

## Conference: Advances in Sámi Archaeology – ‘Things Should Never Rest – Something Must Always Be Happening’

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From 31 August to 2 September 2022, about 50 archaeologists, mostly from Norway, Sweden and Finland, specialized in Sámi archaeology, gathered at Silvermuseet/INSARC in Árjepluovve (Sw. *Arjeplog*) for the three-day conference entitled ‘Advances in Sámi Archaeology’ (ASA). The ASA conference of 2022 was held in the spirit Dr Einar Wallquist, who founded Silvermuseet in 1965, and whose motto was ‘Things should never rest – something must always be happening’ (author’s translation from Swedish: *Det får aldrig stå stilla, det måste alltid hända någonting*). The idea behind the conference was first and foremost to create a platform for archaeologists and researchers to discuss Sámi archaeology. This was the second time that the conference was held, and with the great interest shown, there is an obvious need for archaeologists specialized in Sámi archaeology to gather on a regular basis to share thoughts and knowledge on new research projects or finds to develop the field.

The conference in Árjepluovve was organized by the founder of the research center INSARC (Institute for Arctic Landscape Research) and previous museum director of Silvermuseet, Assoc. Prof. Ingela Bergman, the museum director Dr Malin Brännström and Dr Markus Fjellström. Two keynotes, held by Dr Tiina Äikäs at Oulu University in Finland and Prof. Nancy Turner at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, introduced the themes of the conference. Among other things, the impor-

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Figure 1. *Åskåta* at Lampárguolbban. Photo: Gry H. Sivertsen, Silvermuseet.

tance of interdisciplinary research, ethical considerations and its implications on research were stressed, as was the importance of close collaboration with indigenous people.

The scientific presentations were varied, interesting and provided an opportunity for lively discussions. The first theme focusing on *Sámi archaeology* covered presentations such as Sámi offering sites and rituals, Central and South Sámi archaeology in the early modern period, the Black Death, bear graves in Norway and glacial archaeology. Researchers questioned the borders of Sámi living areas in the past, but also raised awareness of unknown sicknesses, new bear burials and the endangered cultural heritage emerging from melting glaciers and snow patches in the wake of climate change. The second theme, *Ethnobiology and landscape analysis*, covered presentations such as barrier fence construction, zoological and ethnoarchaeological perspectives on working reindeer and pitfalls in the world heritage site Laponia. Here, insights from osteology, paleoecology, forest history and archaeology demonstrated the importance to interdisciplinary research in understanding Sámi pasts. The last theme on *Indigenous methodologies* concentrated on presentations such as contract archaeology in Swedish Sápmi cultural landscape and politics in Lule Sámi lands, the need for widening our horizon limits and children's cultural monuments, and ancient and recent perceptions of sacred mountains and watercourses. An important aspect here, that is already to some extent implemented, is the collaboration and inclusion of the Sámi people and the local population into the archaeological work. These collaborations need to be developed and

can, for instance, be realised through community archaeology, engaging the indigenous and local population into the discussions and interpretation of the archaeology, informing about ongoing and future projects, and so forth.

Sámi archaeology covers a wide spectrum of research questions and interests relating to all different kinds of aspects concerning Sámi past in Norway, Sweden, Finland as well as Russia. There is thus also an important aspect of transgressing the borders regarding internationalization and to permit international and intra-, as well as trans-disciplinary research projects. An important part of Sápmi is on the Kola peninsula in Russia, and only time will tell how the connections and collaboration with Russian and indigenous researchers in Russia will be in the future.

On the third day of the conference the participants attended an excursion along the Pite River in Árjepluovve and visited a number of heritage sites in the surroundings. One focus of the visits was to raise awareness of the protection of cultural heritage sites against landscape changes inflicted by human exploitation of natural resources and climate change. One of the sites that we passed was Máttávrrre, which has, to their constructions, placement and number, unique hearths from different periods. One area had hearths built in a pebble stone field that had been the object of exploitation due to gravel pit extractions, damaging a unique cultural heritage site. A nearby hearth-row system, enclosed into a reindeer corral used for herding, also raised questions regarding the protection of similar sites. At Lampárguolbban we visited an *åskåta* (Sw.) (figure 1), used during the nineteenth to the twentieth century CE. This typical hut construction is characteristic for Árjepluovve and adjacent areas. It is especially interesting due to its construction, and has received attention from the discipline of Historic Preservation. The next Advances in Sámi Archaeology conference will be held at Árran – Julevsáme guovdásj in Drag in Nordland, Norway 18–20th September 2024.