History

Reindeer and people have a connection that is thousands of years old in what is today called Finland. First by hunting, then through domestication and herding. Archaeological sources such as hunting pits, stone carvings and settlement excavations speak to this connection. In 98 AD, the Roman historian Tacitus wrote about a strange people in Thule, who used fur clothes, hunted reindeer and travelled with skis.

In the 800s the Norwegian chief Ottar visited King Alfred and the English court and Ottar told the king about the Sámi and that reindeer were domesticated and managed in herds. This is the first written source of domesticated reindeer herding and is often referred to. However archaeological research is consistently pushing the date of domestication of reindeer and the development of reindeer herding further back in time. Writings after that time tell that the Sami are using domesticated reindeer for transport and milking.

In the 16th 17th and 18th centuries, Sweden, which then included Finland, had imperial ambitions and this increased tax burden on Sámi reindeer herding, which would appear to have stimulated a shift in reindeer herding practices. Sámi reindeer herders where nomadic and moved with their reindeer herds between winter and summer pastures. In the mountain areas an intensive reindeer herding took shape – where reindeer where monitored daily.

The Sámi people lived and worked in so-called "*siiddat*" (reindeer herding groups) and reindeer where used for transport, milk and meat production. The
Siida
is an ancient Sámi community system within a designated area but it can also be defined as a working partnership where the members had individual rights to resources but helped each other with the management of the herds, or when hunting and fishing. The
Siida
could consist of several families and their herds.

Reindeer herding in Finland is based on traditional Sámi reindeer herding and the system of *Sii ddat*
. Compared to Norway and Sweden the reindeer husbandry developed in a different manner in Finland. Finnish settlers and peasants adopted reindeer herding as a livelihood from the Sámi and Finnish reindeer herding became organized already in in the 1700's. Nowadays it is based on herding in districts (
paliskunnat
–
bálgosiin
). In 1898, state authorities obligated reindeer owners to establish geographically defined herding districts and the first Reindeer Herding act in Finland was enacted in 1932.

During the 1900's reindeer herding became more extensive and meat production increasingly important. In the 1960's, reindeer herders began to introduce new technologies – the so called snow mobile revolution in their work with reindeer. Later other mechanical aids, such as ATV's

and motorbikes came. Today such tools are major feature of modern reindeer herding in Finland. This has had a variety of impacts on reindeer herding and as herders no longer ski or walk with reindeer, the relationship with their animals has changed considerably. Today's reindeer herding requires large areas, reindeer are often frightened and are forced to flee from natural pastures. Reindeer are not currently watched year-round and reindeer move with relative freedom during certain periods.

However, reindeer herding would not be possible without the maintenance of traditional knowledge which dates back millennia and is transferred from generation to generation. Its significance remains for reindeer herders because it contains important knowledge about how for instance land should be used during times of extreme weather fluctuation, for example.

Reindeer husbandry today in Finland is a small industry on a national scale, but both in a Sámi and local Finnish context, it has great importance. Reindeer husbandry remains one of the most parts of the Sámi culture

(The Encycloapedia of Saami Culture) (www.paliskunnat.fi)

Borders

Sámi reindeer herding in what is today called Finland, Sweden and Norway has historically been and is in some ways still affected by the countries border drawings as they became barriers to reindeer herding which since time immemorial had moved between different pastures on the coast (summer) and in the interior (winter). In 1751, the northern border between Sweden, which then included Finland, and Denmark, which included Norway, was negotiated. To this border agreement was made a substantial addition of 30 paragraphs on nomadic Sámi rights – what later became known as the Lapp Codicil (*Lappekodicillen*) or the Magna Carta of the Sámi. The aim with the Codicil was to secure the future of reindeer herding for the Sámi people. The Codicil prescribed how the nationality of the Sámi should be determined and how their rights to cross national borders with their reindeer and to utilize the lands and waters of other countries, including sea fishing, should be taken into account in mutual understanding with the other inhabitants of the areas concerned. The Codicil also guaranteed the Sámi complete neutrality in the event of a war breaking out between Denmark/Norway and Sweden/Finland. As a consequence of this border agreement the Sámi in what today is Norway, began to use winter ranges in present-day Finland, in both the Enontekiö and Inari areas, and even further south in the Karesuando area in Sweden. This resulted in increased reindeer numbers in these regions. Reindeer herding Sámi in Finland began to voice concerns about the impacts of these increased numbers on their small scale use of pastures. The situation finally changed when the borders of Finland were closed to Norwegian reindeer herding Sámi in 1852 by the Finnish-Russian authorities - in 1809 Finland was separated from Sweden and became a Grand Duchy of the Russian empire. The border between Finland and Sweden was finally closed to reindeer herding Sámi from Sweden in 1889. Thereafter, reindeer herding was obliged to live with state borders, which closed the routes between summer and winter pastures. Since at least some of the summer pastures had previously been situated in coastal Norway, and the winter ranges were in Finland, Finnish reindeer pastures now had to be used all year round.

