- Snowchange Cooperative Discussion Papers #1 2011 -

Does Siida Life Continue? - Brief Overview of the Land Use and Occupancy and Human Histories of the Indigenous Inari (Aanaar) Sámi Reindeer Herding Community "Nellimin tokkakunta"

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1. Introduction

Main aim of this paper is to investigate the question preliminarily whether some aspects of the Indigenous Sámi siida community governance survive to modern day. This is achieved by producing a brief overview of aspects of land use and Indigenous histories of the Inari (Aanaar) Sámi reindeer herding community which is now emerging (2011) as "Nellimin tokkakunta" (loosely translated as Sámi Reindeer-herding Unit of Nellim) which is conducting Sámi-style reindeer herding in the area of Nellim, which belongs to the municipality of Inari in Finland. Previously this community has been a part of the state-instituted Ivalon paliskunta system. The community of Nellim reindeer herders is in a state of conflict with the state reindeer-herding unit and is currently emerging as an "Sámi-style" reindeer herding community. The paper discusses pre-historic and archaeological roots of Inari Sámi and Sámi land use and occupancy in the region, traces aspects of historical land use of the area with a focus on the Sámi and ends with a view regarding contemporary situation of the Nellim Inari Sámi based in preliminary informant interviews from 2011. The scientific view of the paper rests on the methods of human geography, investigation of archival and printed materials, fieldwork in the region in spring and summer 2011, and selected initial interview with the key informants in the region in May 2011. This paper should be seen as an introductory investigation into the aspects of Inari Sámi land use and occupancy in the region. The conclusions and findings are to be taken only as indicative and preliminary regarding the research question. The research here has been conducted as a part of the on-going community-based research initiative of the Snowchange Cooperative in the Finnish Sámi areas, which began in 2000 in the region and continues as a long-term monitoring effort. Much further work, both in terms of expansion of research literature as well as field interviews among the living people is needed for a throughout investigation of the situation in Nellim. The study of the legal aspects of the land use and occupancy in the region forms another important research topic for the future. It is worth noting that such a communitybased Indigenous investigation should be carried out at an earliest possible convenience together with the established Sámi institutions and research bodies in the area as many of the older Sámi who remember the semi-nomadic migrations are passing away. Toponyms appear in the short paper as written in the sources and they are not consistent with the contemporary translitteration of the Inari Sámi language. Finnish and Sámi terms have been used to refer to culturally specific concepts such as *siida*. The paper concludes that while the Inari Sámi-style siidas as Indigenous governance systems have been destroyed in the colonization process by the nation states in the region since 1517, a cultural continuity can be seen in the reindeer-herding systems, place names and family links to the documented seasonal rounds of the Inari Sámi amongst the contemporary populations of Nellim and the surrounding areas. Special focus will be put in this paper on the aspects of the contemporary Sámi reindeer herding community in Nellim. Local systems of subsistence economies can be

seen to be in conflict with the state-imposed natural management systems, such as the *paliskunta* reindeer cooperatives and other land use decisions. Following the UN decision of 2005 to issue a moratorium on all industrial forestry in parts of Nellim it is recommended that a large research and community-based process be initiated to investigate the region and its histories as soon as possible.

2. Pre-Historic Aspects of the Aanaar-Inari Sámi

The area of Aanaar-Inari today belongs into the sub-arctic boreal zone and is situated roughly 300 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle. It is located in the Province of Lapland, Finland. The Nellim area, which is located in the eastern part of the municipality of Inari, belongs into the northern boreal forest with pine-dominated trees even though birch and spruce can be found the region too. Temperature is quite harsh, in the winter temperatures can reach down to -40 C and in the summer temperatures are around 20-25 C degrees. Extreme temperatures of -50 C and + 30 C have been known to exist. Climate has been partly in-land continental, even though climate change has been predicted to change the current climatological regime (Arctic Council 2005). It can be categorized as a short-summer snow-dominated climate. Predominant winds are from southwest. The Gulf Stream influences the climate and weather in the region, making it milder compared to other climates in the same latitudes.

