

# About the Hearth

## *Perspectives on the Home, Hearth and Household in the Circumpolar North*

Edited by

David G. Anderson, Robert P. Wishart  
and Virginie Vaté



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## CHAPTER 6

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# The Devitalization and Revitalization of Sámi Dwellings in Sweden

Hugh Beach

This chapter analyses the determinants of change to dwelling types, their placements and timing of use among Sámi reindeer herders in northern Sweden over the last 35 years. I document this period, 1973–2008, from my first-hand participant observations (although with shifting intensity), affording grounded detail to complement theoretical discourse. I also contextualize this period by looking back on the history of architectural types in the region up to the seventeenth century. Naturally, the price of such detail, accrued over such a stretch of time, demands that one concentrates on one place. Therefore the focus of this chapter is on Staloluokta<sup>1</sup> – one of the main camps of the Tuorpon Sámi today. The site is inhabited essentially during the calf-marking summer season. Hence this chapter follows the relatively recent and rapid disuse of the traditional Sámi permanent turf dwelling, the limited revitalization of the temporary Sámi mobile tent, and the shift to Swedish-styled frame cabins (which I argue can also be considered to be linked to the revitalization of kinship ties to the landscape).

When I arrived for the first time in Staloluokta, one of the main summer camps for the reindeer-herding families of Tuorpon *sámeby*<sup>2</sup> in the Jokkmokk mountains of northern Sweden in the summer of 1973, the south-eastern shoreline of Lake Virihaure was dotted with permanent turf dwellings<sup>3</sup> made of double-arched birch frames, waterproofed by birchbark (or synthetic tarpaulin) and covered by a thick layer of turf for insulation (Figure 6.1). I lived for a number of years with the Tuorpon herders (Beach 1993), returning each summer to Staloluokta, and even after permanent employment as a professional anthropologist at Uppsala University far to the south, I frequently return to join my herding friends during the summer calf-marking season. Each time I am there, I climb the same slope, stand on the same rock and take a picture of the same village.

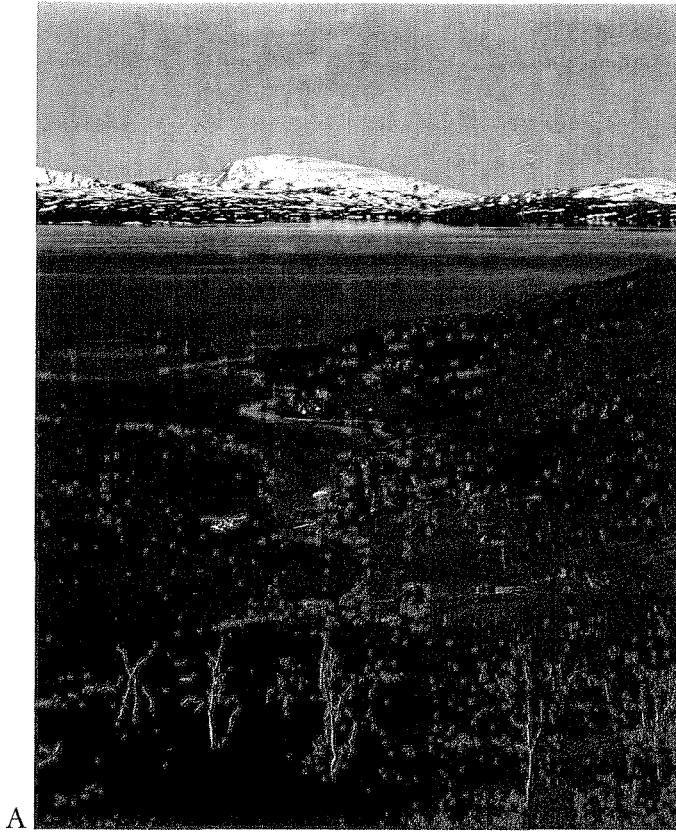
Yet in many ways it is not the same village. When comparing two of my pictures, separated by 35 years, I am struck by the number of relatively new permanent and winterized frame cottages interspersed among the older turf-covered dwellings (Figure 6.1). Many of these old dwellings remain, but the photos do not tell us in what way they remain in use, or when they are used. Obviously, the coming of the new dwellings impacts radically on the old, whether or not they are replaced. While pictures can tell us much, there is more that can never be conveyed by any picture – the differences, which can be viewed in pictures, do not tell us why.