Rights to own Reindeer

In Finland anyone living within the area of Finnish reindeer husbandry who is a citizen of the European Union has the right to own reindeer, in contrast to the situation in Norway and Sweden, where only Sámi are legally permitted to own reindeer. Regarding ownership in Finland, there are however, some conditions. The owner of the reindeer must be approved as a member by a reindeer herding district (paliskunta - renbeteslag - bálggos) and must permanently reside in the municipality to which the district belongs.

(Renskötsellag 14.9.1990/848)

The Reindeer Herding Area

The total area of reindeer husbandry in Finland is approximately 33 % of the surface of the country or about 122 936 km2. According to the Finnish Reindeer Husbandry Act the reindeer herding area consists of all of Finnish Lapland excluding Kemi and Tornio cities and Keminmaa municipality, but also Hyrynsalmi, Kuivaniemi, Kuusamo, Pudasjärvi, Suomussalmi, Taivalkoski and Yli-Ii municipalities in the county of Oulu and the areas in Puolanka, Utajärvi and Ylikiiminki municipalities located north of Kiminge River and Puolanka-Hyrynsalmi road.

In the 1960's the reindeer herding area was divided into three reindeer herding areas; the Sámi Reindeer Herding Area, The Special Reindeer Herding Area and the Reindeer Herding Area. The difference between them is that reindeer herding in the Sámi reindeer herding area should be prioritized and given special attention in issues related to encroachment. Reindeer herding in the special reindeer herding area should also be directed some attention in such issues.

The borders between the districts are decided by the provincial government. A district belongs to the municipality in which most part of the district's area is.

(Renskötsellag 14.9.1990/848)

Management of Reindeer Husbandry

The management of reindeer husbandry is divided into different levels. On the national level reindeer husbandry issues belong to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Finland (*Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö*
).

All districts are members of the Association of the reindeer herding districts (*Paliskuntain yhdistys- Bálgosiid Ovttastupmi*
) – which is the central body and acts as a link between the different districts. The activity in the Association is funded by state and membership is free. The annual general meeting, also called the Reindeer Parliament (
Poroparlamentti - Boazoparlameanta
), is the highest decision making body of the Association. It consists of the District Leaders. Each District Leader votes from the total number of reindeer in his or her district. The Association has a board which consists of 14 members and each board member has one vote.

The duties of the Association are to administer reindeer husbandry in Finland, to promote reindeer husbandry and related research, and to manage relations between reindeer husbandry and the rest of society. It also approves new reindeer earmarks and maintains an earmark registry. The Association has an office which is located in Rovaniemi in northern Finland. It organises for example the annual Reindeer Parliament in early June and also publishes a journal for reindeer herders called Poromies.

On the local level the reindeer herding districts manage reindeer herding activities within the district and ensure that they are carried out and prevent the reindeer belonging to reindeer herders causing injury to other people and their livelihoods.

(www.paliskunnat.fi)

Reindeer herding Districts and Members

In Finland, reindeer husbandry is practiced through a system of reindeer herding districts (*palisk unta –*
bálgosat
). There are 56 districts in the reindeer husbandry area, 41 of which are in the Province of Lapland and the remaining 15 are in the Province of Oulu. 13 of the districts are so called Sámi districts. The districts have strictly defined boundaries and they vary in size and number of reindeer. They are profit-making reindeer husbandry units whose members are reindeer owners. The districts responsibility is to protect the reindeers, to sustain and promote reindeer husbandry and to prevent reindeer from causing damage and from trespassing on other districts areas.

The total number of members in all districts together is about 5 000 people, about 1 000 of whom are Sámi. A reindeer owner can only belong to one district and the person has got the same amount of votes in the annual meeting, the Reindeer parliament, as he or she has reindeer. In a Sámi district a person can have a maximum of 500 votes (and 500 reindeer). A reindeer herding district has its own board (
stivra
) and a District Leader (
boazoisit
), a Vice-Chief of District (
várre boazoisi
t) and a Treasurer (
ruhtadoalli
). The District Leader, who is the manager of the district, is the official representative of the district. He or she is responsible for the practical activities in the district and ensures that the tasks allocated to it are carried out. The Chief of District is legally accountable for his or her actions and occupies this office for terms of three years at a time.