Climate change may cause additional burdens on the human activities in the region, especially to the vulnerable subsistence economies, such as reindeer herding and ice-fishing (see more in Arctic Council 2005). Luhta (2003: 21) states that the natural conditions in the Aanaar-Inari area formed into contemporary forms around 2000 years ago. Oldest samples of timber (pine) investigations have been dated 7520 years ago. The last Ice Age caused the formation of the current water bodies and geographical features (ibid. 2003: 21). The defining element of the region is the Lake Aanaar-Inari itself, which influences the human histories, and land uses of the area.

First human inhabitants reached the region known today as the Province of Lapland in Finland roughly 7370 BC (Carpelan 2003: 31-32). The Sámi know the region as "Sápmi", land of the Sámis or Sámi homeland. The oldest human occupancy evidence has been dated 8000-6000 BC from Inari region (Carpelan 2003: 33). These sites are areas of communal dwellings that have been discovered in archaeological digs. Carpelan (2003: 33) claims that the first arriving peoples to the Aanaar-Inari region came from the coast of the Arctic Ocean north of Aanaar-Inari. These peoples can be classified as hunter-gatherer populations.

Based on the archaeology (ibid. 2003: 34-35) the Aanaar-Inari region has been settled continuously for the past 8000 years. Majority of this period is the time of hunters and gatherers and their societies. There are many markers from this period but especially the system of hunting pits for wild deer also in the Nellim area are an example of the continued long human history in the region. Other examples include specific arrow heads (Huurre 1985: 26-27), pots and other food utensils. The periods of arrival of different materials have been documented in the archaeological studies of the region. First bronze items for example have been dated roughly 900-700 BC (Carpelan 2003: 53).

The link between these pre-historic societies and the contemporary Sámi triggers often heated debates and divides scholarship. It is a matter of political and legal interpretation too. For the purposes of this paper it is enough to state that the contemporary Sámi populations conceptualize themselves as the "Indigenous" or original inhabitants of the region. This status as Indigenous people of the region matters in the international and national legal debates too. Further investigations should be made utilizing – in a meaningful partnership with the local Sámi – the oral histories of the peoples of the region to shed more light on this question.

3. Aspects of the Historical Land Use and Indigenous Histories In the Area of "Nellimin tokkakunta"

According to for example Carpelan (2003: 71-73) the Sámi societies of the Aanaar-Inari region organised themselves into so-called winter village territories or *siidas*. Before this method of land use bands of hunters and fishermen would occupy the lands surrounding the Inari Lake and the Nellim area according to their seasonal cycles. There is plenty of scientific scholarship on the questions and models of the winter village siidas so this is not repeated here (see for example Mustonen 2011: 24-25). It is important to note that these siidas were autonomous Indigenous-controlled reindeer herding and hunting societies that existed well into the historical times. The Swedish Crown as well as the Russian State, the two European powers influencing the Nellim and Aanaar-Inari regions in the historical times, both recognized these forms of Indigenous governance in the early historical times in the region (see more in Mustonen 2011: 79).

The first historical reference to Inari or Aanaar was made in 1517 (Lehtola et al. 2003: VII). In those times the region would be influenced by six ethnic societies, the North Sámi, Skolt Sámi to the east, Russians, Swedes/Norwegians (Scandinavian peoples), Finns and the "local" Sámi, the Inari Sámi peoples. The first farmer arrived in the region in 1758 (Carpelan 2003: 36) and he was ethnically a Finn. Carpelan (2003: 72) quotes Itkonen who indicates that there existed at least 11 siidas around Aanaar-Inari lake system in early historical times. Kitti (1984: 69), a Sámi scholar discussing the issue indicates that there used to be 15 siidas around Inari region. Inari Sámi language and culture are specific and on their own in the family of surviving Sámi languages and areas.