In the following pages I wish to plumb the social and cultural changes that, while often reflected in the pictures, cannot readily be discerned by them alone. For this task, I must rely on my own memories and experiences, along with those of the herding families I continue to visit. It is an easily conceived project whose main insight and methodological tool derives from little more than the stubborn return to a cherished place over many years and having a kind of home there. Yet it is not so simple. I have learned that this work is far from merely battling against fading memories and dredging forth a chronology of past events. All of us find new motivations behind past actions depending on our current positions and the ever-changing larger patterns with which we come to interpret our past in light of our present.

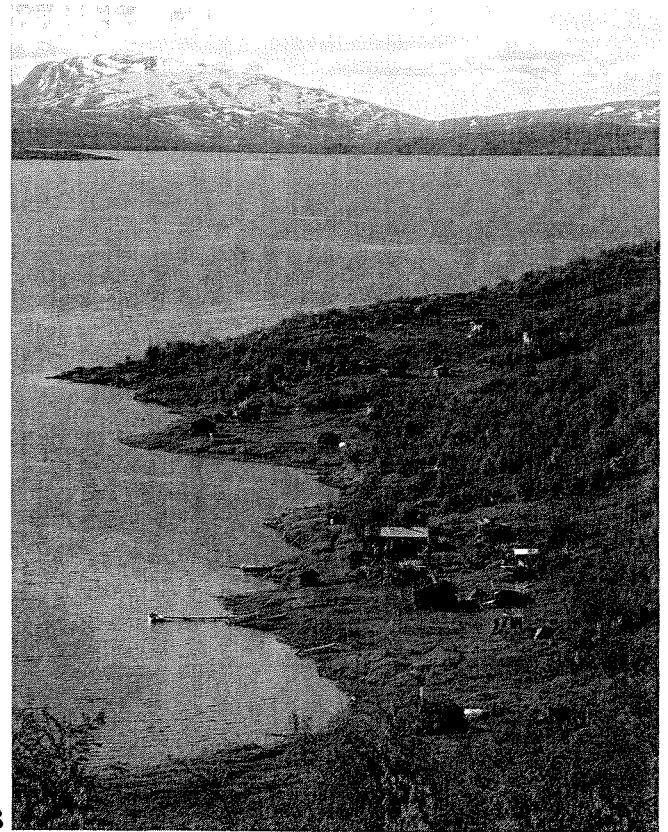
## Dwellings and the extensive revolution

The traditional Sámi turf dwelling is called, in local Sámi, a *goattieh* (pl. *goattii*), a *goahti* in North Sámi, or a ‘*torv* (turf) *kåta*’ in Swedish to distinguish it further from other possible types of Sámi dwelling.<sup>4</sup> Ruong (1937: 45) has proposed a fascinating evolutionary sequence for Sámi architectural development, from the elemental tripod to the double-arched, conical, nomadic tent and the permanent turf *goattieh* (Figure 6.2A). However, as we shall see, social and economic factors allow structures to appear and disappear out of sequence.

In 1973, when I arrived in ‘Stalo’ as it was commonly called, the elementary double-arched conical tent in Ruong’s scheme was already a thing of the past. The distinctive double-arched structural design was by then only to be found in the permanent turf *goattii*, which bordered the lake. There was, however, a mobile Sámi tent form remaining in use. It was the less refined conical *laavo* (or *lávru* in North Sámi) made from straight wooden poles without the curved double-arched birch frame. This ‘straight-pole’ *laavo* was ever attainable as it was made from a frame that hardly warranted transport, since it could be obtained and replaced if need be from the nearest stand of trees. In comparison to the *laavo*, the



