stalking was also practised with this animal, although — as distinct from the reindeer — the elk is not a gregarious animal (except in the winter) and so the drive probably didn't produce the same results as this method of hunting did for reindeer.

Pursuit on skis was very important It was necessary to find a trail, approach the animal and then — when one got close to it — move at top speed In deep snow and with a hard frozen crust it was very tiring for the elk and eventually painful, too, when the sharp crust began to lacerate the elk's legs This method had a devastating effect on the elk population, since a skilful and persistent skier could catch the elk after half a day

Of other methods for catching elks we may mention pits, together with so-called elk baits and shooting

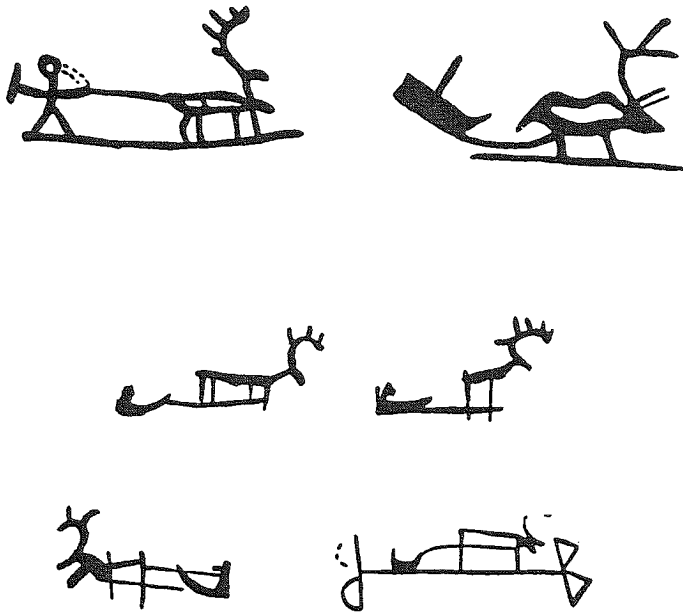


Fig 5 Sleighs drawn by reindeer

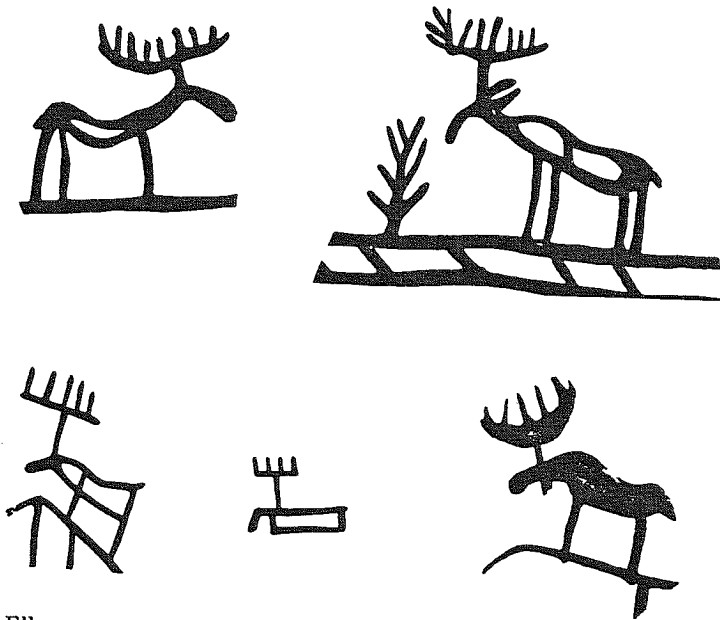


Fig 6 Elk

*Elk figures on the drums (Fig 6)*

It has been possible to identify elks on half of the southern Saami drums. It may be mentioned, moreover, that on Saami drums from other areas elks hardly occur at all — with only one exception. As a drum motif, therefore, the elk is a clearly southern phenomenon, and it is possible that this picture of the animal's distribution corresponds to the actual distribution at the time when the drums originated.

The elk figures are often naturalistically portrayed and very convincingly drawn. Even if the figure is done schematically, the bull in particular is easy to identify.

The elk figure is often placed on the upward pointing ray of the sun sign, but also out on the left hand edge of the drum.

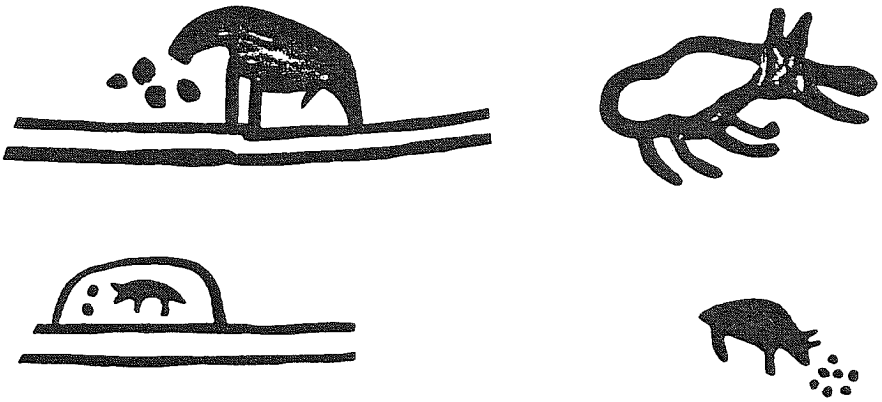
The 33 elk figures identified are distributed as follows on the drum: on field no 1: 20; on field no 2: 7; on field no 3: 6; on field no 4: 0. With another criterion of distribution, this means 26 animals in the left half against only seven in the right. No animal appears in the bottom right-hand corner.

*Bears*

We now move on to the bear. The commonest method of hunting the bear was probably to discover in the autumn where the bear had gone to hibernate, in order to return later in the spring and take the bear in or around his lair. The importance of the bear hunt for the Lapps is well documented and quite familiar, and I do not therefore think it is worth dwelling on the hunt and all the customs that have been connected with it. As is well known, the bear has occupied a central position not only in the conceptual world of the Saamis, but also in that of other arctic peoples.

Among the different kinds of Saami hunts, that for the bear was accorded the greatest status, and talented bear hunters had a high reputation. It has also been fairly widely practised. I shall mention a minor detail with a personal connection: I own a modest little hut at the foot of Löfjället in Tärna parish. Of the few hunters that lived in that area in the 19th century, Ol Sjulsson killed about 90 bears and Kristoffer Sjulsson's father, Lång Sjul Larsson, 83 bears. Kristoffer Sjulsson himself killed 26 bears. This perhaps gives an idea of the extent of bear hunting.

Regarding the incidence of bears on the drums, Manker's and my own interpretations differ considerably. Whereas Manker finds that after the reindeer, the bear is the commonest figure on the drums,



*Fig 7* Bear



*Fig 8* Figures described by Manker as bear figures

I have only been able to identify three figures as bears. The reader himself can obtain an idea of the problem by examining figs 7 and 8. Two things should be born in mind when comparing my interpretations with those of Manker: firstly, how the animals have been drawn; and secondly, how they are combined with other objects portrayed.

As far as appearances are concerned, many of the figures identified by Manker as bears have something like protruding ears or horns, which make it more reasonable to suppose that we are dealing with cattle, if one must guess at all. I cannot in any case identify them as bears.

The second point concerns a number of black dots — ranging from two to almost a dozen — which are often to be found in front of the muzzle of Manker's bear figures. These dots have been given different interpretations, but Manker has plumped for that of Lybecker, that they represent berries, the bear's food.



Against this interpretation one could say a great deal, but I will limit myself to the point that — if there is any kind of proportion between these so called blueberries and the bear — then the berries must have been very large ones

It is quite clear to me that Manker has had a tendency to interpret all figures with these spots in front of them as bears, since this solution presented itself for one particular drum

### *Wolves*

#### *The wolf hunt*

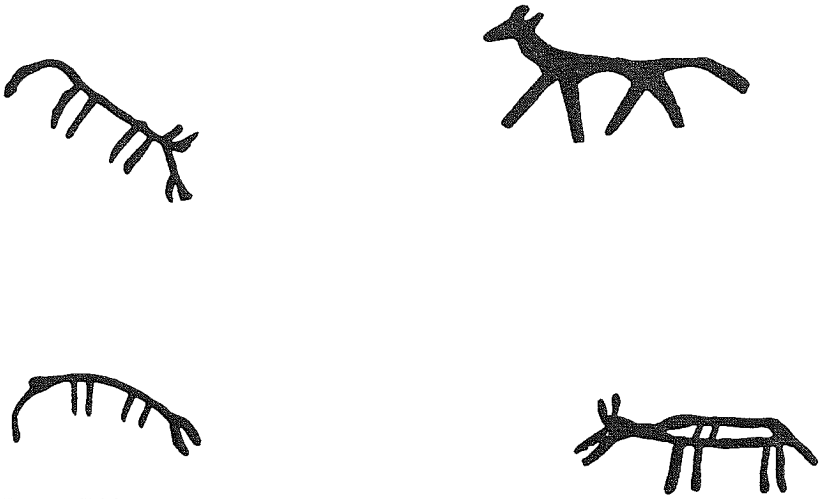
The wolf was an animal feared and hated by the Saami if not actually regarded as despicable, but the wolf hunt was not thought to be as honourable as the bear hunt. The wolf posed a threat both to the domesticated reindeer and to domestic cattle in general. The Saamis, in particular, were regarded as good wolf hunters. In these wolf hunts an almost unbelievable persistence and toughness were required, together with courage. In general, the animal was pursued under snow conditions which favoured the skier rather than the wolf. These hunts could go on for days and perhaps weeks. Often several people cooperated, so that one was in front on the trail, whilst others were so called sack bearers.

There is every reason to believe that the wolf hunt held great interest for the Saamis.

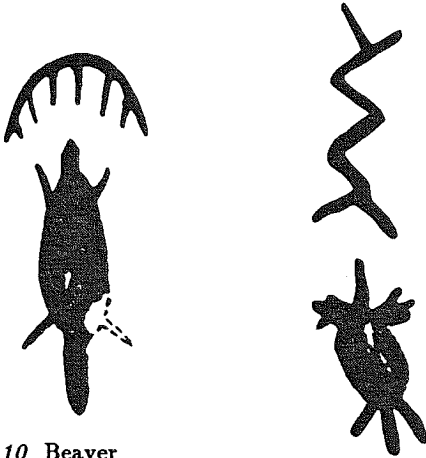
#### *Wolves on the drums (Fig 9)*

If we turn to the drums, the wolf is often characteristically drawn with big ears and exaggeratedly large jaws.

The wolf was one of the commoner figures and occurs on southern Saami drums with 14 figures. They feature above all in the lower half, in fields 3 and 4, and only one figure is found in field 2, but no figure in field 1. The majority definitely occur in field 4.



*Fig 9 Wolf*



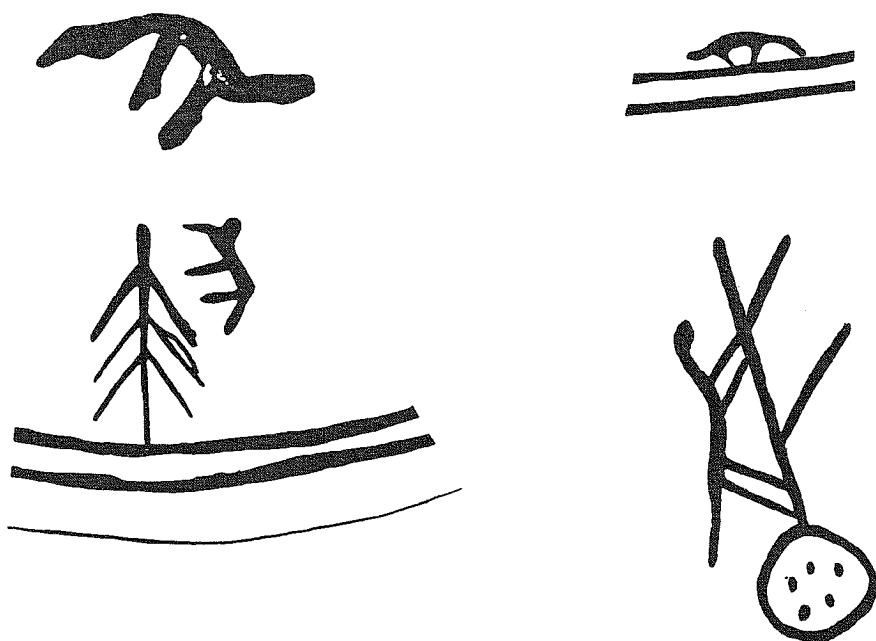
*Fig 10 Beaver*

### *Beavers*

The beaver was a particularly sought after quarry for some time. Above all, it was the beaver "milk", the gland secretion, that was desirable. The beaver was caught by the Saamis in nets or in pots.

I have not, however, been able to find anything on the drums corresponding to the economic importance that the beaver must have had.

On the drums in question I can only identify two figures as beavers with any certainty, and it is these which can be seen in the figure (Fig 10).



*Fig 11* Wolverine, marten etc

*Wolverines (Fig 11)*

The wolverine is regarded by the Lapps as a particularly contemptible animal

This animal was regarded as crafty, and it also spread a most intolerable smell when chased by dogs

Furthermore, the meat was seldom eaten. The wolverine was therefore killed above all for reasons of prevention, in order to keep the reindeer in peace

The normal method of hunting for the Saamis was to ski after it and club it to death. But wolverines were also caught in wolverine traps or killed in so called spear gins

To distinguish the wolverine on the drum is not so easy, and confusion may occur, for example, with bears or other predators. I have only been able to find one in my material

*Martens*

Martens were keenly hunted by the Saamis and the implements used were nets, which they took with them on their trips

It is difficult if not impossible to establish clearly the incidence of the marten on southern Saami drums, but it is possible that it could be one of the figures occurring there

*Foxes*

The fox probably had little importance for the reindeer-herding Saami. The fox was not edible game and it was no major threat to the reindeer either. For those Saamis who devoted themselves to hunting, however, fox hunting was economically rewarding as the skins were often highly prized.

On the drum there are three figures which I understand to be foxes (Fig 12)



Fig 12 Fox



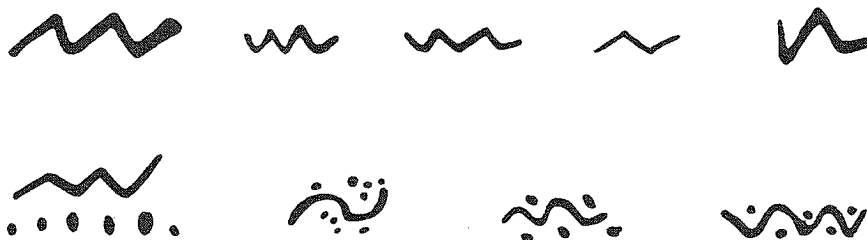
Fig 13 Lynx

*Lynxes*

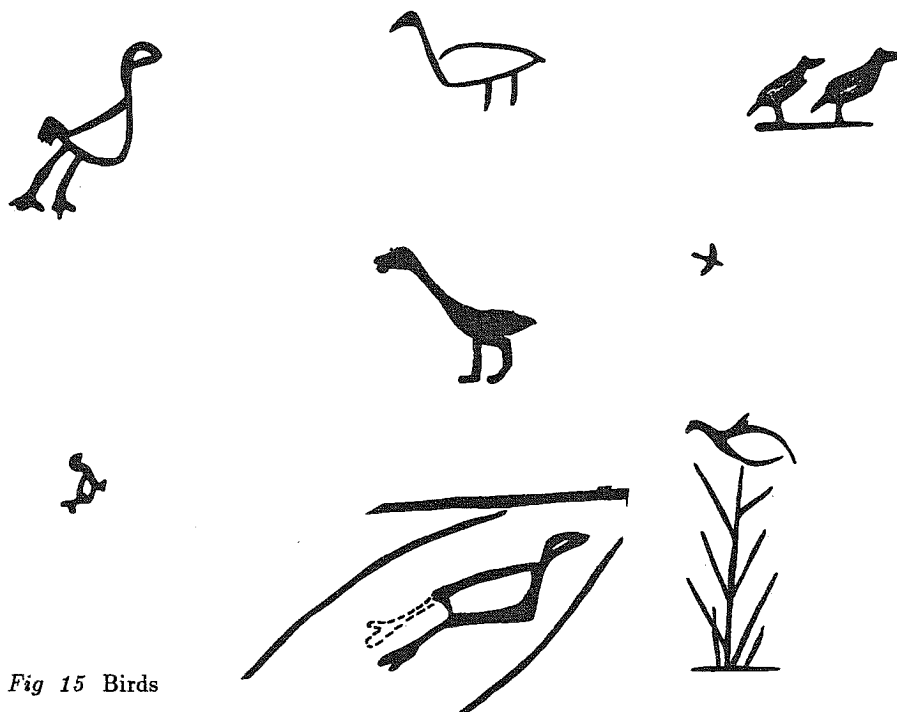
The lynx was hunted by the Saamis, for example, by tracking. On the drums I have only been able to identify one lynx figure (Fig 13)

*Snakes*

The snake or the zig zag pattern is discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this volume, and I therefore limit myself to mentioning that the drums contain twenty two figures of this type, of which twenty-one — that is, all but one — occur on the left hand half of the drum. It is thus a figure which occurs fairly frequently (Fig 14)



*Fig 14 Snake*



*Fig 15 Birds*

*Birds*

The Saami hunted birds, above all moreland birds, i.e. capercaillie, black grouse and hazel grouse, as well as ptarmigan and sea birds. The most important device for catching them was a trap made of tendons, which were later replaced by other material. The diver was caught with nets. Egg covering was practised.