In some aspects these siidas can be linked with family land use and territories in the contemporary times. However the original siida system was destroyed through the colonial acts of the Swedish, Russian and Finnish nation states. Such acts include the construction of a church in Aanaar-Inari in 1646 (Carpelan 2003: 81) and other acts of state power against the Indigenous Sámi such as taxation, regulation of hunting game, fishing and reindeer herding. The semi-nomadic Sámi siidas were forced into partial settlement around Aanaar-Inari as early on as 1666 (Carpelan 2003: 83). However the semi-nomadic cycles of seasonal life continued through this period of settlement and colonization well into the 20th Century (see more in Jefremoff 2001).

A crucial source of data for the Indigenous land use and occupancy of the Nellim and Aanaar-Inari regions can be investigated through the Inari Sámi place names. Ilmari Mattus (2010) has explored the place names of the Eastern Inari areas at length. Samuli Aikio (2003: 98-112) has written extensively on the Sámi place names in Inari. According to him the landscape around the Nellim and Aanaar-Inari regions portrays a wide variety of human interactions with the landscape, including hunting and fishing areas according to different species, seasonal cycles of land use and sacred places. Families would use different territories according to the models explored elsewhere under the siida system (Mustonen 2011: 24, Paulaharju 2010: 53). He notes that person-based toponyms may be a product of layered histories of different events in a place and therefore special care should be paid if links between land use and occupancy and certain families are to be traced – this is a very crucial baseline for further studies of land use in the region (Aikio 2003: 104).

More specifically Aikio (2003: 106) claims that in the Eastern part of the Lake Inari system where Nellim is located the nation-state border of 1323 between Sweden and Russia may have reflected Sámi winter village borders. One of these may have disappeared – perhaps it was called in Finnish *Paatsjoenniskan siida* community. The winter village might have been located close to contemporary Nellim. Nellim was a border between the Lutheran Christian Sámi areas as well as the Russian Orthodox Skolt Sámis too. The lake Kontosjärvi community in Nellim area may have been a mix between Inari and Skolt Sámi families.

What is known is that in the areas of Lake Sarmijärvi and Kontos it was the border between Näätämö, Suonikylä and Paatsjoki siidas, but it may be that an above-mentioned Inari Sámi siida existed as their neighbor in the early historical times (see also, but with criticism Viinanen 2003: 134-135). The Sarmitunturi fjell areas and lake territories are derived from Skolt Sámi toponyms indicating wolf (Aikio 2003: 106, Mattus 2010: 213). Aikio claims that many of the place names on the Eastern and south-eastern side of the Lake Inari are a mix between Inari and Skolt Sámi toponyms and it can be derived from this that the region has been a border area between the two Sámi nations in early historical times.

The Nellim region today is a community of Inari Sámi peoples. Mattus (2010: 152-153) explores the toponym *"Nellim"* and claims that the name derives from a house built there in 19th century. However in the local Sámi language there are many explanations for this name, including the meaning *"to swallow"*. Nellim is located at the mouth of the river Paatsjoki. Origin of the name is currently unknown. In the larger Nellim areas the Morottaja Sámi family constructed their cabins in the 19th Century. The macro-historical elements of the 20th Century left their marks on the Nellim area occupancy and living histories – for example the Skolt Sámi were re-located there after the Diaspora of the Second World War (Linkola 1985a: 99).

One of the Sámi families currently living in this area is the Paadar family. If we look at the questions of the Paadar family and their links to the historical land use, much new research needs to be made. Sacred yoik songs have been documented from the region from the members of the Paadar family, for example from Piettar Paadar from Lusmu(a)niemi (Paulaharju 2010: 63). Aikio (2003: 111) successfully links the family of Paadar with the lake toponym Paadar west of the lake Inari dating documents from 1687. Paulaharju (2010: 39) agrees. Around lake Sarmijärvi which is one of the Paadar family land use areas today historical documents point to a small Sámi family of Tauckum (Aikio 2003: 111). Nahkiaisoja (2003a: 147) points to Western Aanaar-Inari areas as an "original home" of the Paadar family, more specifically to Cape Lusmaniemi in lake Paadar and lake Koaskimjärvi. According to her this family has spread in historical times around lake Aanaar-Inari so that members of this family are for example in lake Aksujärvi and in the areas close to Nellim in lakes Sarmijärvi and Tullujärvi as well as in Cape Tiaisniemi. In 1700s another family of Sámis have been called "Paadar" too according to their place of dwelling in Lake Paadar. The Paadar family land use and semi-nomadic life histories including migrations between summer and winter dwelling places have been documented in Jefremoff (2001: 58) especially in the Sarmijärvi areas during the 20th Century.