A

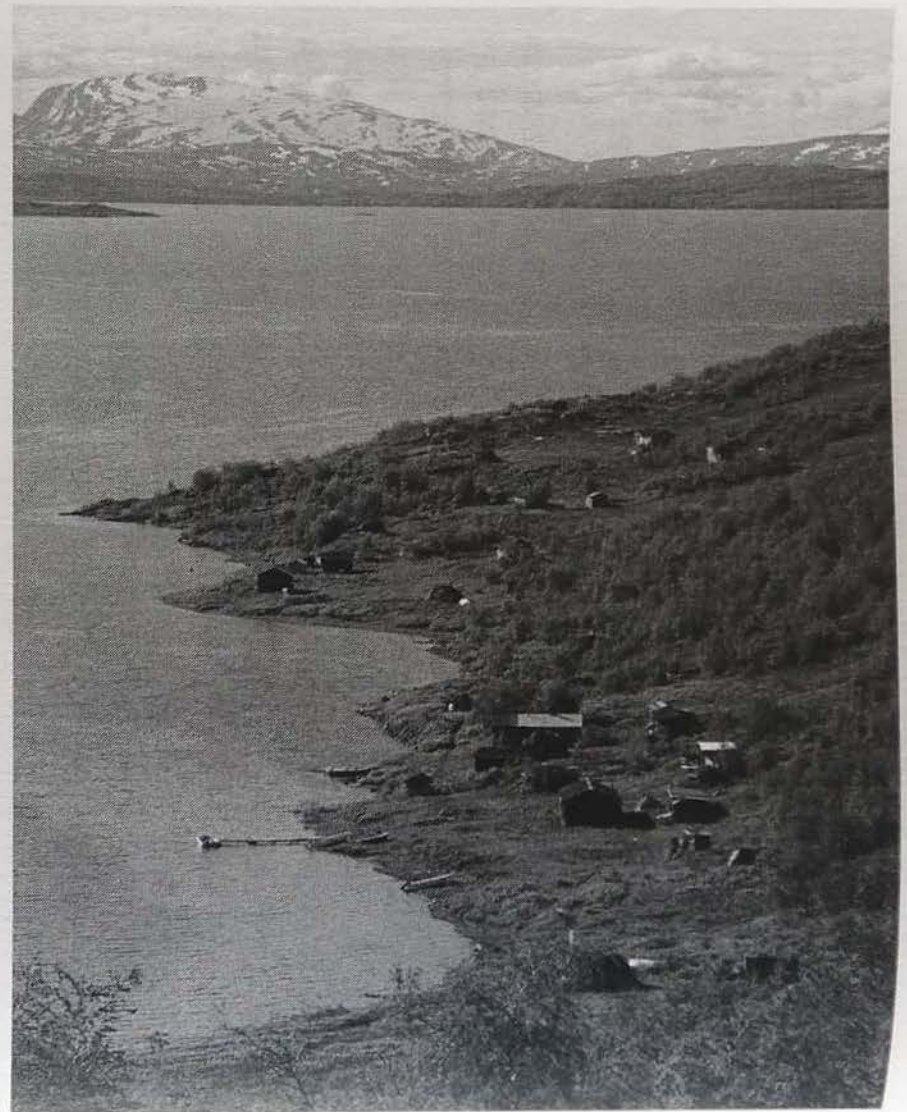


B

**Figure 6.1** *This paired set of photos shows Staloluokta, Tuorpon sameby, summer camp. 1973 is represented in image A. The summer of 2008 is in image B.*



A

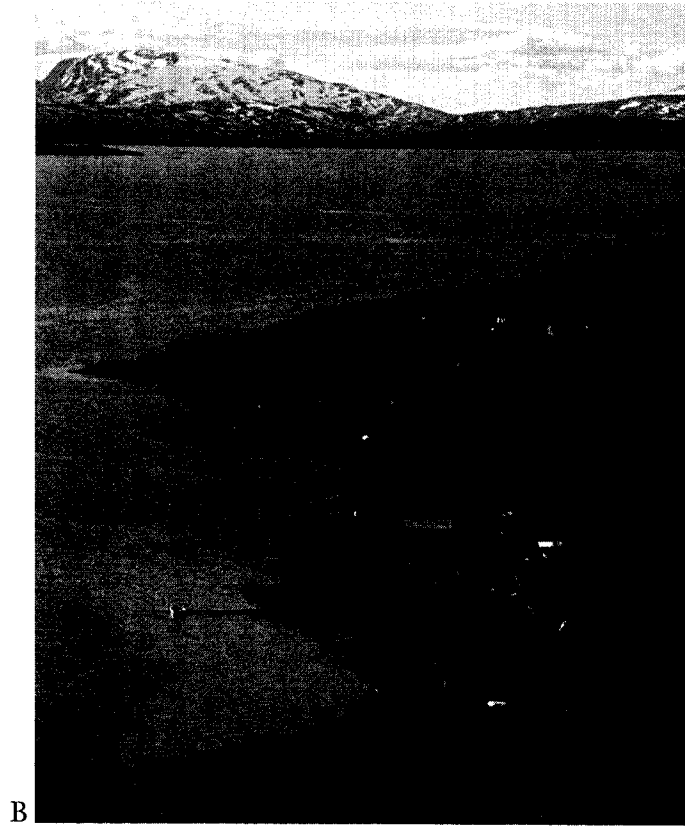


B

**Figure 6.1** This paired set of photos shows Staloluokta, Tuorpujärven, summer camp. 1973 is represented in image A. The summer of 2008 is in image B.