Birds are represented on the drums (Fig 15) by edible forest birds, but also by sea birds as well as goose and crane. In the material I have been able to find seven birds, of which all but one appear on the left half of the drum.



Fig 16 Horse



Fig 17 Horse according to Manker's interpretation

### *Unknown animals*

A number of animals could not be identified at all. As far as position is concerned, they appear in all four fields and there are, all told, no less than sixty two examples. Manker has defined several of these figures unknown to me as "noid animals" or "saivo animals".

### **Domestic animals**

#### *Horses*

Of the domesticated animals, we shall first mention the horse (Fig 16). This figure occurs in twenty nine cases.

All of these occur in the second field and have roughly the same position: on the edge up towards the right of the drum.

Manker has a few more examples on what he thinks might be horses (Fig 17).

*Goats*

The goat is another domestic animal (Fig 18) Of this animal we have an estimated twenty-five examples Like the horse, the goat also has its own position: over four fifths occur in field 2



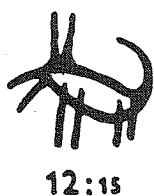
*Fig 18* Goat

*Cattle*

With cattle there is some uncertainty. Manker has often characterised animals with horns as bears, which I find difficult to accept If my calculations are correct, most of these are in field 1, but there are also some in fields 2 and 3, although none in 4

*Dogs*

The dog occurs occasionally on the drums and is so well reproduced that one can even speculate as to what breed it is (Fig 19)



*Fig 19* Dog

### Summary of the incidence of animals on the drum

If one tries to distinguish the certain domestic animals and begins with reindeer, horse and goat, one may state as follows: there are five animals in field 1, no animals in field 3, seven animals in field 4. In field 2 there are no less than fifty five, i.e. 82%

If we exclude reindeer from this material and only consider goat + horse, there are fifty in field 2 (= 92%) and 4% in fields 1 and 3 respectively, and of course still 0% in field 3

If we examine the complete animal material, we thus find:

In the centre: 2%	In field 1 32%	In field 2: 23%
In field 3: 27%	In field 4: 16%	

I have mentioned the different positions of the animals above because I presume that historians of religion may have some help from this in their interpretation of the drum's symbolism

### Weapons on the drum and in reality

Finally, a few words about the Saamis' hunting weapons. The most important of these were the bow and arrow, and the spear or spear shaft. Of these weapons it is the bow which is most often portrayed on drums (see Fig. 20) and this weapon seems to have been used in hunting both large and small animals. Later came the crossbow but there is no certain evidence of the use of this weapon found on drums.

The sticks or staves that can sometimes be seen in connection with the portrayal of human figures may very well be spears or stick-spears — that is, an implement which was both ski-stick and weapon.

How the split tip on the sticks or the spear is to be explained I don't know, and I don't have any good suggestions either. The only thing I can imagine, if one bears in mind that we are dealing with a weapon, is that it might be a horn protector for the spear edge. The occurrence of a split arrow is easier to explain.



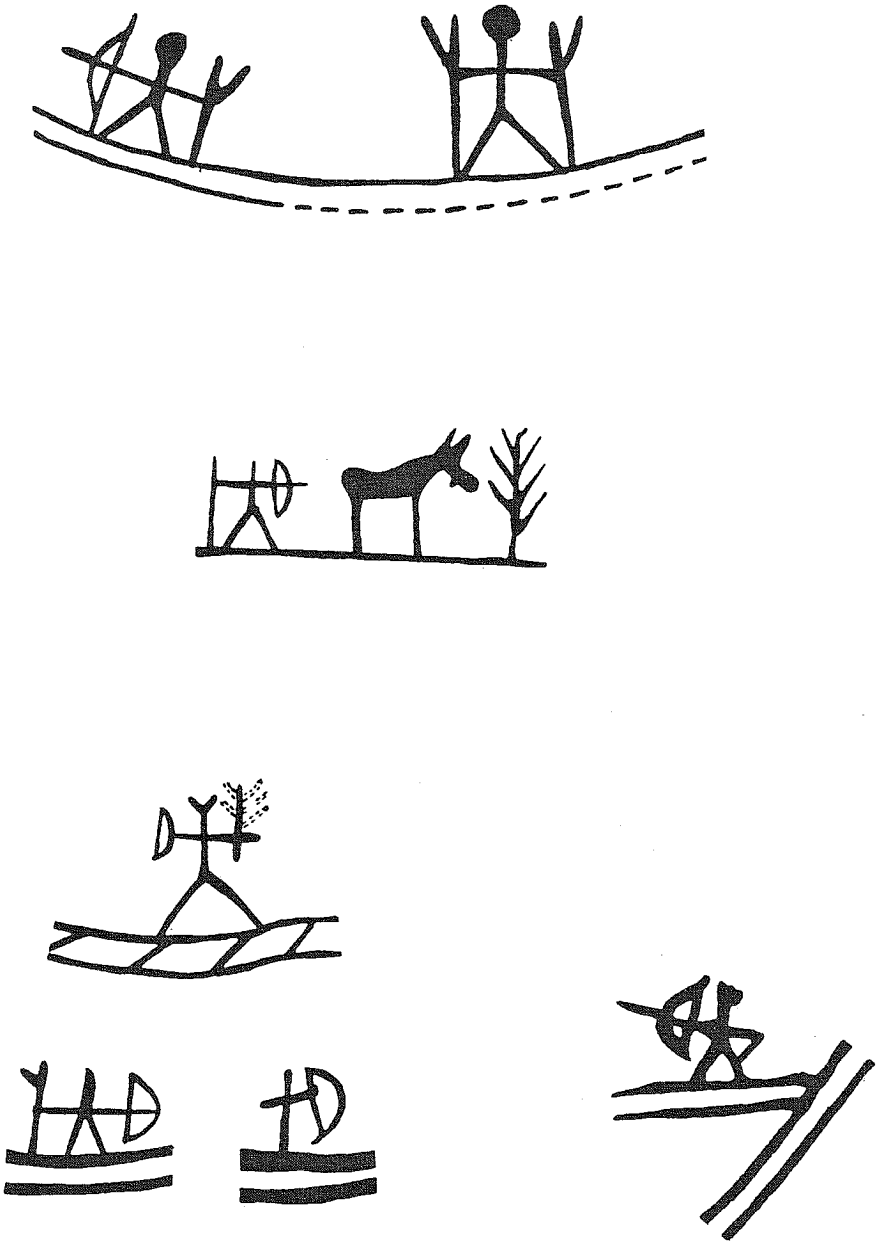


Fig 20 Weapons

### Summary of catching methods

Some trapping implement like a gin may appear on a drum. But in general we have little or no information about hunting or trapping methods at all. As has been apparent from this lecture the drums contain greater numbers of pictures of animals assumed to have played an important part in the conceptual world of the Saamis, such as the domestic cattle of neighbouring peoples, predators, the elk and — above all — the reindeer.

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# Different Ways of Classifying Drums with Reference to Illustrations and Positioning of Drum Illustrations

BY ROLF KJELLSTRÖM

## Drum types with reference to illustrations

- I Without obvious divisions
- II Square cross as unifying central figure
  - a) ordinary square cross
  - b) with three vertical lines
- III Drum with *one* horizontal main line
  - A *Whole* line
    - a) with square cross
    - b) with other complete vertical line
    - c) without vertical line
  - B *Line broken in the middle*
  - C Line not going out to edge
    - a) with further vertical line
  - D *Whole* lines
    - a) with square cross
- IV Drums with two horizontal lines
  - A Whole lines
    - a) without connecting vertical line
    - b) with connecting vertical line
  - B Broken lines
  - C One whole line + one broken
    - a) with square cross or similar
- V Drums with four horizontal lines

## POSITION OF DRUM FIGURES

## I Position in relation to signs on drum

1 *Horizontal lines*1 1 *Drum division*

- 1 1 1 Line 1
- 1 1 2 Line 2
- 1 1 3 Line 3
- 1 1 4 Line 4

1 2 *Other lines*

- 1 2 1 Square cross
- 1 2 2 Lines branching out from rhombus
- 1 2 3 Other horizontal lines

2 *Vertical lines*

- 2 1 Lines joining 2 horizontal lines
- 2 2 Vertical bar of square cross
- 2 3 Other central vertical lines
- 2 4 Other lines vertical to the side
- 2 5 Vertical lines going out to the edge of the frame

3 *Spaces*

The various spaces on the drum are numbered differently, so that the horizontal lines are indicated as B1, no 2 from the top = B2 etc

The *space* which is formed by the top part of the drum and the first horizontal line is called U1

Depending on whether it is the right hand or the left hand *side*, the space is called 1 or 2 The next unit on the left-hand side is 3 and on the opposite side 4 etc Uneven numbers here thus refer to the left hand side

4 *Position with reference to the above-mentioned surface or space*

- 4 1 "on it"
- 4 2 near
- 4 3 floating freely
- 4 4 in relation to the square cross:

- 4.4.1. over the centre of the square cross
- 4.4.2. under the centre of the square cross
- 4.4.3. all along the square cross
- 4.4.4. all along the square cross and under it

5. *Connection between figures*

With one "main" figure and "xx figures". The position is recorded with a figure 1-12 in relation to the main figure (clockwise).

**II. Position without relation to other signs**

Every figure is given a centre of gravity. Its position determines the figure's place on the drum, which is divided into ten percent portions vertically and horizontally. We thus obtain concentric figures.

# The Saami Shaman's Drum and the Star Horizons

BY BO SOMMARSTRÖM



The aim of this contribution to research on the magic drums used by the Saami people during the 17th and 18th centuries is principally to examine more closely one basic prerequisite for my previous studies concerning possible *influences of stellar constellations on the positioning* of the drum figures. Since I have tried to maintain that certain of the drum figures seem to have a similar position to corresponding figures on traditional star maps, both with respect to single star constellations and to some members of the Zodiac circle, it would be natural to ask the following question: which of these star constellations could possibly have been *seen by the Saamis with their own eyes at the latitudes where they live?* And which constellations are not observable at all and could therefore only have influenced the Saamis by hearsay? The answers to these questions would naturally affect the hypothesis, which is based on the importance of orientation by the cardinal points as the common basis for comparisons between the star maps or related astrolabes, used by the neighbouring Nordic peoples, and the drumheads of the Saamis. The degree of possibility to observe the stars depends on their brightness, on variations in their visibility according to seasons, and on the most fundamental factor theoretically determining the limits for local visibility, i.e. the *star horizons*.

Before we consider the visibility of certain constellations for latitudes where Saamis live in the Northern Hemisphere, it will be convenient to recapitulate how the hypothesis about star constellation influences on Saami drum figures has been advanced in previous studies by the author.

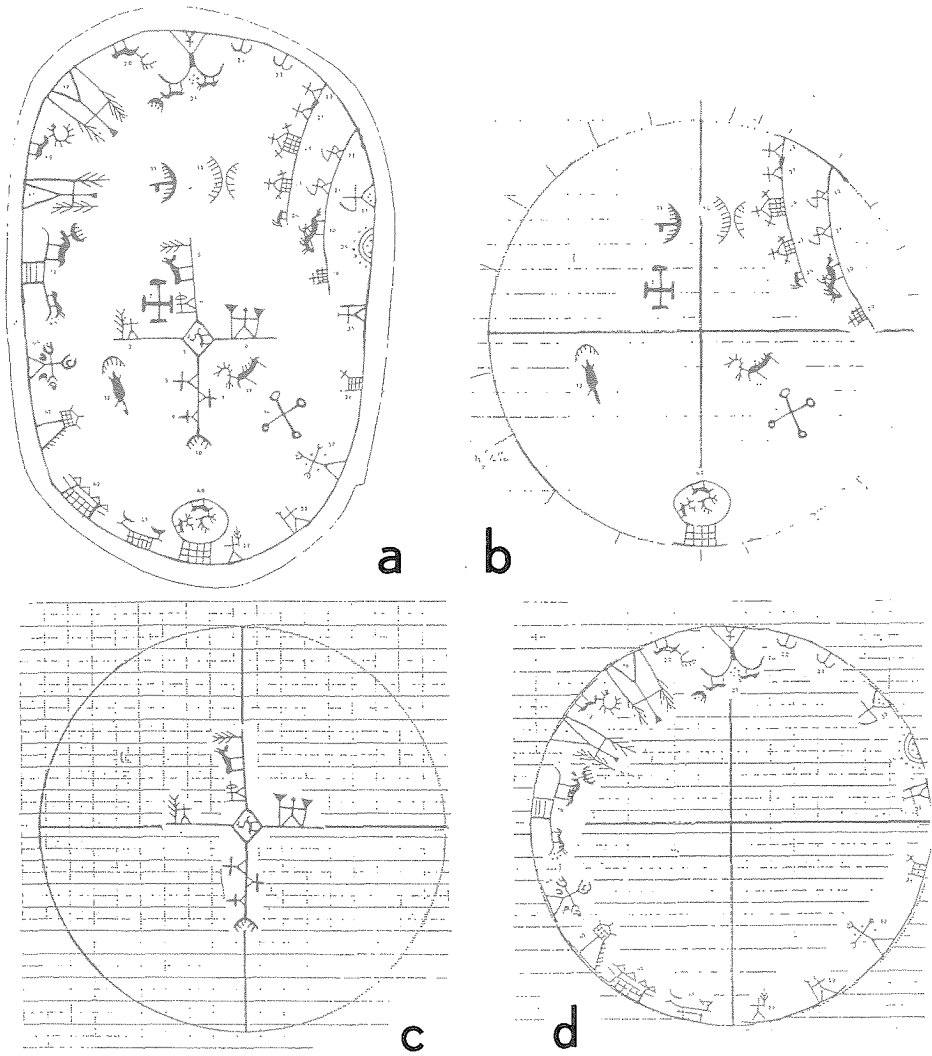
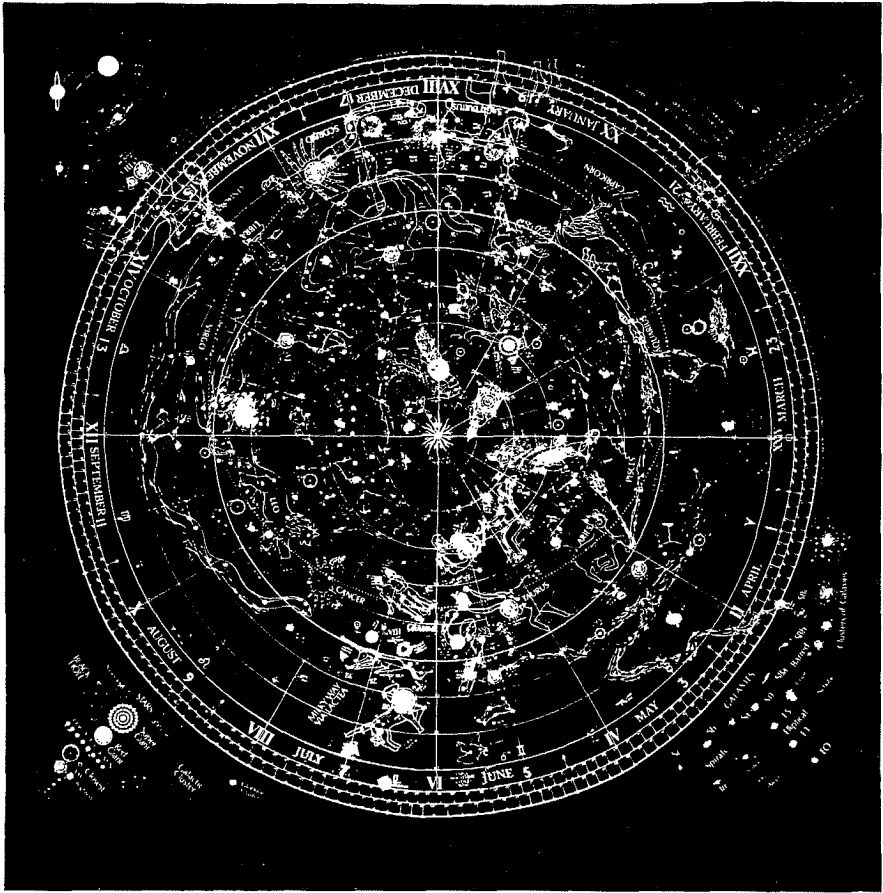


Fig. 1

### Survey of the star map influence hypothesis

A series of pictures (Figs. 1-5) will be referred to in order to facilitate this summary of the rather detailed and sometimes complex investigations, begun in the autumn of 1980 and published in two parts (Sommarström 1985; Sommarström 1987).