Early indicative interviews on the questions of Indigenous land use and occupancy in the Nellim area point to the fact that informants in the region carry oral histories that confirm a *move* from Western parts of Aanaar-Inari areas to Sarmijärvi (Mustonen 2011b). There are accounts and memories of the ancestors living in the lake Könkäänjärvi prior to the move to Sarmijärvi areas. Memories indicate that Paadars have lived around the Sarmijärvi area now for five generations. This exploration of oral histories is still at its very early stages however.

Tarja Nahkiaisoja (2003a, 2003b) is a scholar who has investigated the subsistence economies of the Aanaar-Inari areas. Reindeer was a crucial cultural, spiritual and economic animal to the Inari Sámi in historical times. Place names and anthropological accounts (Paulaharju 2010) confirm this to be true.

We know from other sources (Mustonen 2011, Paulaharju 2010) too that the Aanaar-Inari communities did not practice the same-style large-scale fjell reindeer herding as their North Sámi relatives further west and north (see on the histories of reindeer herding and different styles for example Linkola 1985b: 167-187, Helle and Aikio 1985). As Helle and Aikio (1985) and Linkola (1985b) have demonstrated the Sámi reindeer herding has had times of crisis, emergence and success for several times in the past 500 years. Space here does not allow a complete review of the reindeer or hunting economy in Nellim areas, this will be explored in future publications.

Rather, due to the ecosystem of Lake Aanaar-Inari and possibilities for hunting and fishing economies, the reindeer herding in the Inari Sámi areas was free-ranging small-scale herding (Paulaharju 2010: 49). Kitti (1984: 69) puts the emphasis on the availability of river and lake fish, especially the Sámi land use would have focused on the river mouths and schooling grounds of the fish in the region in rhythm with the seasons and spawning times of the fish.

Seasonal cycles and the "Sámi semi-nomadism" (Jeffremoff 2001:24) reflected availability of fish resources and this smaller-scale specific reindeer herding rather than the large nomadism of the North Sámi or Komi-style reindeer herding. It can be concluded from both literature and indicative interviews in the region (Mustonen 2011b) that the Inari Sámi subsistence economy was its own style of management-system of renewable resources, such as reindeer, fish, berries and hunted animals.

It bears more resemblance to the Skolt Sámi governance system (Mustonen 2011: 24) of which there are many historical documents than the North Sámi or state-sponsored *paliskunta*-systems even though especially the North Sámi-style reindeer herding seems to have partially adapted to the state herding structures (Linkola 1985b: 186). However over many decades the Sámi have made clear the need to address the questions of their own style herding models as an urgent reform of the reindeer economy of Finland (for example Aikio 1985: 201, Mustonen et al. 2010). In modern terms the system of the Inari Sámi which derives from the siida times seems to be ecosystem-based integrative system of land use and occupancy where for example the role of predatory animals in the whole complex system was more accepted and reindeer losses more probable due to the specific characteristics of the "eastern"-style reindeer cultures of the Inari and Skolt Sámis.

State-imposed *paliskunta*-system (reindeer herding cooperatives) from 1898 onwards (Nahkiaisoja 2003b: 302-303, Aikio and Helle 1985: 203-204) disrupted and destroyed the larger basis of the land use of the Indigenous Inari Sámi subsistence economy. They forced the

Inari Sámi to implement joint land-use decisions that did not follow their cultural governance or ecosystem-based free-ranging pastoralism with the reindeer. Each new state-imposed *paliskunta*-reindeer herd had to adapt to *closed, marked* territories, as opposed to herding which reflected open range, adaptative use of pastures according to variety of seasons, climate conditions, snow amounts and availability of reindeer foods. With the imposition of state land use came as well the notion of *private land use* (Nahkiaisoja 2003b: 302-303), which was an alien concept to the Inari Sámi land use decisions.