The board manages the district's activities and handles the preparations for decision-making in district meetings as well as oversees their execution. It meets twice a year and more often if it is

necessary. District meetings (*bálggosčoahkkimat*) are held twice a year, in spring when the reindeer husbandry year draws to a close and in autumn before the start of the reindeer round-ups. The meetings handle such matters as the numbers of reindeer in the district and the work that will need to be done.

Today the number of fulltime herders, who together with their families still obtain their main livelihood from reindeer herding, is about 800 in Finland, 600 of them are Sámis. The number of reindeer owners in Finland is about 6 700.

(www.paliskunnat.fi)
(Renskötsellag 14.9.1990/848)

Number of Reindeer In the beginning of the 20th century, the number of reindeer in Finland was slightly over 100,000, and by 1959-60 it had reached 140,000. Short-term fluctuations in the size of the reindeer herd have occurred over the past century. During the 1970's and 1980's the number increased rapidly and reached over 250,000 reindeer at a maximum.

The maximum number of reindeer was consequently lowered from a previous high of 220,900 animals to 203,700 in 2004/2005. The number of reindeer in Finland was about 207,000 reindeer in 2004/2005.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (*Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö*) regulates the number of reindeer by confirming the largest permissible numbers of living reindeer for each district. This takes place every ten years. The reindeer are counted after slaughtering when reindeer are drawn from the herd and before reindeer calving starts in May. But every year, before the districts autumn meeting, each reindeer herding district plans the number of reindeer to be slaughtered. The reindeer herding districts must obey Ministry regulations in their activities and keep the number of reindeer to the regulated levels. If the number of reindeer in a district exceeds the permitted level, the State Provincial Offices of Oulu and Lapland can order compulsory culling. In such a case, the district must reduce the number of its reindeer to below the largest permissible number.

The largest permissible number of reindeer owned by a reindeer husbandry entrepreneur is 300 animals in the southern region of the reindeer husbandry area and 500 animals in the northern parts of the area. If there are special reasons, then the ministry can decide new numbers. Maximum numbers are primarily based on the capacity of the winter pastures. The state controls the number of live reindeer through a so-called live support paid to individual reindeer owners. In order to receive support it is required that owners have at least 80 reindeer and 300 or 500 reindeer at most.

The Finnish system where other people than Sámi can also own reindeer, has led to a much higher number of reindeer owners compared with Norway and Sweden. A large part of the reindeer owners in Finland have a very low number of reindeer. Statistics show that about 4100 people, or approximately 77.6 % of all reindeer owners have between 1-49 reindeer, and the

income from reindeer herding for these people is only a supplementary income to normal paid work. About 1540 families are working with reindeer and for 690 of those, their primary income is from reindeer herding. Around 75 % of the reindeer owners are male and 25 % female.

(www.paliskunnat.fi)

Economy

In Finland, reindeer husbandry at the individual level in terms of taxation is not treated as a for-profit-business. Instead the reindeer herding district serves as a joint company for the reindeer owners. The district reports all incomes and costs within the district. This is unlike Sweden and Norway, where individual reindeer owners in terms of taxation are seen as for-profit-businesses and for herders in those countries the most commonly filled tax form is that of a private company (*enskild firma* or *enkeltmannsforetak*).

The vast majority of reindeer owners in Finland practise reindeer husbandry as a supplement to agriculture and forestry. With regard to ethnic groups in Finland, reindeer herding is from the economic point of view the most important for Sámi people.

The annual total revenue from reindeer husbandry in Finland is estimated to be 60 million Euro. The main product is meat. In 1999-2000, 93 000 reindeer were slaughtered, producing 2.1 million kilos of meat. An individual reindeer owner usually sells live reindeers to a slaughtering house. The owner must pay for the slaughtering and for the waste produced by the slaughtering process. In addition to meat production, reindeer are also an extremely valuable resource for both summer and winter tourism, as they are one of the main attractions for foreign tourists.