Fig. 1 a-d shows the red-painted pattern of a Saami drumskin (Manker 1950, Abb. 82, Drum No. 1), representing the main type among the 73 drums preserved from the 17th and 18th centuries. This type with



*Fig. 2 a.*

a central cross design was classified by Ernst Manker as the “Åsele” type. It corresponds to the modern classification of a main “Southern Saami” group (of 41 items plus one without a cross) and a closely related “Ume” sub-type of “Central Saami” drums more to the north; this sub-type of 9 items has a cross placed below a transverse line, thus in a more subordinate position (cf. map Fig. 6; cf. Kjellström & Rydving 1988, 8 ff.).

The total pattern (a), with all of its red-painted figures, was divided by the author in 1980 into 4 quadrants of a circle by extending the arms of the central cross to the edge, to resemble the round sky horizon. The individual figures were then seen as more or less “free” in a zone around







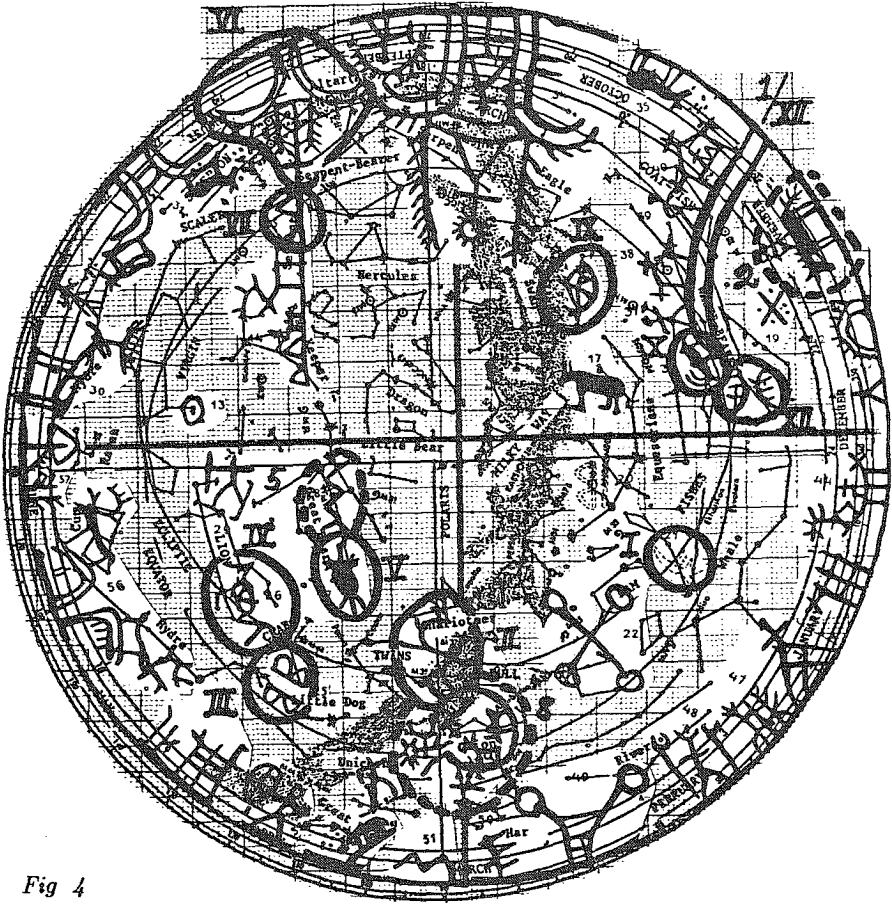


Fig 4

During the first phase of the investigation (1980–1984) eight types of figures were sought: 1 larger single or double bow line = ?Milky Way, 2 rider = ?Pegasus, 3 reindeer with sledge or dragging a ski runner = ?Charioteer, 4 beasts of prey, dogs = ?Bears, *Lion*, Dogs, 5 snake = ?Hydre, Dragon, Unicorn, 6 sailing boat or ship, bow and arrow = ?Archer, 7 pairs = ?Twins, Scales, 8 reindeer corral = ?Orion Those in italics above are not “free” because in a sense they are bound to the Zodiac circle (constellations I–XII) This fact led to the second phase of the investigation (1984–1985) when the author discussed the possibility that the *Zodiac circle* as such had partially influenced the positioning of the drum figures; this study was published in 1987 and included detailed comments on the figures which were more or less fixed in relation to the central cross design

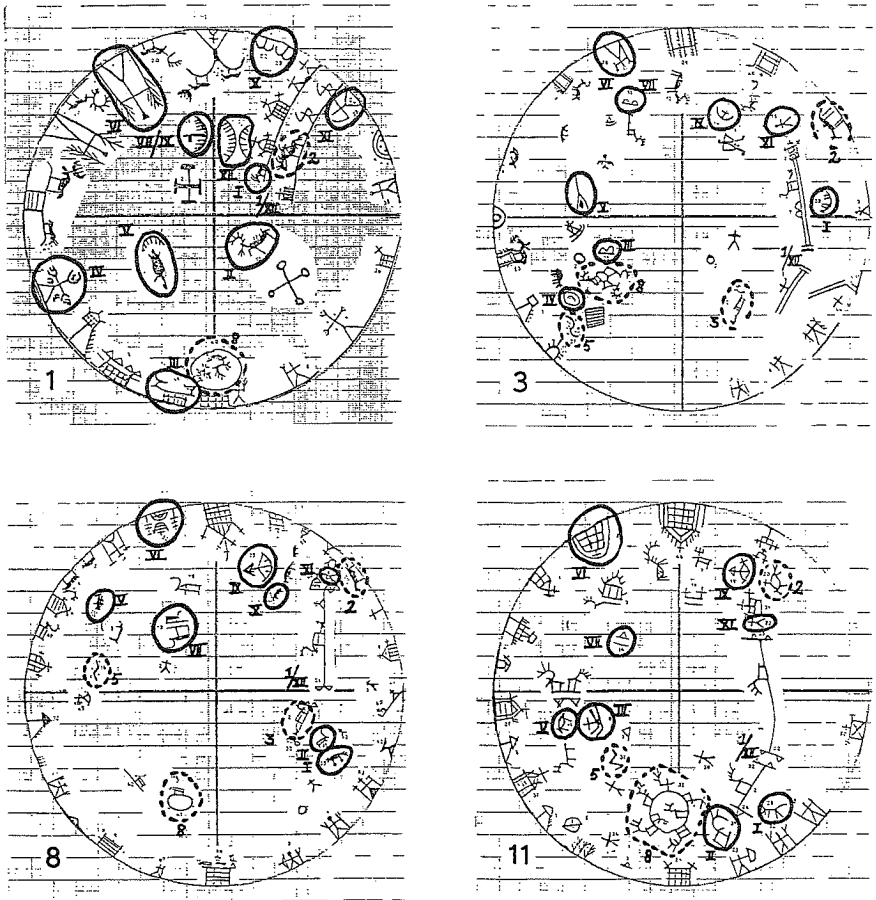


Fig 5 a

and the border respectively (Sommarström 1987). Possible "Zodiac" figures were sought both among the "free" and the "border" figures, which had this time not been moved from their original oval frame. The results may not have been very convincing, but at least a few more members of the Zodiac circle seemed to be related to some of the Saami figures in the "free" or "border" zones. In Fig 3, as well as in the two following Figs 4–5, straight lines encircle Zodiac constellations (I–XII), and broken lines other, single constellations (1–8).

In Figs 4–5 the drum figures have been contracted into a round frame, instead of the original oval one, in order to facilitate a comparison with star maps. In Fig 4 Hedvall's map in the form of a transparent copy has been superimposed on the Saami pattern of

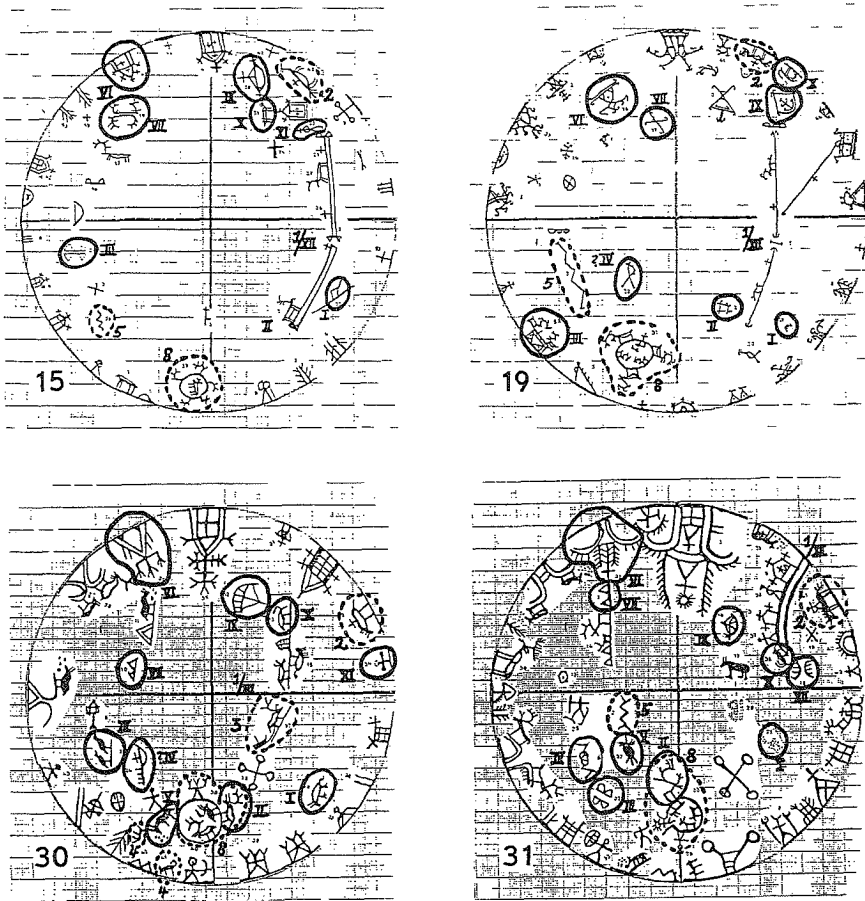


Fig 5 b

Drum No 31 (Manker 1950, Abb 112) The same method may be used for the other relevant drum patterns, but we have now chosen only seven more items as examples of such comparisons (Fig 5 a, b); these are drums No 1 (Manker 1950, Abb 82), No 3 (Manker 1950, Abb 84), No. 8 (Manker 1950, Abb. 89), No 11 (Manker 1950, Abb 92), No 15 (Manker 1950, Abb 96), No 19 (Manker 1950, Abb 100) No 30 (Manker 1950, Abb 111), and No 31 (Manker 1950, Abb 112) The results have been summarized in Table 1 of the 17 figure identifications attempted in the investigations, these eight drums (chosen among 41 with a central cross) have an average of 13 possible ones If these identifications can be accepted as fairly likely in most cases, then it seems safe to assume that both the Zodiac

Table 1 Drum figures resembling star constellations (Figs. 5 a, b)

	Drum Nos (according to Manker 1950)							
	1	3	8	11	15	19	30	31
<i>Zodiac constellations:</i>								
I Ram (Aries)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
II Bull (Taurus)	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
III Twins (Gemini)	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
IV Crab (Cancer)	x	x				?	x	x
V Lion (Leo)	x	x	x	x			x	x
VI Virgin (Virgo)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
VII Scales (Libra)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
VIII Scorpion (Scorpio)								
IX Archer (Sagittarius)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
X Goatfish (Capricorn)	x		x		x	x	x	x
XI Water-bearer (Aquarius)	x	x	x	x	x		x	
XII Fishes (Pisces) - cf 1, below	x							x
<i>Single constellations:</i>								
1 Milky Way; ?Fishes (XII)-bow lines	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2 Pegasus - man on horse	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3 Charioteer - reindeer drawn sledge or skier		x	x				x	
4 Lion (V); Bears, Dogs - beasts of prey, or dog				-	-			x
5 Hydre, Dragon, Unicorn - snake		x	x	x	x	x		x
6 Archer (VI); - ship or bow-and-arrow	-		-	-	-	-	-	
7 Twins (III), Scales (VII) pair	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8 Orion - circle with reindeer	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Total	13	13	13	12	12	11	15	14

(Single or double strokes indicate that a figure has already been marked above among the Zodiac constellations)

circle and separate constellations have beyond doubt influenced the positioning of several of the figures on the Southern type of Saami drums

This conclusion was reinforced during further study carried out after 1985, especially as more accurate methods worked out in cooperation with a professional astronomer (Per Ahlin) proved the relevance of natural explanations for the consistent absence of at least one of the Zodiac constellations (Scorpion, VIII). This new test was first presented in a preliminary form at the Seminar on Saami drums held in Åbo in 1988, and is the main theme of the present article

The table shows that 3 of the Zodiac constellations (Ram, Virgin, Archer) and 3 of the single ones (Milky Way, Pegasus, Orion) obtain the highest score. If this is not mere chance or the result of too much subjectivity in identification, it may possibly have been caused by significant associations with the Saamis' own cultural concepts (which 200–300 years ago seems to have contained a high percentage of Germanic pagan, Catholic, and more recent European secular elements).

### Checking the hypothesis against earlier interpretations

I have previously generally avoided using conventional interpretations in earlier studies, in order to see how far one could get with the star map hypothesis, without mixing it with the extant partly contradictory mixture of a few original facts and later speculations or over-simplified descriptions. It would now, however, be interesting to start such a comparison as a preliminary step to a more integrated investigation; a thorough analysis can only be attempted after we have completed the present test of the visibility of star constellations. It is important to bear in mind that the star map hypothesis does not replace other interpretations: in principle it only affects the system of arranging the figures on the drumskin.<sup>1</sup>

In his second volume on the Saami drums (Manker, 1950) Ernst Manker gives the following interpretations, based on his comparative research, for the six figures which we have found to be particularly likely candidates for star map influences. Table 2 will help the reader

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<sup>1</sup> For such future studies there are now two new systematic surveys for practical use. Rolf Kjellström and Håkan Rydving have published a handy booklet (Kjellström & Rydving 1988) with the individual figures grouped according to categories, and Josef Borbas has written a thesis called "Kosmograf – Kosmogram" for a Phil Lic degree in Art History at Lund University (LUB Borbas 1989) a MS of 202 pages describing all the drums. — It would also probably add to drum research to continue comparing with other Saami and circumpolar sources such as figures engraved in wood (e.g. boards of buildings such as described in Sommarström & Lیمان 1966), bone, and stone. — Sonic studies on the effects of drum sound, of which Rolf Kristoffersson's contribution to the present Seminar is a fascinating example, are certainly far from exhausted. They could be tried in relation to new general theories based on clinical observations of our senses, on which I have made some preliminary reflections (Sommarström 1989). Special biochemical and electronic responses to sound impacts are phenomena on which Don Robins has founded his theory combining high technology with human neurology (Robins 1988).

Table 2

	Drum Nos							
	1	3	8	11	15	19	30	31
<i>Zodiac constellations:</i>								
Ram	24	20	37	29	32	29	19	21
Virgin	19	38	52	45	45	16	29	32
Archer	11	14	20	19	20	21	12	16
<i>Single constellations:</i>								
Milky Way	24-32	17-19	26-30	23-25	25-29	26-27	13-15	36-40
		23	32-34	26-28	30-31	23-25	17	
Pegasus	30	41	57	20	49	42	33	41
Orion	40	30	41	32	35	31	20	23

to find all the individual figures numbered by Manker for each of the eight drums

For each individual figure on all the drums preserved Manker first refers to similar figures on the other drums, and often also to such figures in earlier publications as those of Lybecker, Utterius, Skanke Jessen, and Fries. He then gives a description, and finally his own interpretation, sometimes with the addition of earlier interpretations (including ancient annotations written directly on the drumskin in a few cases).