4. Contemporary Situation in the Lands and Waters of "Nellimin tokkakunta"

In the post-war years the Indigenous Inari Sámi culture, language and governance structures in the Nellim areas have become endangered and eroded. This is due to many simultaneous developments, including the loss of land rights and siida-system, imposition of schooling and state rule, modernization of reindeer herding and on-going disputes regarding lands and waters of the area to name a few developments. As a little-known history the state of Finland sold 176 square kilometers of state land to Soviet Union in 1947 close to the Paatsjoki river area – this fact has not been discussed much in the larger Finnish society.

The Inari Sámi belong into the larger group of Arctic Indigenous peoples which are wellknown for their capacity for adapting to severe natural conditions and ecosystems. They have lived in very cold conditions for hundreds of years. But like many other Indigenous and subsistence-based human ecologies around the world, these are very *vulnerable* systems – their capacity to adapt to large industrial land uses and needs of modern society are very few.

In recent decades the larger society has imposed several natural resources activities, including road construction and forestry on the lands and waters of the Nellim area. Plans for mining and railroad construction exist. The United Nations (2005) has called for a moratorium on industrial land use in the region until such a time a solution will be made between Sámi land uses and ownership and the relationship with the claims the Finnish state has on these lands in 2005.

The contemporary reindeer herders of Nellim belong to a handful of Sámi families. One of these families is the Paadar (Mustonen 2011b). Previously the community herders have herded as members of the state-governed reindeer herding cooperative *"Ivalon paliskunta"*. This paliskunta has divided into two distinct reindeer herds and the Nellim herd uses separate winter pastures as the main stock of the Ivalon paliskunta herd, for example so that the spring pastures of the Nellim herd are mostly located in the wilderness areas of Sarmitunturin erämaa-alue away from the paliskunta proper grazing areas (Mustonen 2011b). The members of the Nellim community have therefore a long-term experience from working inside the state-governed reindeer herding community.

Since 1990s the Nellim herders have entered into various disputes with their herding partners in other parts of the Ivalon paliskunta unit. In the 2000s the herders from Nellim have entered into legal and land-use conflicts with the state and state forestry company "Metsähallitus" over the rights of the reindeer to utilize lands which have been clear-felled for the purposes of industrial logging. Various national juridical rulings have been made regarding these disputes (Mustonen 2011b). Some of the conflicts have been solved through long-term agreements (Metsähallitus 2011). It is worth noting that these agreements that the Nellim herders achieved with the state organizations led to several similar agreements on

conservation of timber lands for the purposes of reindeer herding between 2009 and 2011 (Metsähallitus 2011).

Documentation of these issues is beyond this paper and will be highlighted in future publications. Many of these conflicts have rested on the notion of a specific Sámi reindeer herding as a land use versus other uses of the land, such as logging, road construction, mining and so forth. The Finnish state interprets the situation so that the state owns and can manage the land use decisions, in accordance with various Sámi and land use laws of Finland. The Sámi water and land right questions have not been settled and remain in a slow-burning conflict. This has prevented Finland from ratifying the ILO 169 Convention on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, even though the state has signed various other legal and political documents such as the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the UN in 2007 and national Sámi laws on rights to language and culture.