Numbers from 1994-2000 show that 60-80 % of reindeer husbandries income is from meat and about 10 % from compensation and 10 % from aid. Only a small part comes from investments and other incomes. Numbers from the same years show that about 40 % of the costs are related to herding activities, about 20 % of costs to cross country traffic and the rest to damages caused by reindeer, administrative costs, office supplies and equipment and other utilities.

(www.paliskunnat.fi)
(Sustainable Reindeer Husbandry – Arctic Council 2000-2002, J-L. Jernsletten, K. Klokov)

State economic support for Reindeer husbandry

State economic support to reindeer husbandry consists foremost of support to reindeer owners for live reindeer. If a reindeer owner should be able to apply for support for his or hers live reindeer, she or he must have at least 80 reindeer and 500 reindeers at a maximum in the Sámi reindeer herding district and 300 at most in other districts.

Finnish reindeer herding Sámi have requested that the support system should be more flexible

than it is today, so that the support system would better fit reindeer husbandry and promote a more sustainable economic balance. On the whole, Sámi have requested that support should be based more on the number of live reindeer in bad years and that it should depend on prices of reindeer for slaughtering in good years. The proposed system would also guarantee a certain salary every year regardless of grazing conditions etc. The support system is primarliy adapted to foremost supports to agriculture.

(www.boazu.fi)

Challenges - Loss of pastures and Encroachment

A pasture is not a homogenous landscape, but consists of many important features and characteristics changing in accordance to season and activity performed. Each district needs different kind of pastures, such as summer and winter pastures. The summer pasture is a key factor for the growth of a reindeer. For example, a good summer is needed to survive a hard winter. Reindeer also need large and undisturbed areas during the whole year. For many years reindeer husbandry in Finland has had to grapple with encroachhments even though reindeer herding, practised by both Sámi and non-Sámi Finnish reindeer herders, is in most parts of Northern Finland theoretically protected by the Finnish legislation against other land uses. In the area especially reserved for reindeer herding, forestry and other land use should not, according to the law, significantly hinder this traditional livelihood.

The Sámi people's rights to practise their culture and traditional livelihood is also protected through the Finnish Constitution and a number of international agreements and it is recognised that reindeer herding is the basis of the Sámi culture.

The most important and most challenging task today is to find a way to integrate diverse interests regarding reindeer pastures. An extensive proportion of the reindeer-herding area consists of coniferous woodland, and it is thus commercially exploited by forestry. These two sources of livelihood are often in conflict. Other conflicts are caused by the mining industry and increasing levels of tourism, especially in areas that are important for calving. The third major problem is the question of legal ownership of the pastures in the reindeer-herding area. Currently these are owned by the state, but there are dissenting opinions which are waiting to be addressed through a series of state sponsored investigations. A fourth problem is the conflict between nature conservation and reindeer herding. Reindeer are for example an important source of food for large predators.

Forestry is a large industry in Finland and it is primarily practised by the Finnish governmental forestry enterprise Metsähallitus, especially in Lapland, where the state is the main land owner. There have been widespread logging activities and other activities connected to logging in forests in the North that are important for reindeer grazing. More than 75 % of the reindeer in Finland graze in forested areas where logging activities are planned and are being undertaken. Logging deteriorates the forests reindeer graze on and are dependent upon especially in winter. Left overs and debris from logging activities prevent reindeer from accessing ground lichen, and the destruction of old-growth forests means the destruction of tree hanging arboreal lichen. These two lichen types are crucial for the survival of reindeer especially in the late winter. This

situation has during the last decades led to conflicts between reindeer herders and the forestry industry.

In Finland the reindeer districts not get compensation for impacts from forestry because the State owns the largest part of the northern Finnish reindeer herding area. Fees for example fishing licenses go to the Forestry Council (*Meahcceráđđehussii*).

(Forestry Conflicts in Finnish Sapmi: Local, National and Global Links, R. Lawrence, K. Raitio)

Predation

Predators inflict damage on reindeer herding. In 1997, about 3,400 reindeer were found killed in Finland, mainly by wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*) and golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). The predators issue is currently one of the main issues the Finnish Reindeer Herding Sámi (*Suoma Boazosámit*) is working with.

The goal of Finland's predator policy is that there should be a certain number of predators in Finland. Finland's predator numbers have in generally increased over the last decades. In 2000 there where 130 wolfs, 115 wolverine and 850 lynx. This trend has also led to increased levels of reindeer killed by predators. For example, the number of bears increased by 300 % from 1987 to 2000 and the level of reindeer killed by 531 %.