For the figures which I have chosen as equivalent to the Zodiac constellation of the *Ram (Aries)* the following summary of Manker's information (translated from the German text) will be given for each of our eight drums. Drum No 1: *goat*, which is written in Swedish ("get") on the drumskin near this figure. No 3: animal difficult to determine, but probably a fur bearing animal such as a *fox* or *wolf*. No 8: difficult too, possibly *wolf* (?). No 11: apparently a *wolf*. No 15: possibly a *reindeer*, maybe on its way from the realm of death (*jabmeaimo*)<sup>2</sup> to a more paradise-like spiritual world (*saiwo*) to be sacrificed there (?). No 19: possibly a furred animal (?). No 30: animal difficult to determine, but earlier commentaries point to *lynx* or *wolf* ("the Devil's dog"). No 31: apparently a harmful animal, *wolf* (?). The conclusion does not seem to support the idea of a possible similarity of meaning, and in most cases the form is that of a beast

<sup>2</sup> Saami words cited from Manker's publications are unchanged. For modern transcriptions of other Saami words in the present article (as well as in my previous article, Sommarström 1987) I am indebted to Professor Olavi Korhonen, the Institute for Saami language, Umeå University.



of prey rather than of a goat. However, in the folklore of the Saamis, as well as in Nordic and other European folklore, the goat can be the companion of the Devil, or even form part of it. According to a story from Arjeplog parish in Swedish Lapland two *noai des* were having a contest to find out who was the best shaman. Finally one of them said: "Tomorrow you will have spirits which I will fetch from Norway!" This was of course an outrageous lie because the shortest possible distance must have been 50 kilometres as the crow flies in these high mountains on the Swedish Norwegian border, say between a nomadic settlement on Lake Mavas and the village of Fauske in the inner part of the Saltfjorden. It must have taken at least two days in each direction even for a good runner, as most of the reindeer herders of course were (I know because I once made most of this high way myself). Nevertheless, next morning a goat appeared with a keg of spirits hanging from a strap around his neck, just like the famous St Bernhard dogs in Switzerland, trained by monks to rescue travellers who have gone astray. So, at least we have a certain similarity between two companion figures: one is the wolf, the principal enemy of the reindeer herder, who therefore regarded him as "the dog of the Devil" (in Christian time); the other "power animal" was the goat of the shaman, the *noai de* who was often equalled with the Devil already in the earlier sources. Could, therefore, a goat or a smaller beast of prey (fox, lynx, wolverine, wolf) be substituted to suit the strange, foreign idea of attaching importance to a *ram*? The wolf would in fact be a better expression of the basic meaning of Ram/Aries as a symbol of energetic forces: "restless environment, assertive power, ambition, ardour, quick temper, forceful speaker; rash, fanatical, independent, versatile, quarrelsome, aggressive, violent" (to cite A. T. Mann in his book on astrology, 1979) (Mann 1979, 138)<sup>3</sup>

The next Zodiac constellation is the *Virgin*, for which Manker gives these explanations: Drum No 1 a human figure with a tree in each hand, which might symbolize good weather, thus a weather or forest spirit, according to an inscription here meaning "clear weather" Man

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<sup>3</sup> The citation of course refers to the *sign* of the zodiac with the same name as the star *constellation*. A sign is a 30° division of the ecliptic in both astronomy and astrology, equal to two hours of time. The personality traits cited are common traditional elements of Western horoscopes and therefore not to be completely dismissed as one of the sources of influence on ancient Saami divination system. Certainly not directly, but only as an underlying tendency which has created the basic zodiac constellations and signs, as personalized expressions of the yearly changes of seasons and seasonal variations of the visibility of the stars.

ker notes that the motif of a ruling deity (a *Radien*) “does not seem to be unfamiliar” and cites a late commentator (Reuterskiöld), who advances the idea that the figure represents *Tjorveradien*. This god, however, usually has a reindeer antler as a halo, as in figure 33 on drum No 31. Instead of this son of the highest god *Radienattje*, the latter’s wife *Radienakka*, or his daughter *Rana-neida*, if we prefer to follow Manker’s and Reuterskiöld’s suggestion of a Saami Holy Family, or Trinity (with the Holy Spirit in a female form). The members of this group of deities reside on the upper part of the drumheads (when the large bow line design is to the right). This is also the place of Christmas and the New Year, as I have previously suggested (Sommarström 1987, 237, Fig 12). Drum No 3 has a similar figure at the corresponding place, and Manker also refers to the first-mentioned one saying that it may be “one of the *Radien* aspects or a forest spirit”. No 8: Manker says that “the figure apparently belongs to the *Radien*-group and would in this case preferably be regarded as *Radienakka*; may possibly also represent a weather spirit”. No 11: “apparently a figure of the *Radien*-group; *Radienakka* (?)”. No 15: “*Radienakka* (?)”. No. 19: if we choose figure 39, which is at the border and therefore in the same place as the other Virgin like figures, the interpretation according to Manker is this: “Sacrificial platform with idol or sacrifice; *passé* (holy place)”, for figure 16, an alternative which suits the Virgin idea better, but is in the “free” zone, he states that it may be a “sacrificial place with sacrificed reindeer antlers (? , possibly a camp with tents and reindeer?)”. He admits that these figures are hard to determine; all the figures of this drum are painted in a unique way with plenty of extra decorative twirls, which might suggest to the snags of antlers. For me it is obvious that figure 16 is a woman, and in a place quite acceptable for that of a Zodiac Virgin. No. 30: several commentators refer to the Holy Spirit, or to *Radienakka*, the wife of the Ruling Deity. No 31 “one of the three figures of the *Radien* group, probably *Radienakka*”, with *Radienpardne* (her son, also called *Tjorveradien* and *Radienkjedde*) between her and his father, *Radienattje*. — All commentaries taken together indicate a female figure of mythical dimensions: Virgin, Wife, or Mother.

The *Archer* is the third member of the Zodiac group that interests us with reference to the Saami meaning of its counterpart on the drums. For No 1 Manker gives this information: “Boat with mast”, “Boat sacrifice” referring to Reuterskiöld who specifies “A sacrifice to the dead at Christmas time” (which is a qualified guess only); an old inscription here has the Scandinavian word for ship (Near to the right

there is a generally similar figure, which has been interpreted as a ship with its reflected image; this idea is in my opinion too sophisticated, and I have preferred to see such convex/concave designs as perhaps representing the Zodiac Fishes, especially as the Zodiac *sign* (not constellation!) has the same basic construction) No 3: "Boat with cross shaped mast", "Boat sacrifice" No 8: "Boat with cargo and a triangular sail", "Boat sacrifice", in my eyes the "sail" is more like an arrow, but I must admit that the bow in such a case has been turned the wrong way No 11 "A boat with mast and a triangular sail (?)", "Boat sacrifice" No 19: "Figure hard to determine, suggests a boat as well as a strung bow; encloses a figure which has a certain similarity with an anchor, and also with a sitting human being", "Boat sacrifice (?)", for me it is more a design of a strung bow with the arrow free inside as if just released No 30: "Boat with mast", "Boat sacrifice" No 31 "Figure similar to a boat", "Boat sacrifice", the boat apparently being loaded — In our present selection of eight items, our Archer constellation clearly corresponds to a boat figure, and only in one case to a possible bow with arrow (another bow and arrow is quite clear in drum No 17, figure 22 in about the right position for an Archer; it looks more like a crossbow, however, and is painted on a drumhead which belongs to the Ume sub type where the cross design is close to the centre but below a transverse line). Still, the boat forms generally show peculiarities and similarities with the bow and arrow motif Besides, the bow would have been the only part of the Archer constellation that was possible to observe, as the centaur holding the bow is concealed below the horizon (but we come to that later)

Among the *single* constellations of special interest in the present survey we first look at the *Milky Way*, which is of course not a constellation proper but a galaxy (comprising our solar system) For drum No 1 Manker follows earlier commentators in describing the left hand bow line group as representing the "Christians' Path" as well as the realm of living human beings The opposite of this is the right hand bow line with a "Christian grave", "aggressive men", and an rider which Manker, Fries and Reuterskiöld identify as *Rota* (*Ruto*), the demon of death and disease, riding to the realm of death Reuterskiöld and other earlier scholars propose that the prototype for *Rota* was Odin, who also is connected with the land of the dead Gustav Ränk has recently (Ränk 1985, 170) pointed out that this is a too narrow an interpretation and that the motif is much older and more widespread Henceforth we will treat this figure separately in

connection with the constellation of Pegasus, which comes next in our survey, as he is mostly not directly associated with the large bow lines on other drums No 3: "A Lapp/Saami/ in his sledge returning to his camp from the church or the church village; possibly symbolic *saiwo* (Paradise)-motif showing the dead person travelling from his grave or churchyard to his camp in the other world, *saiwo*", the shorter part of the broken bow line also being a *saiwo* motif No 8: Manker gives the same kind of interpretation here as for No 3: a Saami in his sledge travelling from the church village to his camp, possibly a *saiwo*-motif; the triangles at the ends of the bow lines are tents according to Manker No 11 the same interpretation No 15: "Men and reindeer between two camps in the *saiwo* realm; possibly on their way from one camp to the other", and for the short bow line: "Reindeer (herd) and reindeer herder in *saiwo* (?) The group seems to correspond with" the longer bow line group No 19: "The *saiwo*-realm with people and reindeer (?)", No 30: "The settlement or the church village with houses and cattle: goat, cow, and horse", and a speculation that the reindeer drawn sledge at the shorter bow line may be a *noai de* together with his reindeer making a spiritual journey No 31: this double bow line represents a "Settlement or church village, showing a house, church or maybe a storehouse on piles, goat, and a couple of persons, possibly man and wife"; reference is also made to Fries who names this group in the common way "*Rist-balges*", the Saami word for the "Christians' Path" — The interpretations tally well with the complementary ideas of this living world and the other dead or spiritual world This also partly coincides with a Fenno-Ugric concept that equates the Milky Way with the destination of dead souls So, in a very general sense, at least, there may be a link between the star maps' Milky Way bow line and e.g. Saami concepts of life and death connected with *their* bow lines painted on the drums to the right of the central cross (As a secondary motif fused with that of the Milky Way we might consider the Zodiac constellation of the Fishes, who are separated from each other in a manner reminiscent of the gap cutting both the Milky Way and the bow lines on the drums in two parts )

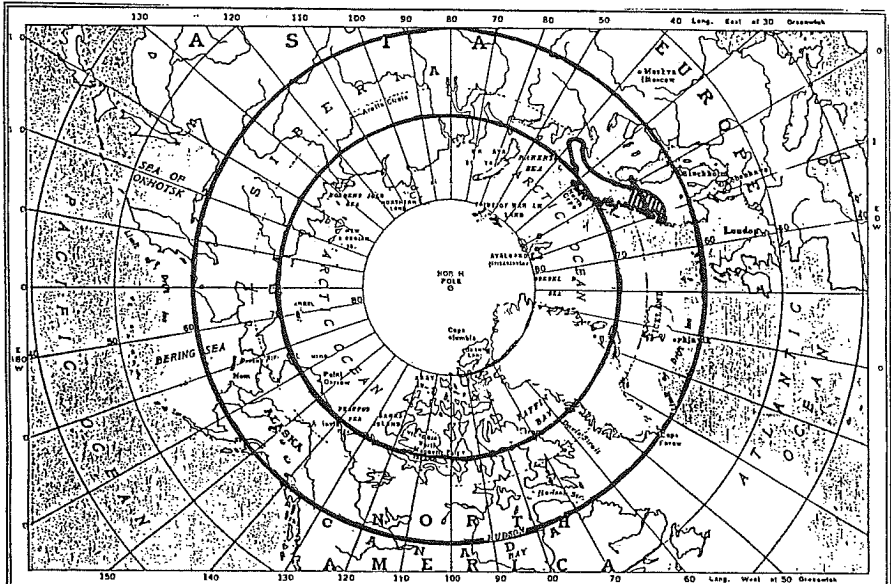
*Pegasus* was the first real constellation like figure to appear in a fixed position in relation to a drum surface divided into 4 quadrants The similar horse figure moves only within the upper quadrant to the right We have already seen that Manker and other scholars have associated this rider with the death- and disease demon *Rota* (*Ruto*) in Saami mythology; he has many counterparts in Eurasia (cf. later investigations, e.g. Pettersson 1987, Mebius 1968, Bäckman 1975,

Ränk 1985) But in our present context we limit ourselves to the basic information related to the drums which Manker had collected up to 1950 Drum No 1 the rider figure here has already been commented on in connection to the Milky Way above: *Rota (Ruto)* as a death and disease demon No 3: "*Rota* on a horse" No 8: "*Rota* on horseback" Nos 11, 15, 19 and 30: ditto, the latter with commentaries by others mentioning that the horse was the typical sacrifice to this "god of the Nether world" No 31 the same identification — There is a certain similarity between *Rota (Ruto)* and the classical concept of Pegasus The former "appears as a dualistic spirit of disease who could *both cause and remove illnesses*", and "he sat on a dead horse, which was then dug down to enable him to ride down into *Rutaimo* with the torment An act of purification was thus carried out there which can suitably be called *a transference rite*" (Ränk 1985, 169) The latter was born from the side of the monstrous gorgon Medusa when Perseus cut off her head; the head was then carried in a goat skin by Athena, or used as a shield by her, Zeus and Apollo in battle (could this have been the "Golden Fleece", which was a *Ram's* hide and stolen by Medusa and Jason, one of the Argonauts?) Medusa's blood was considered to have *both healing and destroying* properties, and even after death her eyes issued flashes of lightning which petrified enemies

The sixth and final constellation for our purposes here is *Orion*, a cluster of stars with a striking combined brilliance<sup>4</sup> The drum design at a corresponding place is naturally recognized by all observers as a corral with reindeer, and sometimes also herder(s) Manker does so too, and the only interesting point he notes is that the corral was used during summer time when the reindeer were to be milked (During recent generations this has ceased as a daily procedure, and corrals are now used for ear marking the calves, castration of the bulls, separating into smaller herding units during the autumn, and principally for slaughter during winter time) There is apparently no resemblance between the corral concept and the classical myth of the wild hunter Orion — if the corral is not regarded as an enclosure for *wild* reindeer which have been driven into it; the time of the preserved drums was

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<sup>4</sup> *Orion* is one of the most prominent star groups in Eurasian mythology and has been widely used by seafarers for orientation especially before the invention of the magnetic compass in China in about the 10th century A D and its subsequent spread westwards For its ancient mythological and astronomical history see e.g. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's works (Tilak 1893; Tilak 1925), the first one specifically dealing with the constellation *Orion*. For other perspectives, cf. Sommarström 1987: 230



*Fig 6* Circumpolar zone between Latitudes  $60^{\circ}$  N –  $70^{\circ}$  N Within this are the southern Saami drums with central cross design (hatched area), and most of the other drum types of the Saamis (encircled area of traditional population distribution). Latitude  $65^{\circ}$  N (short transverse line) was chosen for the present investigation of which star constellations could actually have been seen by the southern Saamis in clear weather during different parts of the year

not far away from the Medieval time when tame reindeer were still kept in small numbers mainly for transport, and hunting wild reindeer was an important part of the Saami economy<sup>5</sup> Another interesting possible connection might also be considered: that between Orion and the Zodiac constellation of the Bull within which there are the Pleiades (or Seven Stars), which are always being “hunted by Orion” It may therefore not be a coincidence that on some of the drums a large reindeer bull stands on the outside of the corral instead of at the proper place in the relevant constellation (to the right of the corral/Orion)

<sup>5</sup> The transition from hunting to herding reindeer among the Saamis has been extensively studied by several scholars May it here suffice to mention Vorren’s study on reindeer pens (Vorren 1966), and two short surveys on reindeer herding development and its ecological background (Sommarström 1956–78b; Sommarström 1956–78a) Just to show that the reindeer economy was not the only one among the Saamis but a gradually increasing and dominating part of their total economy I also want to refer to my study on Fishing Saamis (Sommarström 1966)

I am of course aware of the great risk of pressing the facts too far to suit the star map hypothesis. I still keep to the main idea that its value lies in the *probability of influence on positioning*, or arrangement system, of the individual figures on the drumskins. However, if the above discussion has led to a *possibility of greater similarities in meaning* for some of the correspondences than merely formal resemblances indicate, then it would certainly strengthen the hypothesis. The natural background for this is the fairly advanced degree of acculturation prevalent for the time when the drums studied were in use. The Saami people was far from isolated, especially not after developing full nomadism for many groups after the post medieval period and crossing the Scandinavian peninsula annually, often from coast to coast. The Southern Saamis even went southwards to the winter market connected with the "Disa assembly" in the town of Uppsala, centuries before the period which we are now studying, and even after this until 1895, when the market was abolished in its traditional form.

#### Planisphere with tables made for the present study<sup>6</sup>

The astronomer *Per Ahlin*, of the Stockholm Public Observatory, has prepared a planisphere and tables containing calculations for determining of the *rising and setting of the sun* relevant for latitudes 60°, 65° and 70°, and the *stars visible within* the corresponding *three horizons*. As the Arctic circle in the Northern Hemisphere has the latitude 66° 30', the chosen horizons are accordingly representative for the circumpolar region and most of the peoples living there or near to it. In any case, the circumpolar zone comprises those Southern Saami regions which have produced the type of drums that are the object of our investigation, i.e. the type with a central cross (including the sub type with a transverse line above), all in all 50 drums (Map, Fig. 6). The planisphere (Fig. 7) with accompanying calculations (Example

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<sup>6</sup> This section about astronomical technicalities is based on Per Ahlin's detailed introduction to his specially prepared planisphere and its appurtenant tables with calculations of the rising and setting etc. of the Sun for the relevant horizons. Ahlin has changed an ordinary planisphere made by George Philip and Son for Latitude 51½° N, useful also for zone 46½° N - 56½° N, published in 1978 by making a new oval opening (through shading) which generally corresponds to the more northern horizons for the Saamis. At the inner edge of the window like opening's plastic pane Ahlin has line marked three ovals representing the latitudes 60° 65° 70° N with blue, black and red lines respectively. DI Ahlin 1988; Philips planisphere 1978.

