

The Old Sami Sacred Sites at Inari (included Ukonsaari)



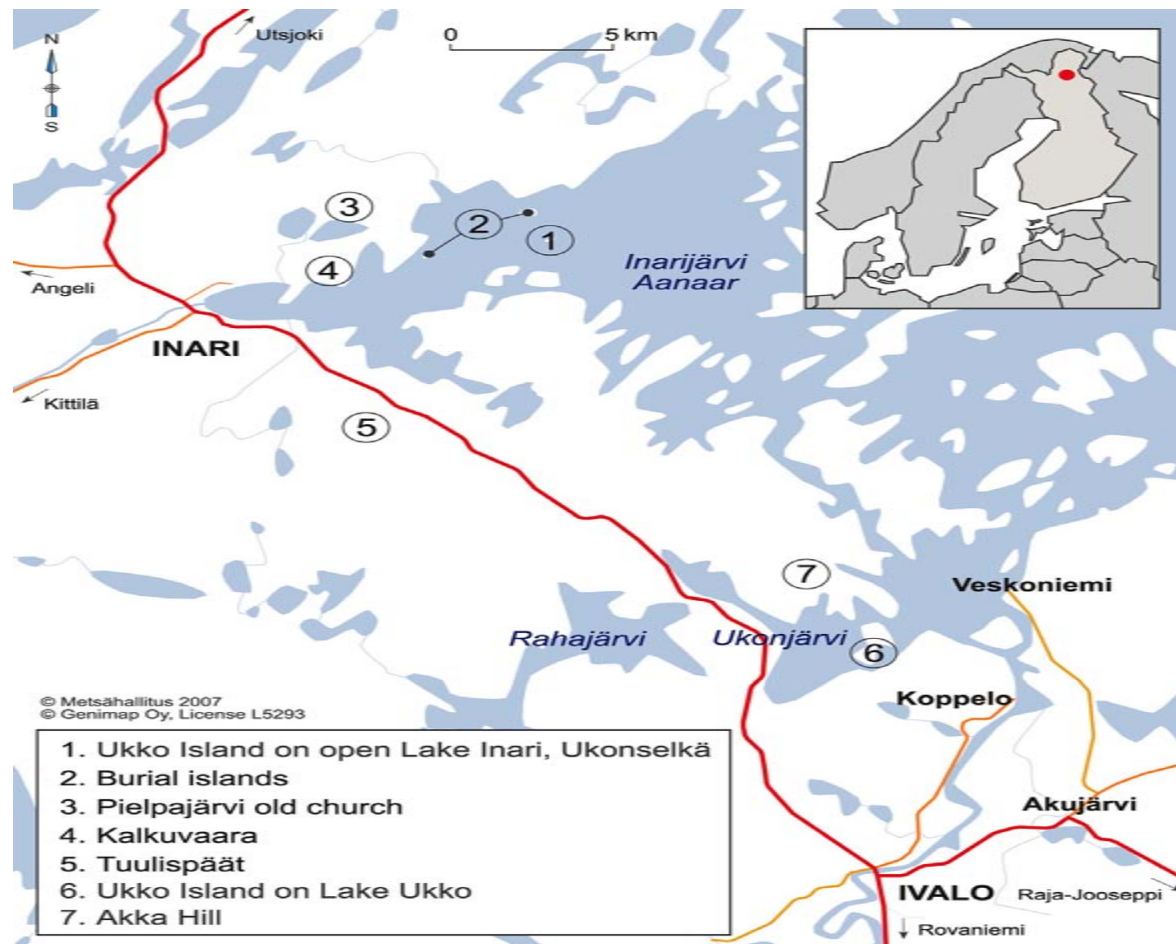
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Ukonsaari in summer



The old Sami sacred sites at Inari



Location

- N 68° 55'; E 27° 20' 300 km north of the Arctic circle
 - Altitude of water level 119 m a.s.l.
 - Northern Finland, County of Lapland
 - Municipality of Inari
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- The Inarijärvi protection area of the European Natura 2000 Network
 - The Inari Hiking Area – IUCN category V
 - Under the Recreational Act

Saari = island

Järvi= lake



Inari Hiking and Protection Area



Natural values (1)

- The total area of the lake 1,043 km²
 - The third largest lake in Finland and the sixth largest in Europe
- Depth 92 m
- The bedrock: ancient granite gneiss (over 2,500 mill. years old)
- Broad areas of open water and more than 2000 islands
- Two third of shoreline: steep moraine and rock, one third: peat or sand covered by natural old-growth forests with Scots pine
- The landscape represents a distinct and stark large lake with clear waters, peerless in the sub-arctic zone
- The stock of fish highly varied, such as indigenous lake trout, arctic charr and variety of whitefish