According to the law, individuals must accept that their private property, such as reindeer, may be food for predators. In light of this the State pays compensation for reindeer killed by predators. Compensation for wolverine, wolf and lynx are paid directly to members. Every district has a predator assessor who must approve the killed reindeer before compensation can be paid. The compensation depends on what kind of reindeer it is. The compensation for a calf is 218,64 €, 386,83 € for a male/female reindeer and 504,56 € for a semi domesticated male reindeer (*heargi*). Compensation for golden eagles are paid to the district and the compensation is based on the number of nests with chicks. Finnish reindeer herding Sámi report that compensation some years have been paid during several times and other years in the end of the year and is dependent on the state's economic situation.

(www.paliskunnat.fi)

Climate Change

Large areas of pastures are being lost to different industrial activities. Climate change is likely to add new set of stresses. The Arctic Council Arctic Climate Impact Assessment – ACIA (2005), reflects more than 250 researchers' assessments of how climate change will affect the Arctic environment and the communities that live there. The report also demonstrates that

temperatures in the Arctic are rising faster than elsewhere in the world. These changes will involve, inter alia, shorter and warmer winters, and new varieties of wildlife in the Arctic. Climate Change also results in increased development, for example in the form of roads and facilities in the Arctic, which both directly and indirectly have impacts on reindeer husbandry and reindeer pastures.

Since reindeer herding is conducted in nature and is very much dependent on the conditions that nature provides, any changes that occur have special impacts on the practice of reindeer husbandry. But no one can yet know with certainty when, how and how much reindeer herding will be affected as a result of increased climate change.

Sources of indigenous knowledge across the Arctic report according to ACIA state that the weather seems more variable, unfamiliar and is behaving unexpectedly and outside the ‘norm’. According to the ACIA report autumn weather in some areas has fluctuated between raining and freezing, often creating an ice layer on the ground that has reduced reindeer’s access to the underlying lichen. These conditions represent a major change from the norm, and in some years, have resulted in extensive losses of reindeer. Future changes in snow in extent and condition have the potential to lead to major adverse consequences for reindeer herding and the associated physical, social and cultural livelihood of the herders.

Warming is projected to cause earlier melting and later freezing. The biodiversity of the reindeer herding region is quite vulnerable to climate change. There remains uncertainty about how the mountain flora will withstand warmer climates couple with the impacts that a warmer climate will have on different insect varieties and how they will affect reindeer. Since snow free time is when reindeer collect important fat and protein reserves reindeer some researchers have stated that climate change may been of benefit to reindeer as they can forage for longer periods of time.

(Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, 2005)
(Sverige inför klimatförändringarna – hot och möjligheter SOU 2007:60)

Traditional Knowledge - Language

The Sámi language is very rich in the terminology for reindeer, reindeer husbandry and landscape generally. The terminology is an important part of Sámi traditional knowledge and it is transmitted from one generation to another, mostly orally. This very exact knowledge on nature shows the old and tight connection to it and how important reindeer husbandry is for the Sámi. Reindeer husbandry is a kind of basis for Sámi culture, not only for subsistence, but especially for lifestyle. The climate conditions in reindeer herding area can be extreme and cold. To be able to manage and survive in these conditions it has been and still is important for the herders to have knowledge of landscape, such as of grazing or snow conditions. The Sámi language and its dialects have hundreds if not thousands of exact terms and descriptive epithets for snow, ice and similar natural phenomena. Israel Ruong (1903-1986) who was a professor in Sámi language, classifies snow terms as follows: a) amounts of snow, b) the composition of snow c) the bearing capacity of snow, d) the surface, level and slide quality of snow, e) expressions for being covered with snow, f) unmarked snow and tracks in the snow, g) hoarfrost

and other coverings of ice and snow on plants ad trees, h) the melting and disappearance of snow, i) ice, j) the appearance of (patches of) unfrozen land, k) places where the snow remains in the summer, l) different kinds of winter pasture, incl. expressions for the surface quality of the snow. For a reindeer herder it is also necessary to know exactly what kind of reindeer is in question or is being discussed. Reindeer terminology is very precise and professional and it can be described according to colour, age and sex, antlers, appearance, nature and some other special characters.

(The Encycloapedia of Saami Culture)

- Paliskuntain yhdistys - Finnish Reindeer Herding Cooperative
- Suoma Boazosámit - Suomen porosaamelaiset - Sami Reindeer Herders Association of Finland
- Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, Global Change Division
- Thule Institute, University of Oulu