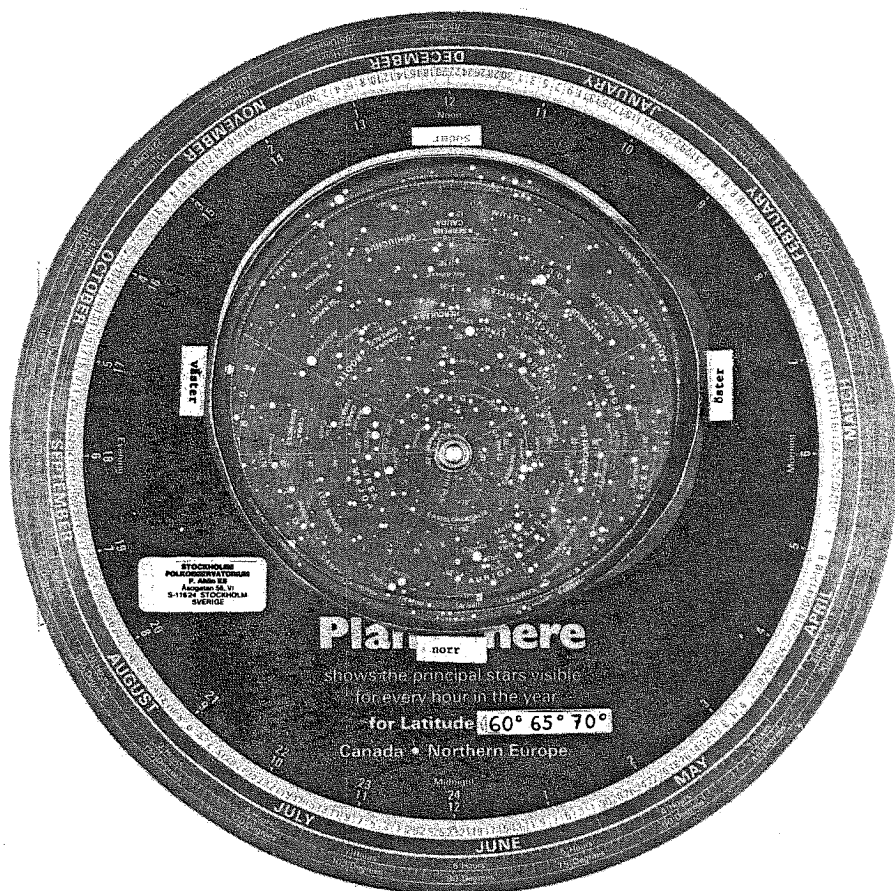


Fig 7 Planisphere used for the present investigation of the visibility of certain star constellations on latitudes where Saamis live in their traditional regions. Original planisphere (made by George Philip and Son, Ltd, London) has been adjusted by astronomer Per Ahlin, Stockholm Public Observatory, to suit the horizons of the more northerly latitudes of the Saamis. Different portions of the star map of the bottom disc are seen as the top disc when its transparent opening is moved clockwise. The main change is at the opening, the form of which has been altered by shading and by 3 differently coloured line ovals at the inner edge representing latitudes  $60^{\circ}$ ,  $65^{\circ}$ , and  $70^{\circ}$  N respectively.

(in Table 3) may of course also be used to check realities behind astral myths among other circumpolar peoples, besides the Saamis, in different kinds of material, folkloristic, religious and artistic.

The planisphere is naturally not an exact instrument for precise measurements. The rate of accuracy may be estimated at about



one degree perpendicular to the horizon. The horizons shown in the planisphere are so called "ideal" horizons which in reality only exist on the sea and on the tundra. But the instrument is probably sufficient for the purpose of our study, which aims at determining the visibility of constellations for their main (mythical) features only. The tables with calculations are, on the other hand, much more precise than would be necessary. This high degree of precision reminds us of the fact that such accuracy was common for both astronomers and astrologers. These were often identical, in the case of Tycho Brahe, Kepler and other famous scientists who lived partly by making horoscopes for rich people, basing their prophecies on actual relationships between stars and planets, in combination with the person's birthday, and other circumstances. Nowadays, these two spheres of activity have separate practitioners in the West, at least as a rule, but the use of exact calculations for astral matters is still the same for both categories, and thus also the tables of the astrologers may be as impressive as any work of their more established scientific colleagues (such as Table 3).

The *calculations* for the rising and setting etc. of the sun, made for our special planisphere by Per Ahlin, are valid for as much as 6 horizons (the planisphere itself is for 3 only), viz. for the time meridian with latitudes  $60^\circ$ ,  $62\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ ,  $65^\circ$ ,  $67\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ ,  $70^\circ$ , and for Stockholm. Such a fine adjustment might be of some advantage when making additional field research regarding the knowledge of stars and planets among local people living at these horizons within the circumpolar zone. But for our present purpose, references will be made only to conditions related to the three horizons with latitudes  $60^\circ$ ,  $65^\circ$  and  $70^\circ$ , and detailed tables only for latitude  $65^\circ$ .

The time which is indicated at the edge of the planisphere's upper disc is not the time which is shown by our modern clocks and watches. The latter indicate a time which is usually common for a whole country, the so called "normal" time. The time of the planisphere, on the other hand, indicates "local" time, or the "local mean solar" time according to the terminology of astronomers. Formerly, mean solar time was in general use, in Sweden, for instance, until 1879. Mean solar time and normal time have the same speed and differ from each other only by a constant value which is called the "time difference". Its size depends on the distance to the time meridian which for Swedish normal time is based on longitude  $15^\circ$  East of Greenwich. The time difference is accordingly a difference in longitudes which may be measured either in degrees (one round is 360 degrees) or in hours (one round is 24 hours).

Table 3 Example of one page of calculations made by astronomer Per Ahlin showing the visibility of the sun through a year

SOLENS UPPGÅNG OCH NEDGÅNG  
SAMT GRYNING OCH SKYNNING (- 6)

FÖR LATITUD 65

0 min 0 sek väster om Sveriges tidsmeridian  
65 grad 0 min 0 sek nordlig latitud

Mars 1988

April 1988

	Solen			Gryn	Skym	Dagens längd	Skillnad		Gryn	Skym	Dagens längd	Skillnad							
	upp:	söder	ned				vinter	sommar				igår	vinter	sommar	igår				
1	7 12	12 12	17 14	6 20	18 06	10 02	+ 6 39	11 42	+ 7	1	5 18	12 04	18 51	4 24	19.46	13 33	+10 10	8 11	+ 7
2	7 08	12 12	17 17	6 16	18 09	10.09	+ 6 46	11 35	+ 7	2	5 15	12 04	18 54	4 20	19 49	13 39	+10 16	8 05	+ 6
3	7 05	12 12	17 20	6.13	18 13	10 15	+ 6 52	11 29	+ 6	3	5 11	12 03	18 57	4 16	19 52	13 46	+10 23	7 58	+ 7
4	7 01	12 12	17 24	6 09	18.16	10.23	+ 7 00	11 21	+ 8	4	5 07	12 03	19 00	4 12	19 56	13 53	+10 30	7 51	+ 7
5	6 58	12 11	17 27	6 06	18 19	10 29	+ 7 06	11 15	+ 6	5	5 04	12 03	19 04	4 08	19 59	14 00	+10 37	7 44	+ 7
6	6 54	12 11	17 30	6 02	18 22	10 36	+ 7 13	11 08	+ 7	6	5 00	12 02	19 07	4 04	20 03	14 07	+10 44	7 37	+ 7
7	6 50	12 11	17 33	5 59	18 25	10 43	+ 7 20	11 01	+ 7	7	4 56	12 02	19 10	4 00	20 07	14 14	+10 51	7 30	+ 7
8	6 47	12 11	17 36	5 55	18 28	10 49	+ 7 26	10 55	+ 6	8	4 53	12 02	19 13	3 56	20 10	14 20	+10 57	7 24	+ 6
9	6 43	12 10	17 40	5 52	18 31	10 57	+ 7 34	10 47	+ 8	9	4 49	12 02	19 16	3 52	20 14	14 27	+11 04	7 17	+ 7
10	6 39	12 10	17 43	5 48	18 34	11 04	+ 7 41	10 40	+ 7	10	4 45	12 01	19 19	3 48	20 18	14 34	+11 11	7 10	+ 7
11	6 36	12 10	17 46	5 44	18 37	11 10	+ 7 47	10 34	+ 6	11	4 42	12 01	19 23	3 43	20 21	14 41	+11 18	7 03	+ 7
12	6 32	12 10	17 49	5 41	18 40	11 17	+ 7 54	10 27	+ 7	12	4 38	12 01	19 26	3 39	20 25	14 48	+11 25	6 56	+ 7
13	6 28	12 09	17 52	5 37	18 44	11 24	+ 8 01	10 20	+ 7	13	4 34	12 00	19 29	3 35	20 29	14 55	+11 32	6 49	+ 7
14	6 25	12 09	17 55	5 33	18 47	11 30	+ 8 07	10 14	+ 6	14	4 31	12 00	19 32	3 31	20 33	15 01	+11 38	6 43	+ 6
15	6 21	12 09	17 58	5 30	18 50	11 37	+ 8 14	10 07	+ 7	15	4 27	12 00	19 35	3 26	20 37	15 08	+11 45	6 36	+ 7
16	6 17	12 09	18 02	5 26	18 53	11 45	+ 8 22	9 59	+ 8	16	4 23	12 00	19 39	3 22	20 41	15 16	+11 53	6 28	+ 8
17	6 14	12 08	18 05	5 22	18 56	11 51	+ 8 28	9 53	+ 6	17	4 19	12 00	19 42	3 18	20 44	15 23	+12 00	6 21	+ 7
18	6 10	12 08	18 08	5 19	18 59	11 58	+ 8 35	9 46	+ 7	18	4 16	11 59	19 45	3 13	20 49	15 29	+12 06	6 15	+ 6
19	6 06	12 08	18 11	5 15	19 03	12 05	+ 8 42	9 39	+ 7	19	4 12	11 59	19 48	3 09	20 53	15 36	+12 13	6 08	+ 7
20	6 03	12.07	18 14	5 11	19 06	12 11	+ 8 48	9 33	+ 6	20	4 08	11 59	19 51	3 04	20 57	15 43	+12 20	6 01	+ 7
21	5 59	12 07	18 17	5 07	19 09	12 18	+ 8 55	9 26	+ 7	21	4 05	11 59	19 55	3 00	21 01	15 50	+12 27	5 54	+ 7
22	5 55	12 07	18 20	5 03	19 12	12 25	+ 9 02	9 19	+ 7	22	4 01	11 58	19 58	2 55	21 05	15 57	+12 34	5 47	+ 7
23	5 52	12 07	18 23	5 00	19 16	12 31	+ 9 08	9 13	+ 6	23	3 58	11 58	20 01	2.50	21 10	16 03	+12 40	5 41	+ 6
24	5 48	12 06	18 26	4 56	19 19	12 38	+ 9 15	9 06	+ 7	24	3 54	11 58	20 05	2 46	21 14	16 11	+12 48	5 33	+ 8
25	5 44	12 06	18 29	4 52	19 22	12 45	+ 9 22	8 59	+ 7	25	3 50	11 58	20 08	2 41	21 19	16 18	+12 55	5 26	+ 7
26	5 41	12 06	18 33	4 48	19 25	12 52	+ 9 29	8 52	+ 7	26	3 47	11 58	20 11	2 36	21.23	16 24	+13 01	5 20	+ 6
27	5 37	12 05	18 36	4 44	19 29	12 59	+ 9 36	8 45	+ 7	27	3 43	11 58	20 15	2 31	21 28	16 32	+13 09	5 12	+ 8
28	5 33	12 05	18 39	4 40	19 32	13 06	+ 9 43	8 38	+ 7	28	3 39	11 57	20 18	2 26	21 33	16 39	+13.16	5 05	+ 7
29	5 29	12 05	18 42	4 36	19 35	13 13	+ 9 50	8 31	+ 7	29	3 36	11 57	20 21	2 21	21 37	16 45	+13 22	4 59	+ 6
30	5 26	12 04	18 45	4 32	19 39	13 19	+ 9 56	8 25	+ 6	30	3 32	11 57	20 25	2 16	21 42	16 53	+13 30	4 51	+ 8
31	5 22	12 04	18 48	4 28	19 42	13 26	+10 03	8 18	+ 7										

Teckenförklaringar

- \* = Tiden anges i sommartid i curiga fall anges tider i normalt tid  
Justering för sommartid är alltså redan gjord för \* markerade tider!
- o h = Solen är över horisonten hela dygnet (midnattssol)
- u h = Solen är under horisonten hela dygnet
- ++ = Solen rör aldrig mer än 6 grader under horisonten Om det inte är midnattssol varar skymning+gryning från solnedgång till soluppgång

- upp / red = Tider då solens centrum passerar över en skymd horisont
- söder = Tiden då solens centrum står i söder
- Dagens längd = Der tid under dygnet som solen är över horisonten
- Skillnad vinter = Dagens längd minus längden av årets kortaste dag
- Skillnad sommar = Dagens längd minus längden av årets längsta dag
- Skillnad igår = Dagens längd minus gårdagens längd

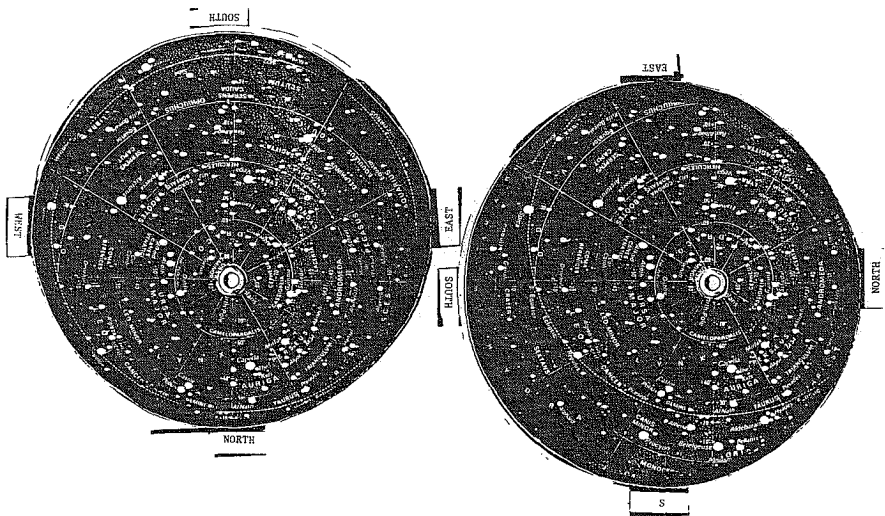


Fig 8 a

Fig 8 b

The calculations for the rising and setting etc of the sun are, for the sake of simplicity, made for the year 1988, but can nevertheless be used for other years as well, because the time differences between years in our era is much smaller than the uncertainty which is caused by the planisphere

Per Ahlin's calculations comprise the following factors: for each *day* in each *month* (on the time meridian of Sweden) the *sun's* rising, position in South, setting, start of dawn, end of dusk, length of day, differences of daylight during winter, summer, between two days Dawn and dusk are calculated for two situations: 6 degrees ( $-6^{\circ}$ ) below the horizon (the maximum setting of the sun's light), and 12 degrees ( $-12^{\circ}$ ); in this study only the former will be utilized As we are studying the stars, several of the above-mentioned factors are not of immediate use, since they refer to day-time when the stars are invisible (even if they are within the horizon of theoretical visibility) (Cf Fig 8 a-d)

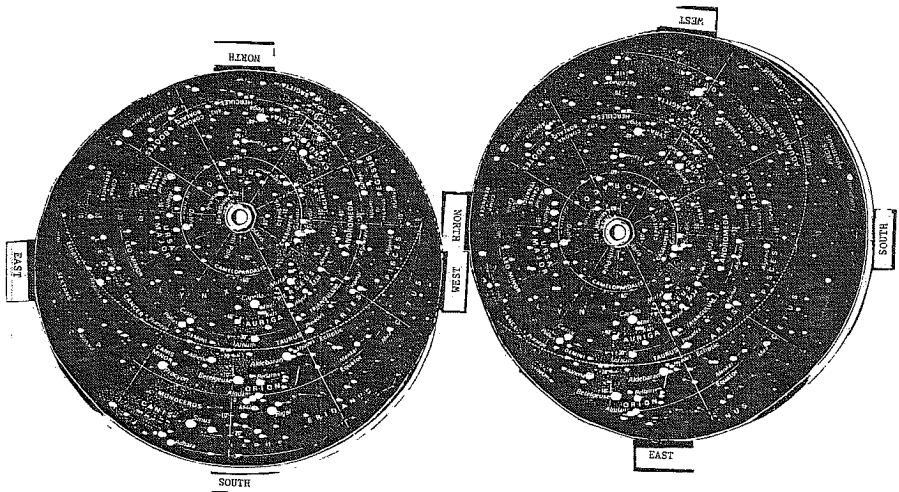


Fig 8 c.