In the spring and summer 2011 the herders from Nellim have on-going dispute as well with the Ivalon paliskunta herders some of whom are partly Sámi too. As one mechanism of solving this conflict over the summer 2011 indicative interviews from the herders portray an establishment of a "Sámi-style" reindeer herding community that the local Sámi call "Nellimin tokkakunta" at the moment (August 2011) - with the purposes of being able to herd their reindeer in culturally appropriate manner consistent with their Sámi culture as opposed to the paliskunta-style governmental herding. Outcomes of this emerging community are yet to be seen. However in the rhetoric that the members of the community are using they are identifying their herding style, pasture use and other aspects of the subsistence economy as specifically "Sámi" (Mustonen 2011b). The community members have passed on the skills and elements of this "Sámi" -style herding to the contemporary herders according the informants (Mustonen 2011b). Given the early stages of this exercise of Sámi-style herding as a new community it will be the task of future monitoring efforts to investigate the success of the community as they are emerging from the establishment of the Sámi style into governing the herds themselves. Simultaneously coinciding with the emergence of the Sámi community will be most likely further conflicts with the state reindeer herding management systems and it is still unclear how the compatibility of these systems will be achieved. Future will indicate too to what extent the establishment of a "Sámi-style" herding in Nellim will achieve larger credibility and legitimacy within the larger context in Finnish Sápmi.

As described in this brief paper the Nellim Inari Sámi and their "tokkakunta"-style reindeer community have been subjected to European-style governance, conflict and land use decisions since 1517. Literature, historical research and informant interviews indicate that we cannot find continuous occupancy of a specific family in the Nellim areas from pre-historic times. However, by exploring the documented seasonal rounds from the 20th Century (Jefremoff 2001), documented interviews with key community informants (Mustonen 2011b) and socio-historical research including toponyms (Aikio 2003, Mattus 2010) we can determine that a *cultural continuity* does exist between the early historical Sámi siida systems and the contemporary *tokkakunta*-based Sámi-style reindeer herding communities. What we know from the documented notes on the siida-style Indigenous land use decisions (for example Mustonen 2011: 211-269) in neighboring Skolt areas, land use for the siidas was more crucial as a *collective and family decision* rather than a fixed position in a map as in settler societies. The decisions of the Paadar family are in line with this data as the ancestors of the Paadar family spread from the western part of Inari at some point in the 18th Century to the eastern areas close to Nellim and Sarmijärvi (Mustonen 2011b).

Interview data (Mustonen 2011b) indicates early markers for this *cultural continuity*. For the purposes of this paper they are limited to a view of land use and occupancy only, but in future they should be expanded to include cultural issues, handicrafts, oral history documentation and other manifestations of Inari Sámi culture in Nellim. These markers include the wish to exercise Sámi-style herding, land use governance decisions inside the non-monetary subsistence economy of the Nellim area, seasonal harvest of hunting, fishing and gathering resources such as berries, role of predator harvest in the reindeer herding cycles of the community as opposed to total predator termination in the Finnish-style reindeer herding.

5. Conclusions

We can determine from the interviews and literature that the Sámi Indigenous histories of the Nellim region are complex, ancient and to a large extent unknown. The establishment of a *"Nellimin tokkakunta"* as a specifically Sámi-style reindeer community indicates that unlike previously believed, there are cultural continuities from the siida-era Sámi land use and occupancy though the state-imposed modernity beginning from the 1600s to contemporary times. The main manifestation of this process is the emerging wish to establish specifically Sámi-style reindeer herding through a new community as opposed to the Finnish state-sponsored herding. They seem to wish to implement the rights for *land use* rather than *land rights* through these reformative and emerging processes (Mustonen 2011b).

Given the fact that the United Nations has reacted strongly in 2005 by issuing a moratorium on parts of the area based on the need for state-Sámi relationships to be clarified, we can determine that the region, the community and the Inari Sámi peoples living in the contemporary Nellim belong within the international legal aspects of Indigenous peoples. Therefore they should be partners in a far-reaching and multi-year scientific study of the situation in the community. Until the findings of such an inquiry are available for public debate, scholarly criticism and Sámi participation, all imposed actions from the larger society and state should suspended at once to allow proper time and space for this unique Sámi community to address their histories, land use and occupancy and reindeer cultures in all of its forms [examples from Norway include for example Oskal et al. (2009), from Finland from another region Mustonen et al. (2010)and from Russia Mustonen et al. (2011)].

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