Spiritual and cultural values of the Sámi (1)

- Pre-Christian religion was closely connected to nature
- Their entire land was sacred with specific holy sites and places such as fells, hills, big stones, springs and rapids
- They worshipped natural forces: the sun, water, wind and thunder



Spiritual and cultural values of the Sámi (2)

- UKKO (*Äijih*), the god of thunder
 - Meaning: old, wise man, grandfather or thunder
 - The most powerful god
 - Power over the weather in particular thunderstorms, harvest and people's destinies
 - His most important sacrificial site was Ukonsaari (saari=island)
 - His counterparts in other mythologies: the Norse Thor, the Germanic Donar, the Celtic Taranis, the Slavic Perun, the Roman Jupiter, the Greek Zeus
 - Powerful shamans and sorcerers were able to communicate with the God of Thunder and placate him through sacrifices
 - Only men had access to Ukonsaari
 - Ukonsaari has probably been a sacred site for 7,000 years when land elevation raised to its current height a.s.l. The area has been inhabited for around 10,000 years.



Spiritual and cultural values of the Sámi (3)

Some other gods:

- Akka or Kalku (*Galgu*) > Kalkuvaara=Akka's hill
 - Ukko's wife
 - The goddess of fertility and the Earth Mother representing the female side of nature
- Pieggelmai, the god of wind
 - Worshipped at Tuulispää = Windfell
- Piäváž, god of the sun (Finnish term päivä= the sun)
- Čäcialmai, god of the water
 - Worshipped in midsummer night on the shores of rapids



Ukonsaari in autumn colours



Ukonsaari in mid-winter



Archaeological research

- Arthur Evans (1873):
 - Antlers arranged into an arch
 - Animal bones
 - A fragment of silver filigree head jewellery belonging to a lady's circlet >dates back to the late Iron Age around 1100 to 1200 A.D. in Russia
- Anja Sarvas (1968)
 - Found the sacrificial cave at the western end of the island and animal bones, antlers and teeth
- The research project of last year
 - A number of sacrificial finds: bones, antlers, teeth of reindeer, goats or sheep; radio carbon dated between 1430-1630;
Coins such as kopeks minted by Russian Vasili Shuiski
between 1606 and 1610
A fragment of copper plate



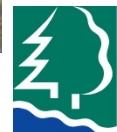
The sacrificial cave behind birch trees



The sacrificial cave



Bones and teeth of reindeer and sheep found in excavation in 2006



A cave in Ukonsaari



A cave in Ukonsaari



The cruise ferry M/S Inari to Ukonsaari



Ukonsaari seen from Tuulispää windfell



The burial island seen from Ukonsaari



The burial island close to Ukonsaari



Seita stone of Ukonsaari in Lake Ukko



Bones under the seita stone of Ukonsaari



Spiritual and cultural values of the Sámi (4)

Conversion to Christiannity began in Inari in the 1550s

- 500 years later than in southern Finland
- Slow process > the first church in 1647 in Pielpajärvi winter village
- By 1661 all Inari Sámi people had been baptised
- Ukonsaari is still generally appreciated as sacred
 - A practice among many people sailing on the open waters of throwing a coin into the lake and asking Ukko for a following wind
 - Many visitors to the island stand at the highest point and throw a coin to the rocks and ask Ukko for something



The old church in Pielpajärvi (completed 1647)



Pielpajärvi church



The Delos initiative

- The World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) has the **Task Force on the Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas (CSVPA)**
- **The Delos Initiative** focuses on the sacred natural sites in developed countries throughout the world.
- Its main purpose is to help in maintaining both the sanctity and the biodiversity of these sites, through the understanding of the complex relationship between spiritual / cultural and natural values.
 - Ukonsaari and the other old Sami sacred sites at Inari belong to the list.



Many thanks for your
attention!



The Inari Sámi People

- The Sámi are Europe's northernmost indigenous people
- Their population is 50,000-100,000 in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia
- The Sámi languages are part of the Finno-Ugric branch of the Uralic language tree
- The Inari Sámi people: a distinct group of about 300 speakers (4 % of the total population in the municipality of Inari)
- Old means of livelihood: fishing, hunting, reindeer herding, gathering plants and berries; agriculture since 18th century