Fig 8 d

Fig 8 a-d The planisphere shown in four major positions according to equinoxes and solstices. The investigation covers all parts of the year and shows when the star constellations appear above the horizon and when they sink below and cannot be seen even theoretically. Daytime, dawn and dusk are controllable factors of visibility, which are also tested in the investigation. (For clear or bad weather prognostication, you have to use the drum.)

### Test of visibility

In the following account of our *test of the visibility of 17 chosen constellations and the Milky Way*, the tables show the relevant times (in hours and minutes) calculated for the horizon at  $65^\circ$  latitude in some detail, but give (separately) only the final sums of visibility hours for the horizons at latitudes  $60^\circ$  and  $70^\circ$ . When the planisphere has been fixed for the rising and setting of stars, comparisons of hour time and dates have been limited here to the first day and night of each month.

In the same way as for Table 4 below, all the other tables for calculation of the real visibility possibilities have been constructed. It would be a dull and lengthy process to print the complete tables, and therefore only the final results of each will be accounted for here, viz the last sum, which is the measure of hours when the stars can really be seen in darkness. Thus the *Ram* is visible for more than 5 hours during the first day and night (fdn) of each of altogether 7 months and must, accordingly, be seen as an acceptable constellation to be

Table 4 Ram (I) 65° - 6

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Stars</i> rising in East	setting in West	<i>Sun</i> dawn starts	dusk ends	<i>Star visibility</i> (in darkness)
Jan 1	12	4	8 44	15 23	15 23-4:12 23
Feb 1	10	2	7 50	16 38	16 38-2:9 38
Mar 1	8	0(24)	6 20	18 06	18 06-24:5 54
Apr 1	6	22	4 24	19 46	19 46-22:2 14
May 1	4	20	2 11	21 48	21 48-20: 0
Jun 1	2	18	----	----	----- 0
Jul 1	0(24)	16	----	----	----- 0
Aug 1	22	14	1.13	22 52	22 52-1.13:2 21
Sep 1	20	12	3.44	20 13	20 13-3.44:7 31
Oct 1	18	10	5 21	18 17	18 17-5:21 11 04
Nov 1	16	8	6 53	16 33	16 33-6 53:14 20
Dec 1	14	6	8 15	15 23	15 23-6:14 37

---- indicates direct continuation of dusk into dawn (or from sunset to sunrise), and 0 absence of darkness, or the stars being below the horizon

compared with figures of the Saami drums' cosmology

The *Bull* is also a possible choice as its visible appearances for more than 4 hours are also during fdn 7 months (January to December 11 37, 8 22, 4 54, 1 14, 0, 0, 0, 0 13, 4 44, 8 21, 11 53, 12 00)

The *Twins* are observable for more than 6 hours during fdn 7 months (16, 13 22, 9 54, 6 14, 2 12, 0, 0, 0, 3 44, 7 21, 10 53, 14 15)

The *Crab* is similar to the *Bull* in that both are clearly visible more than 4 hours during fdn 7 months (11 30, 11 22, 7 54, 4 14, 0 12, 0, 0, 0, 1 14, 4 51, 8 23, 11 30)

The *Lion* appears like the *Bull* and the *Crab* (10 44, 11 50, 11 54, 8 14, 4 12, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1 21, 4 53, 8 15)

The *Virgin* is seen clearly only 6 months fdn from December to May (Jan etc 5 44, 6 50, 7 20, 7 24, 4 23, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 3 15)

The *Scales* are partly seen for up to a little more than 2 hours during fdn 5 months (0 44, 1 50, 2 20, 2 24, 2 11, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0)

The *Scorpion* is almost wholly absent, being visible only for less than 1½ hours during fdn 4 months (0, 0 50, 1 20, 1 24, 1 11, 0, 0 0, 0, 0, 0, 0)

The *Archer* can be seen a few minutes more than the previous constellation, and during one month more (0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1 08, 1 47, 1 43, 1 27, 0 37)

The *Goatfish* is seen for up to 3 hours during fdn 6 months (0 37, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 2 13, 3 00, 3 00, 3 00, 3 00)

The *Waterbearer* is visible not more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours during fdn 6 months (3 07, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 13, 3 30, 3 30, 3 30, 3 30)

The last of the twelve Zodiac constellations, the *Fishes*, rises to as much as 10 hours during fdn for a period of 8 months (7 37, 4 22, 0 54, 0, 0, 0, 0, 2 13, 6 44, 10 00, 10 00, 9 37)

Among the separate or *single constellations* the measures arrived at with the planisphere and the calculation tables are as follows:

The *Milky Way* is partially seen all the time, and is therefore circumpolar in the astronomical sense of the word. However, as it stretches across the horizon of the sky, we may restrict the commentaries in this respect to noting that, at the time of January 1 and one o'clock, the Southern horizon is at the Dog's constellations, and the Northern at the constellation of Lyra when the Milky Way is "rising", when "setting" it is at the Charioteer (Auriga) in the North and at Ara at the South.

*Pegasus* is absent 5 months, but for the other 7 months it is visible many hours up to 9 hours fdn (6 37, 3 22, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 2 21, 6 57, 9 00, 9 00, 8 37).

The *Charioteer* is a truly circumpolar star constellation in that it is seen all the time, on all three latitudes ( $60^\circ$ ,  $65^\circ$ ,  $70^\circ$ )

The *Big Dog* (*Canis Major*) has a small score of appearances: shows itself only 4 months for 2 hours fdn at the most (2 00, 2 00, 2 00, 0 14, the rest 0). The *Small Dog* however is better seen during 9 months it can be observed up to 14 hours fdn (14 00, 13 22, 9 54, 6 14, 2 12, 0, 0, 0, 1.44, 5 21, 7 53, 11 15)

The *Hydre* is visible only 5 months, each time for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hour fdn, especially at its ends — this constellation is among the longest of the star constellations and its form also probably counts for difficulties in measuring.

The final test within this horizon at latitude  $65^\circ$  was made for *Orion*. Of the 8 months when it can be seen 6 have values of above 4 hours fdn, which stresses the fact that this constellation is one of the most conspicuous (8 30, 9 22, 4 54, 1 14, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1 14, 4 51, 8 23, 8 30)

The most general impression one gets when comparing all the above information may be that the constellations which have been noted as most difficult to relate to drum figures are the ones recording the highest number of absence. Corresponding figures on the drumheads are also either missing, or more or less corrupted, or only partially represented (as e.g. the *Archer*). The worst case in this respect is the

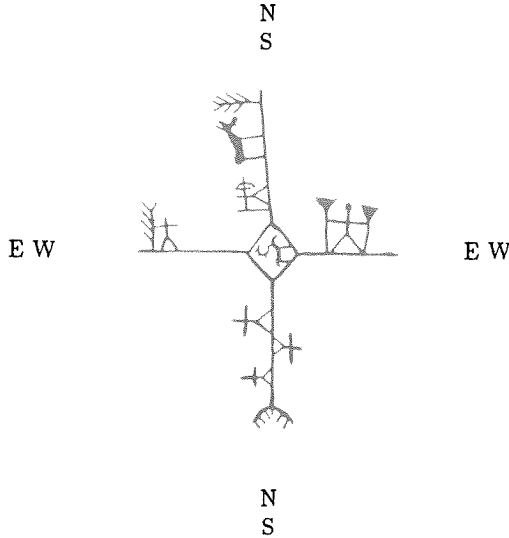


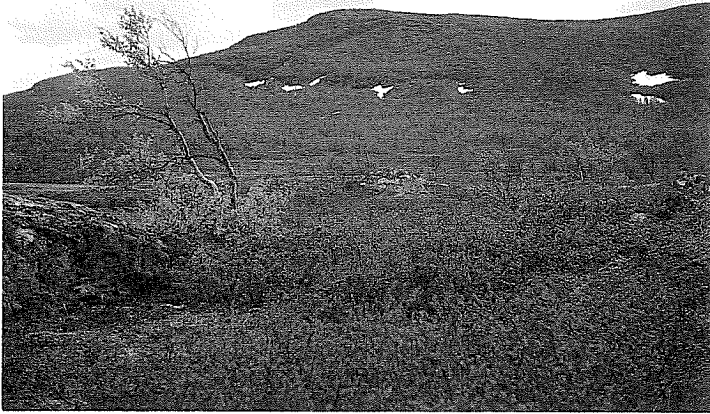
Fig. 9 a-d. This cross from one of the southern Saami drums here represents the compass-rose which may be the underlying concept of the central design. *a, b* show the consequences if the top of the tree-like cross points to South and to the constellation of *Ara (Altar)* at Noon on the Winter Solstice, and to *Orion* on the Summer Solstice; East to the right and West to the left when the drum is used for the sky. East and West change places when the drum is turned downwards and becomes a geographical chart. *c, d* represent the case when North is upwards and South at the root of the Sun-tree, and the consequences will be similar to that of the first situation.

*Scorpion*: it is almost completely absent in both the horizon of latitude  $65^\circ$  and at the corresponding place on the drums. It may therefore be a reasonable statement that an investigation of the visibility rates of the star constellations supports the star map hypothesis.

### Conclusions

In the course of this new study I have become even more convinced that the star map hypothesis is a model that can be used to explain the *basic pattern* of the figures on the Saami drums of the Southern type.

The most general correspondences between star maps (including planispheres or three-dimensional astrolabes) and the painted designs on Southern drums depend on the existence of a *cross for determining the four cardinal points* in both cases (Fig. 9 a-d). As the central cross according to original Saami statements is "like a compass" for showing the routes one has to take as a result of drum-divination (e.g. to find a



*Fig. 10 a.* Traditions of famous shamans, *noai'des*, still exist among the Saami people. The drum of one of these was said to be hidden in a cave on the northern side of the small hill, *Vuoktanj*, south of the mountain ridge, *Barturte*, in Arjeplog parish, North Sweden. In the summer of 1964 the author went there with two Saami men, but the cave was filled with snow and ice and could not be entered. Three years later the author was approached by a Saami at another place in the same region who said: "Stop searching for the drum! By the way, we have already moved it." — The exact geographical positions for these two photographs taken by the author have been determined by the Saami, *Lars Erik Ruong*, who is a local expert on the culture of this region.

wolf to hunt), it is convenient to see the whole design of the drumhead as a *geographical map* (Fig. 9 b, d). However, other early statements indicate that the region for "Death" (e.g. *saivo*, "Paradise"), as well as its earthly counterpart "Life", is depicted as a settlement on a simple or double bow-line resembling a bridge, to which the death- and illness spirit *Rota (Ruto)* is riding. This motif, which we have compared with the *Milky Way*, appears to the right of the central cross, i.e. to the *East* — if the cross is regarded as equivalent to an ordinary compass centre. But this direction is against most world-wide common beliefs





*Fig. 10 b.* This view shows another hill associated with drums: farthest away is seen the bowl-shaped *Guob'dábák'te* at Parka on a parallell mountain ridge (cf. Sommarström 1987, 213, Fig. 1). The point of observation is on *Barturte*, not far from *Vuoktanj* (which is behind you, to the South). The Arctic circle ( $66^{\circ}30' N$ ) is close just in front of you. In the *Pite* river valley between the two mountain ridges there is a third region famous for its shaman. Could the three *noai'des*, if they were contemporary, have heard each other at these distances — and communicated with their drums? — A revival of their ancient psycho-mental techniques has recently begun among some Saamis who are learning “core” shamanism in workshops and courses and try to reconstruct or establish new forms of traditional local shamanism. Even drums are again used in *Saami-land* for changing one's state of consciousness in order to experience non-ordinary realities.

about *Death* being connected with *the West*, the region of the sunset. Likewise *the East* is connected with *Life*, because the Sun rises there (as do the stars which illuminate the dark sky). However, if you lift the star map, or one of our Southern drums, over your head, then — almost as if by miracle ! — East becomes West and *vice versa*, and the map is turned into an *astral map* (Fig. 9 a, c). This would resolve the apparent contradiction as the drum could be used for both purposes simply by being regarded as turned up or down: for matters

concerning *life on earth* the drum was possibly seen as if with the drumhead turned *upwards*; for *spiritual* matters such as illness, death, and the future, the astral map directions could have been seen as more appropriate, and accordingly the drumskin was looked upon as if held with the skin *downwards*. — If this interpretation is correct, it follows that the Saami drum was a truly holistic instrument, and consequently, different interpretations do not necessarily contradict each other. This view also strengthens the star map hypothesis, which is founded on the relationship between the central cross and the bow lines on its right side; this is a fixed position which allows for two initial arrangements, with either North or South pointing at the Ara (Altar) constellation and Mid-Winter around December 20, which was also the approximate time of the New Year for the ancient Saamis; either North or South then points at the constellation of Orion at midsummer time. The final choice may be easier after the following discussion.

The *Zodiac* constellations on the Ecliptic are seen almost completely and *all at the same time* when South in the star map is at Noon (12) on Christmas (nowadays December 24) which is also in the direction of the constellation *Ara (Altar)*. In all other kinds of position the Ecliptic will not be seen as a whole, and the 12 *Zodiac* constellations will completely disappear under the horizon for parts of the year. It is also noteworthy that the *full view of the Ecliptic is valid only for the horizon at latitude 65°* — not for latitudes 60° or 70°! All taken together, this strongly suggests, in my opinion, a decision in favour of the alternative shown in Fig. 9 a, where North is in front of you and South at your back, and East to your right side, when the *star map or the drum* is lifted up towards the sky. When put down and therefore turned so that South is in front of you and North at your stomach, and East consequently must be looked for to your left, you have a *map with earth orientations* (Fig. 9 b). Even if each separate *Zodiac* constellation did not call for any incorporation, the curious fact is that the *whole circle* can be seen at a time just *around Noon in Mid-Winter* (when it is dark about 21½ hours), it is the time when Christ was born, and the time when the New Year begins. Add to this that a Saami “Holy family”, similar to the Christian family or Trinity, is depicted on the drums at this very place, which has an especially large sacrificial altar as its dominating feature (the constellation Ara/Altar being close behind, i.e. below the horizon). It is too much to be sheer coincidence!

The *Milky Way*, *Pegasus*, and *Orion* are the most suitable examples among the *separate (single)* constellations to be compared with similar figures on the drums. They have been shown to have resemblances not

only with regard to forms but also as to their deeper meanings (but this may be due to archetypal concepts) But the great positional similarities between these stars and the corresponding drum-figures point to influences from star maps even more strongly than for the cases related to the Zodiac circle

Single or bound together in a ring, all these constellations which we have compared with the drum-figures are in fact *peripheral* Saami skies It is hard to believe that they can have played any vital rôle in their capacity as star symbols within the frame of the Saamis' own astral cosmology It is more probable that the earthly meanings of most of the figures were more important to the drummer, who was usually either a shaman (*noai de*) or an ordinary master of a household Still, a relation to other worlds with which one communicated by means of the drum had to be conceptually framed and graphically shown in a way that could be understood by the public. Much work remains to be done in reconstructing the Saami people's ancient cosmology, and for the astral dimension efforts should especially be made for the *central* region around the Pole star

By way of conclusion, I would like to repeat once more what was stated in an early source about the relation between drum and drummer: "the most successful" *noai des* were not dependent on drums for their spiritual journeys<sup>7</sup> It therefore follows that the drum figures were not absolutely necessary for specially gifted persons But, on the other hand, most drummers seem to have been ordinary house-holders, and the drums therefore have a great value in reflecting common beliefs and ways of life among the ancient Saami people<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> According to Johannes Jonae Tornaeus, cited by Schefferus 1675 (Schefferus 1956, 153, 173 I stressed this view in my article of 1987, note on p. 225, last lines

<sup>8</sup> For recent discussions on Shamanism as a religious or non-religious system see e.g. Åke Hultkrantz 1988 (Hultkrantz 1988) and Mihály Hoppál 1987 (Hoppál 1987) For inside information about revival movements for Shamanism to be used in our modern society — so called neo-Shamanism — see e.g. works by Michael Harner (Harner 1980; Harner 1983; Harner 1987; Harner 1988a; Harner 1988b; Harner 1989) Jonathan Horwitz (Horwitz 1989), Sandra Ingerman (Ingerman 1989), Leslie Grey (Grey 1987), and Jörgen I Eriksson (Eriksson 1989) One of the latest historical surveys which includes the neo Shamanistic development is the one published by Ward Rutherford (Rutherford 1986) Further information about traditional and "core" Shamanism respectively can be found in collections of Essays such as Samsk shamanism (Eriksson et al 1987), *Shamanism* (1987), *Shamanism, Past and Present* (1989), *Shaman's Path* (1988), and in the two existing Journals on Shamanism: *Shaman's Drum* (in USA) and *Gimle* (in Sweden)

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# The Sound Picture of the Saami Shamanic Drum

BY ROLF KRISTOFFERSSON

Research on the Saami shamanic drum has mainly concerned the pictorial world of the drumheads. The missionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries who produced the first written sources for our knowledge of Saami culture and religion described carefully what they saw and heard, but were unable to understand the shamanic element of Saami belief. Their frame of reference for understanding non-Christian religion was the world of the Bible and Graeco-Roman antiquity (e.g. Forbus 1910).

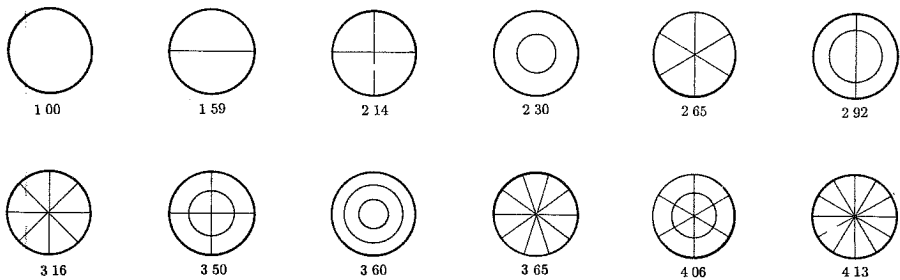
In the religious-cultural conflict the drum became a symbol of resistance against the Christian mission. Within their own conceptual framework, the missionaries described the drum as an instrument of witchcraft (Rheén 1897, 33 f). In this connection the pictures on the drumskins acquired the utmost interest as a source for the Saami world view and concept of the divine world. Another principle interest was their function in divination.

In his study *Lappalaisten uskonto* (Holmberg 1915) Uno Holmberg states that the Saami shaman, the *noaide*, originally used the drum solely as an aid to attaining shamanic ecstasy. The divinatory use, in his opinion, is a late development (Holmberg 1987, 91). Holmberg accepts Fritzner's supposition that the use of the Saami drum in divination was influenced by European soothsaying with the help of sieves, a method used during the 16th century (Fritzner 1877). There is a technical similarity between one type of Saami drum and the sieves, but this explanation seems rather simplistic. I will here, among other things, suggest an alternative explanation based on the shamanic use of sound.

Andrew Neher has published results of research on the effect of drum sounds on the electrical activity of the central nervous system (Neher 1961, Neher 1962). Human hearing covers a range of approximately 16 to 20,000 HZ, a little more than ten octaves (Möller 1976, 26). The sense reaction to the sound volume, the amplitude, increases when the frequency rises, i.e. when the pitch becomes higher (Möller 1976,

27) The human auditory faculty accepts a higher sound pressure, or amplitude, for low frequencies before the pain threshold is reached than it does for higher frequencies

The frequency of a drum depends on its size, on the tension of the skin and the weight of the skin per  $\text{cm}^2$  the greater the size, the lower the frequency; the higher the tension, the higher the pitch; and the heavier the drumskin, the lower the pitch. The pattern of harmonics in the membranes is complicated (Sundberg 1973, 138 f.) The node lines can be detected by modern technical equipment, and for round membranes these lines are given by Wilhelm Stauder (Stauder 1949-68, 13, 729 f)



*Fig 1* Node lines in a circular membrane. The numbers refer to the relative frequency. Stauder 1949-68, 13, 729

The Saami surviving drums are all different in size. Most of them are slightly oval shaped (Manker 1938). The node lines, therefore, are supposedly even more complicated. The frequencies according to size and other factors are low.

What I have said so far means that the drum sounds reach the receptive organs in the human ear in a range of low but strong tones, with low frequencies but high amplitude. This means that more energy is transferred into the nervous system than with various other types of instrumental sounds.

The frequency of the beat is another factor affecting the nervous system. There are several types of brain waves appearing under special circumstances. The so-called Theta waves, four to eight cycles per second, are related to trance conditions, dreaming and sudden insights. A drum beating in this rhythm is supposed to make it easy to attain trance conditions. According to Michael Harner, Jilek and Ormestad



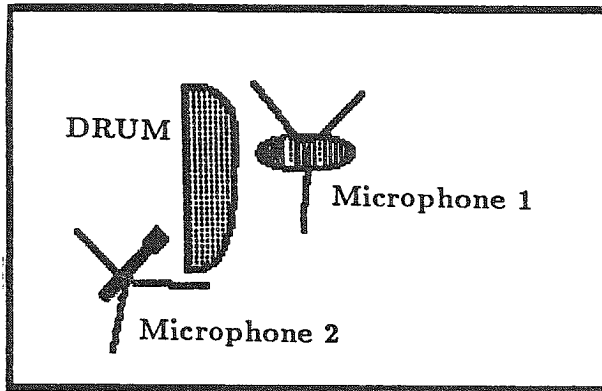
have discovered "that drumbeat frequencies in the range of Theta waves in EEG were dominant during initiation processes when the Salish Indian drum of 10e deer hide was used (Harner 1983, 74 f, Jilek 1974, 21)

**Fig 2 CEREBRAL WAVES**

Hz	Label	Characteristics
0,5-4	DELTA	A condition of deep sleep
4-8	THETA	Drowsiness, dreaming Can rise in conditions of intense alertness such as sudden insight or when a memory appears Trance conditions
8-14	ALFA	Relaxed waking state Habitual mental activity Introverted attention Meditation
14-22	BETA	Attention Concentrated mental activity but also anxiety and restlessness
22-32	HIGH BETA	Intensive reactions and thinking or intense anxiety
33-	K-COMPLEX and undefined	Short outbreaks of high frequency waves during problem solving and when short term memory becomes reinforced

Wonder & Donovan 1984, 114

The brain has a system of descending nerves connecting the cortex with the sensory apparatus The function of these nerves is not very clear, according to Aage Möller (Möller 1976, 27) It is known, however, that the brain processes the signal from the auditive receptors in the ear in three or four stages It is to be supposed that the descending connections direct the revision of the primary signal on its way to conscious recognition Rapid changes in frequency or amplitude



*Fig 3* Arrangement of microphones for the recording of drum 67 The beats hit opposite mic 1 Tape recorder: Revox PR 99A; Tape: BASF ferro LH HiFi LP 35; Microphones: AKG C 451 E and AKG D 130

seem to be accentuated Biologically, this means that changes in the surrounding sound pattern tend to strike conscious observation, while more stable sounds are suppressed A conscious or even an unconscious influence on auditory receptivity seems possible It is a well known fact that it is possible to become accustomed to certain sounds so that they are no longer noticed, e g the ticking of a clock in the room

The drum sound is non-harmonic, shortlived and fluctuating in character It is unstable in amplitude and in perceived frequency The frequency apprehended depends on the amplitude, which shifts rapidly In its general character the drum sound is close to rumbling

The special character of drum sounds might be a partial explanation of why drums are used in religious ceremonies all over the world It seems possible by study to increase the sensitivity for, and reaction to, certain types of sounds, and it is possible that such sensitivity training in sounds used in shamanic rites is a part of the initiation of shamans <sup>1</sup>

The sound of a drum also depends on the point at which the stick touches the drumskin "The membrane at this point is forced into an oscillation and all the harmonics which would have had a node at this point disappear" writes Johan Sundberg (Sundberg 1973, 31) So much for the theoretical problems of drum sounds In my study of the Saami drum I have tried to find the answer to two questions: 1) Is it possible to detect the sound pictogram from some of the drums

<sup>1</sup> There are only a few references in the literature to the training of new Saami shamans, e g Tornæus 1900; Olsen 1910

preserved? 2) Are there marks of usage which might indicate what kind of sounds the users preferred?

Most of the surviving Saami drums are in such a condition that it is impossible to carry out any research on the original sound. Through the courtesy of the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm, however, I have had the opportunity to record drum 67 (numbers according to Manker 1938). The recording was made on June 20, 1988, in a small auditorium in the Museum. The drum was held in a vertical position with the microphones placed one on each side of the drumskin. The beats were made by an original "hammer" (*vetjier*) (Fig 3).

As the original drums are very fragile, it is not possible to make more trying experiments with them. In order to try more vigorous beating, I have produced a couple of experimental membranes myself. These are made in the shape and size of an average Saami drum, with a slightly oval shaped surface and ca. 40 cm in length at the longest point. One was technically speaking a shell drum made at first without holes in the bottom.<sup>2</sup> The sound of this drum was very weak and without character until I made openings in the wooden bottom. When the openings were made, the sound became strong and rich. This may indicate that the openings in the bottom of the shell drums are made as much for reasons of sound as because of the need of a handle. I have made two frame drums, a wooden "hammer" and a "frog", *arpa*. The "frog" is made by brass rings connected to a common ring in the centre.<sup>3</sup>

With reference to the *arpa* Samuele Rheen describes "a big bunch of brass rings bound to a brass chain"<sup>4</sup>. The designation of the object as a frog (e.g. Niurenius 1905, 20) is probably descriptive. The connected brass rings look, when placed on the drumskin, look quite alive if the skin is beaten with a hammer. It vibrates and jumps in a manner remarkably similar to a frog. Some small jumps, followed by a sudden higher one and so on. We will return to this question later.

Regarding my second preliminary question about signs of use on the drumheads, I have carefully examined 21 drums at the Nordiska Museet. In the reproductions made by Ernst Manker there are several

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<sup>2</sup> In the shell drum the drumskin is stretched over the opening of a wooden bowl. The frame drum is built on a wooden frame made by a bent lath.

<sup>3</sup> In order to avoid misunderstandings I must here make clear that my laboratory drums are in no way to be regarded as Saami woodwork. The material is plywood and board. The drumskins are of goat hide and not decorated.

<sup>4</sup> Sw "een stoor knuppa Messingz Ringar tillsamman bundne widh ett Messingskiädh" Rheen 1897, 31.

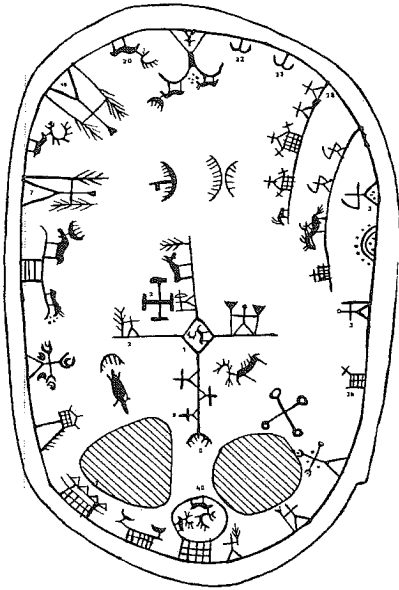


Fig 4 Drum 1

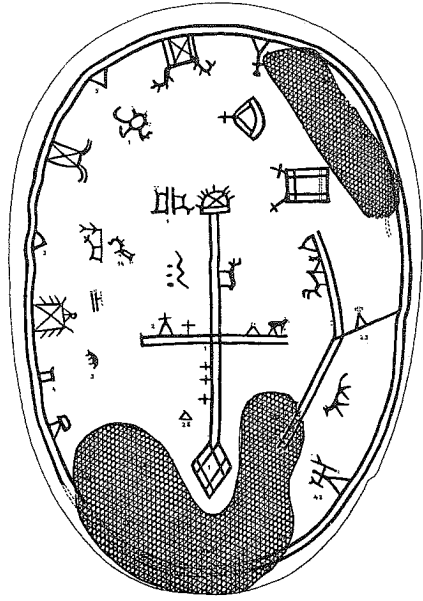


Fig 5 Drum 2

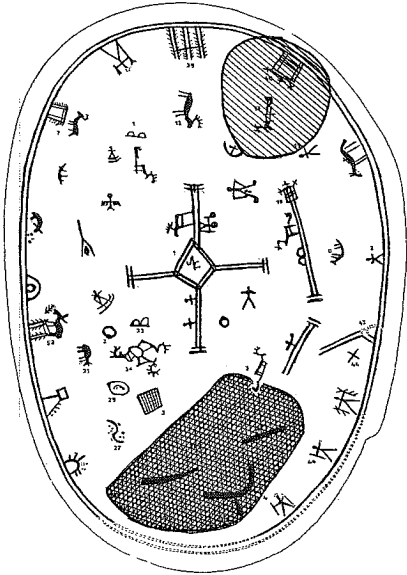


Fig 6 Drum 3

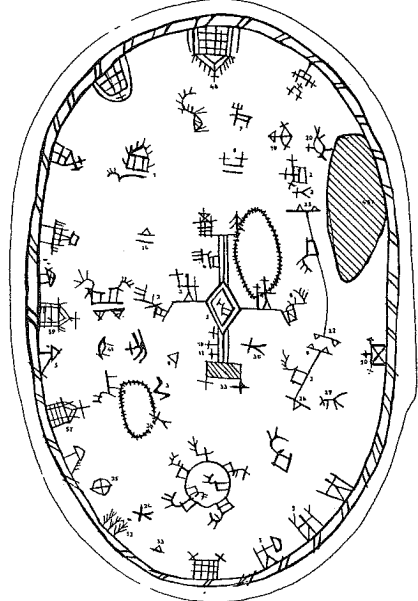
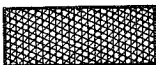


Fig 7 Drum 11



S fa with isible  
sig of



S fa pp dly  
d naged by h t



Ap t h gger-  
t d L k if mad  
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Sig ifi w pai

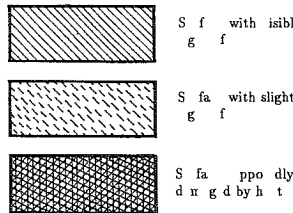
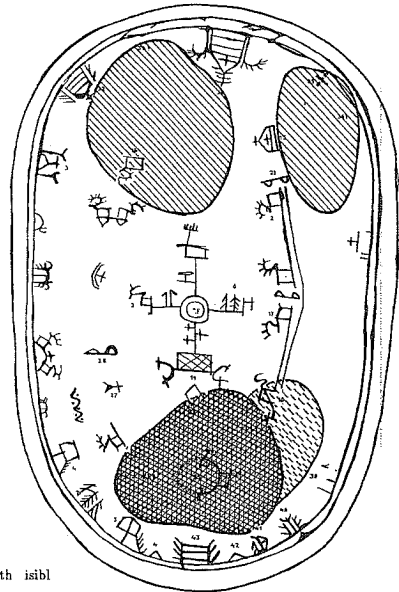
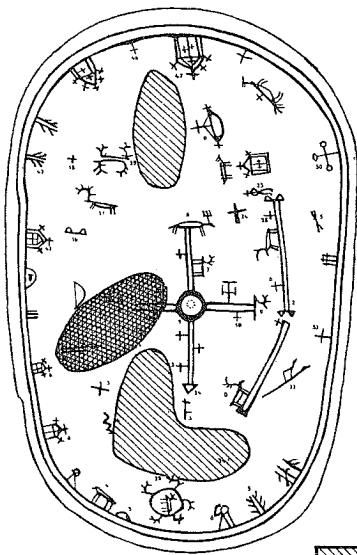


Fig 8 Drum 15

Fig 9 Drum 16

blank parts with question marks and missing figures. In many cases the reason is that the drumskins are damaged by holes and rifts, or by blemishes of the surface supposedly through heat. The drumskins, we are told, were often stretched by heating at the fire in the middle of the kota. This need for stretching the skins is easily understood. The cold and wet climate softened the drumskins and made the sound weak and vague. It was necessary to dry the skin to get a good, strong tone.

There are, however, blanks in the skin surfaces which are not caused by heat or serious damage. Some of those are certainly caused by use of the drums. In some drums no such signs can be detected. Some of the skins are too badly damaged and some are so well kept — and perhaps too little used — so that there are no signs of usage.

A comparison of the different drums shows that the signs of usage are surprisingly consistent. We have mentioned that the sound of the drum depends, among other things, on the point where it is hit. From laboratory experiments, it seems clear that the “best” sound, the sound with the deepest frequency and the richest variety of harmonics,

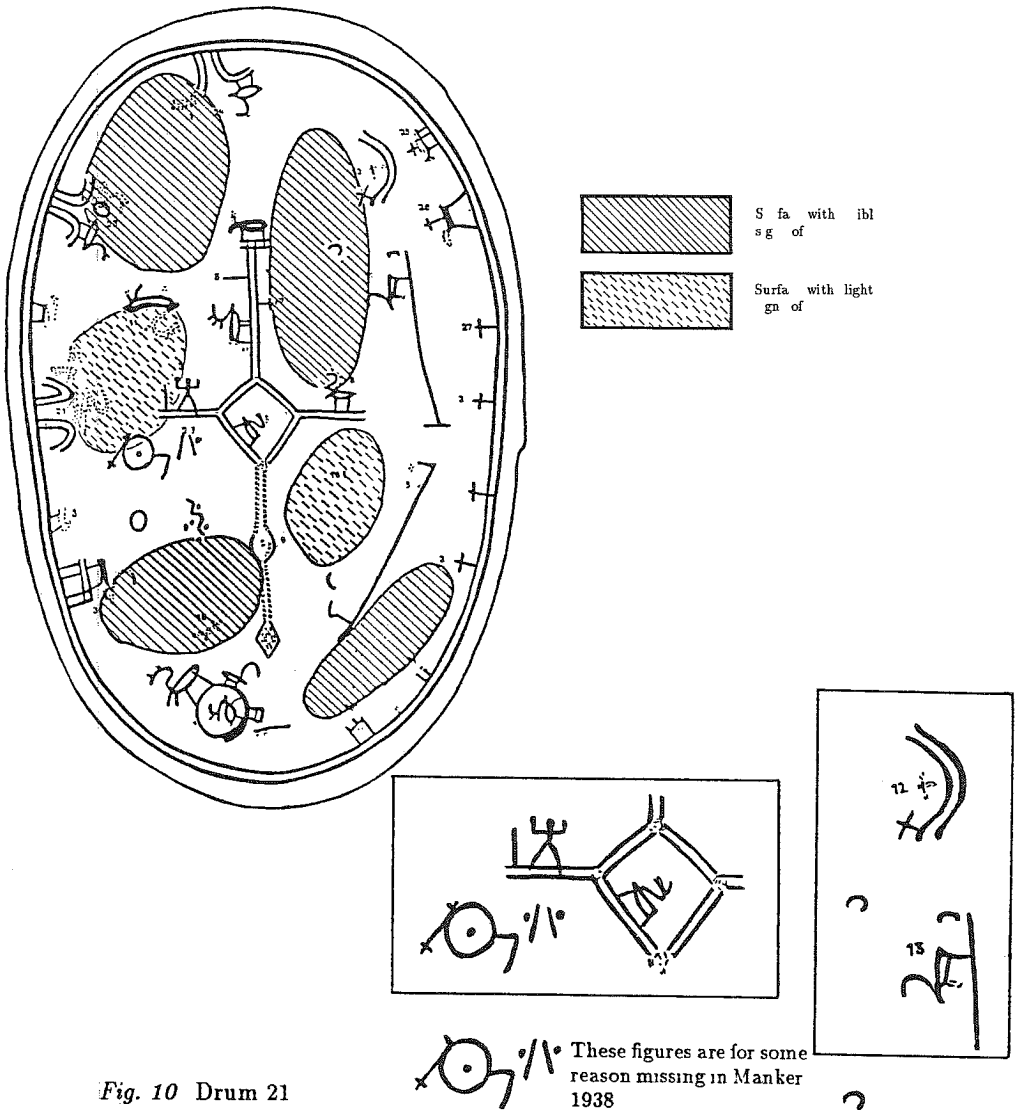


Fig. 10 Drum 21

These figures are for some reason missing in Manker 1938

sound with the deepest frequency and the richest variety of harmonics, occurs when the drumskin is beaten on those parts of the surface where the signs are to be seen. An incidental point is that some of the drum skins which were originally imperfect were repaired by the users themselves, which may be related to the idea of the infallibility of holy things, also common among the Saamis.

I will here present the drums I have explored (Figs 4-18)

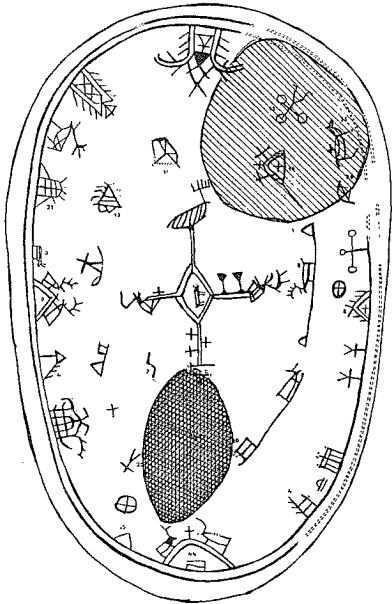


Fig 11 Drum 25

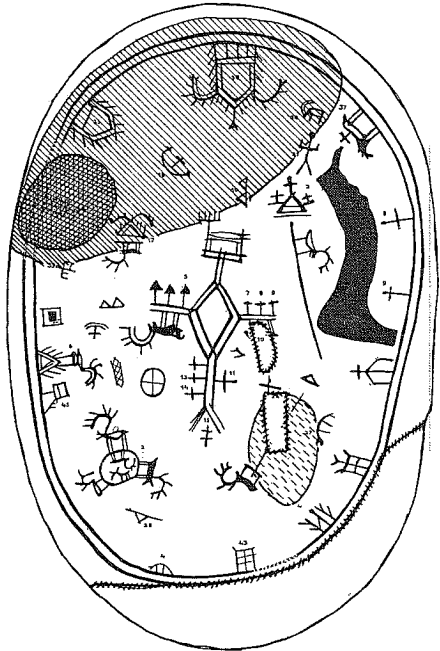


Fig 12 Drum 26

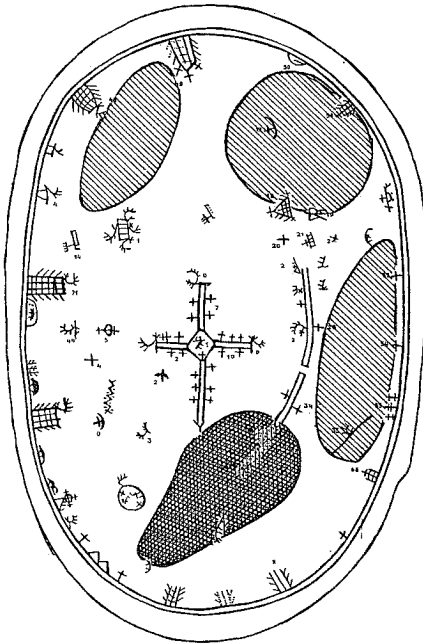


Fig 13 Drum 29

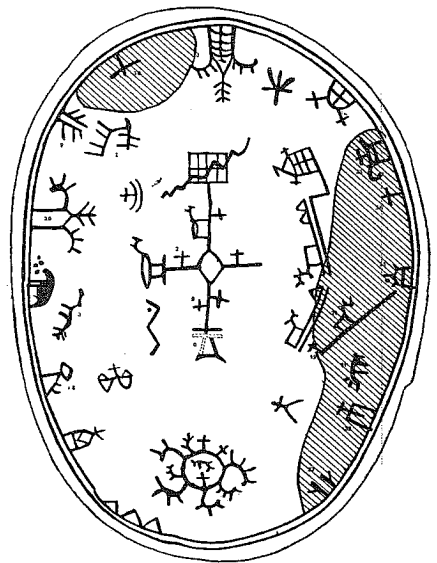


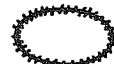
Fig 14 Drum 35



S rfa with ibl  
gn f



S rfa pp dly  
d maged by h at



Sig ifies wn in pa



S fa with slight  
gn of



Ap ture

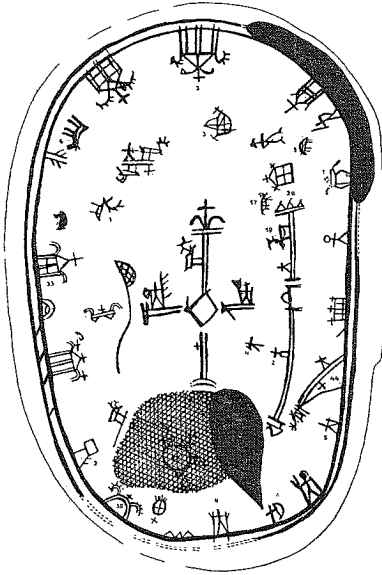


Fig 15 Drum 37

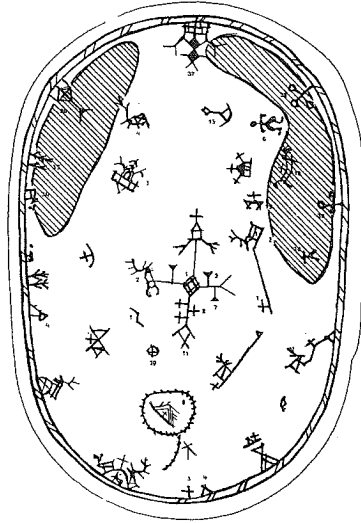


Fig 16 Drum 40.

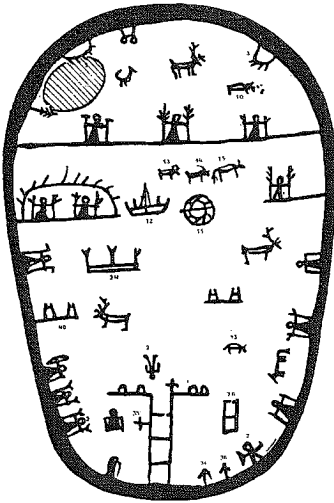


Fig 17 Drum 64

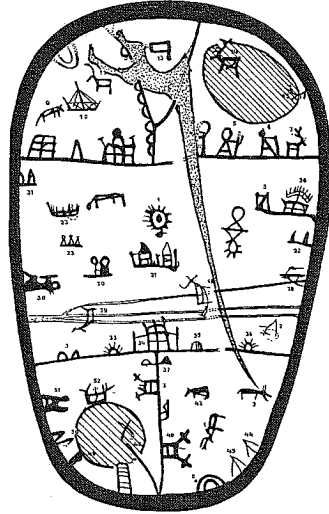
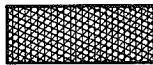


Fig 18 Drum 67



S rf with ibl  
ig f



S fa pp dly  
d maged by h t



Signifi w repai



S fa with light  
sg f



Ap t



M d pai



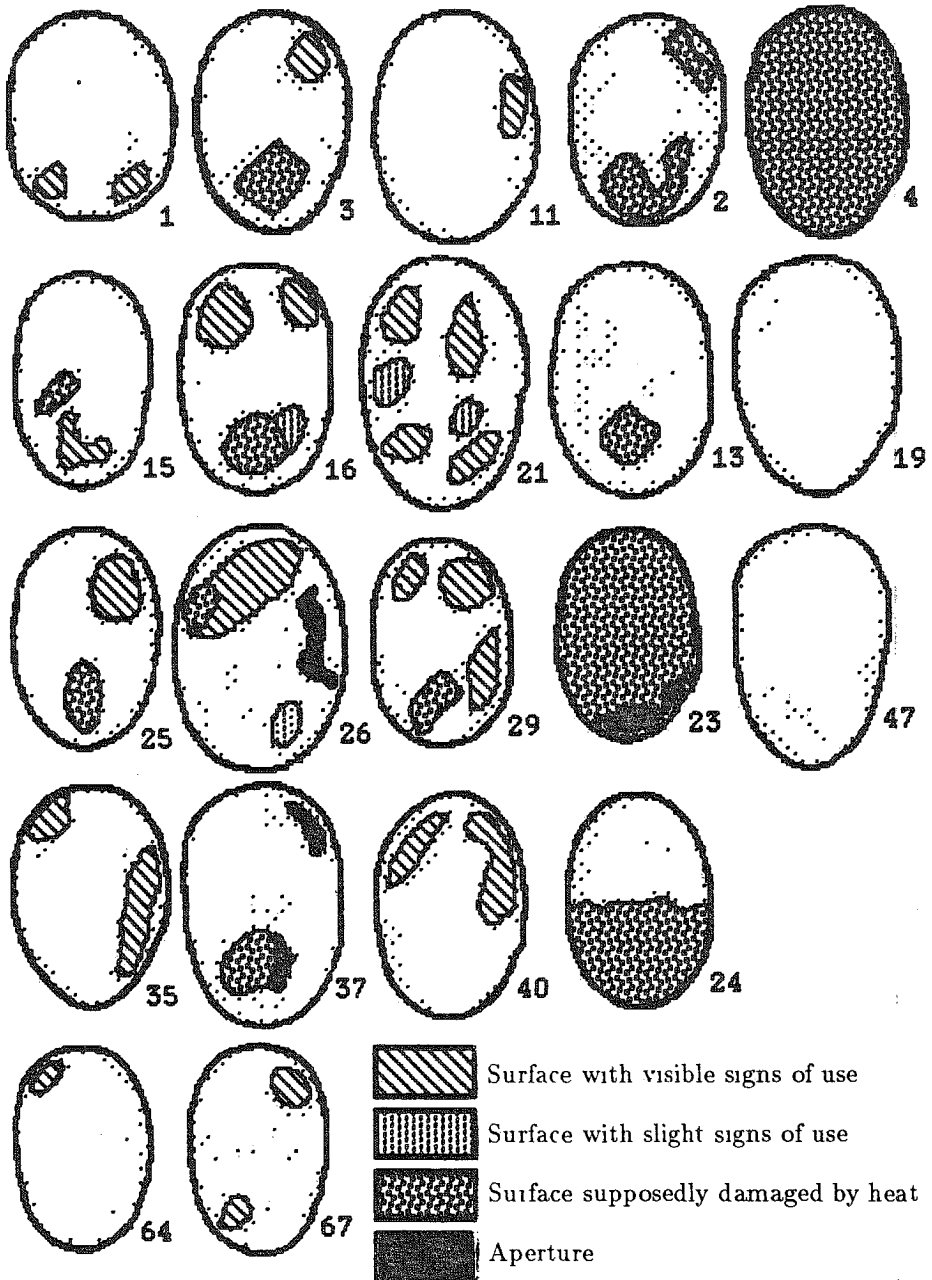


Fig 19 Comparison of drums studied

Drums 4, 19, 23, 24, and 47 did not provide any information about usage. Nos 4, 23, and 24 are badly damaged, presumably by heat. The 21 drums compared thus give the impression seen in Fig. 19.

Now we have to return to the question of the *arpa*, or the "frog" or "pointer". Different objects were fixed to the drums hanging on strings or chains. Niurenius writes: "On the drum itself, tied by sinews, hang claws and bones from all sorts of animals which they have caught. The brass frog, which is their oracle, is covered all over with rings. When one beats rapidly with the two-headed brass-mounted hammer on the middle of the drum, the rings on the frog jingle and the claws and bones make a terrible noise" (Niurenius 1905, 21). And Olao Graan tells us that "the most savage drum beater in urgent need uses a firkin lid as his drum, on which no figures are painted. This was the case with a Saami called Kobdask Pähl, who took the firkin lid in the palm of his hand, turned the plain side upwards, took a ring from his belt and, putting it on the said lid, then began to beat the lid with his knife, which he used as a hammer until he fell down and was unconscious for half an hour" (Graan 1899, 60). A question here is what function was served by the ring placed on the lid. It could not, apparently, be used as a pointer for divination. There was nothing on the lid to point at. My suggestion is, that the ring was used as a sound maker. The sound made by the jumping ring supplemented the sound from the beats on the lid. Thus the *noaite* was in possession of two voices, one low and one high.

High frequency sounds are common among shamans; such sounds include those from rattles of different kinds. Michael Harner believes that sounds from rattles supplement and strengthen sounds from drums in an effective way (Harner 1983, 75). In a paper by E. I. Banyai it is stated, that short click sounds at high frequencies and flashes affect the EEG (Banyai 1984, 174 f). The experiment was carried out in order to see if it was possible to produce hypnotic conditions during physical work by stimulating alertness instead of sleep. Some details in the sources indicate that this question is relevant for Saami shamanism. It is said that the *noaite* "drives on furiously in the hut"<sup>5</sup>

To me it seems likely that the original function of the *arpa* or "frog", was to supplement the drum sound with a high frequency sound in the same rhythm in order to strengthen the influence on the senses in the old use of the drum as an instrument of exaltation. The surviving

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<sup>5</sup> Sw "Fålas om kåtan såsom ursinnig och faller omsider i loge" Forbus 1910, 40

signs of usage, the marks of wear on the drum skins, suggest that this type of practice, right into the period of cultural confrontation, was much more normal and widespread than is suggested by the written sources

We said that the designation "frog" describes the movements of the *arpa* on the drum skin. When one lets the bunch of rings move on the drum, one is rapidly aware that it cannot be easily directed, but has, so to say, its own will. Strictly physically, the jumping is dependent on the nodes and oscillating points linked to the notes and harmonics of the vibrating skin. This division of the membrane into parts cannot be seen by the naked eye. If one tries to direct the "frog" by tilting the drum or by drumming at different places on the drum skin there is no means of sure success. Sometimes the "frog" jumps down from the drum in spite of every attempt to keep it on the skin, perhaps several times in succession. This is my experience from experiments with the drums I have built.

It is quite understandable if these circumstances were interpreted as expressions of some external agent, naturally the will of the gods. From such an idea it is only a short step to the divinatory use of the instrument.

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