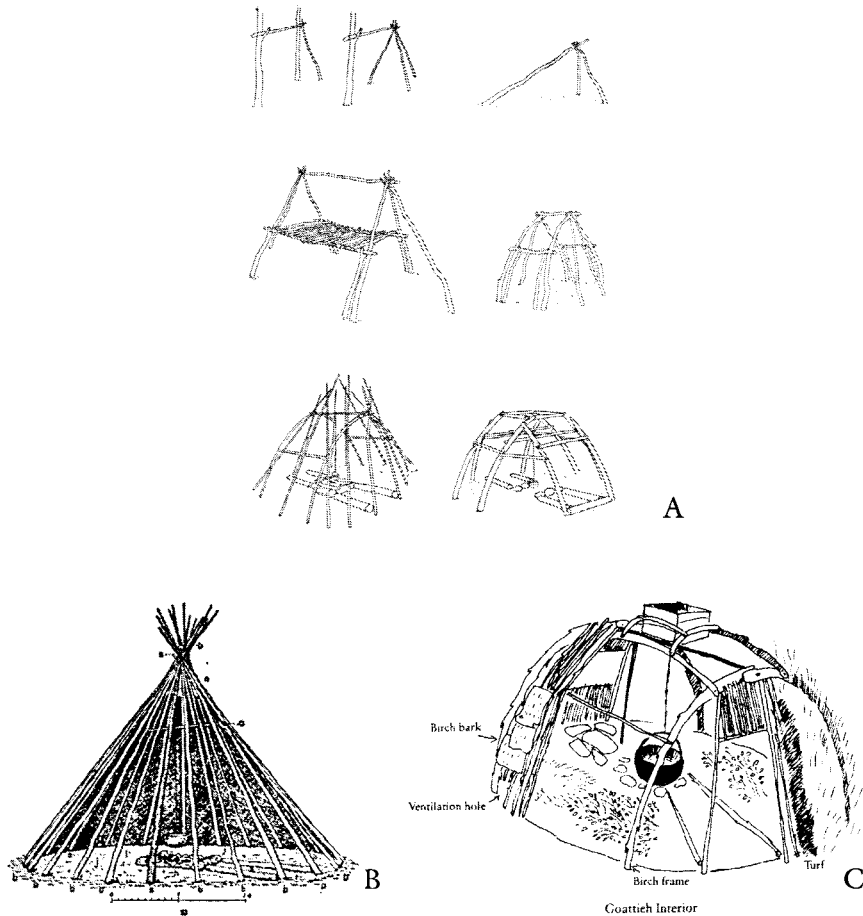


A



B

**Figure 6.1** *This paired set of photos shows Staloluokta, Tuorpon sameby, summer camp. 1973 is represented in image A. The summer of 2008 is in image B.*



**Figure 6.2** A collage showing the developmental sequence for goattieh architecture. Image A shows Ruong's developmental sequence for the Sámi laavo (Ruong 1937: 45). The frame on the bottom left of the panel is the frame for a double-arched nomadic tent. The frame on the bottom right shows the basic frame for the permanent turf goattieh. Image B shows a cross-section of a Sámi laavo according to Ruong (1969: 106). Image C shows the double-arched northern Sámi goattieh type common in Stalo (Beach 2001: 48).

‘devitalized’ double-arched tent gave more ‘floor space’ (with good head-room), which would have required far more straight poles, of the *laavo* tent type, to achieve.

In a sense, the older double-arched tent was ideal for reindeer caravan migrations. The fewer structural parts of the double-arched tent meant a much lighter load for the reindeer. When families were moving over bare ground, the tent structure – disassembled arch halves and poles – was



distributed evenly on the sides of the last tame transport deer. One end of the long poles was tied behind the shoulder of the deer, the other dragged over the ground. When they were moving over snow cover, the entire structure was hauled along on the last sled of the reindeer caravan. This double-arch *goattieh* could be easily set up, anywhere on the tundra or high above the tree line where *laavo* poles could not be cut. I came to appreciate all of these features when visiting Norwegian Finnmark where the double-arched tent, the *bealljigoahhti*, was still used in migrations with reindeer caravans (see Chapter 5). However, in the Jokkmokk mountains it was already rare for entire families to travel by reindeer sled. Snowmobiles and the demands of the Swedish school system for the children had already ended the era of full-family reindeer sled migrations with mobile double-arched tents. Instead, stationary turf dwellings dotting the migratory route at critical points were preferred: dwellings which took advantage of the dawning of what came to be called the extensive revolution in reindeer herding.

It is important to mention that the surviving *goattieh* turf dwellings themselves had already been modified by 1973. Not long before my arrival, these turf dwellings were located higher up on another slope of the mountain Unna Titir overlooking other mountain slopes and snow patches rather than the lake. When I came to Stalo, the older generation still remembered their old *goattieh* sites, when the village was around the other side of the mountain and quite a distance from the lakeshore. To some degree, this older alpine setting is associated with multiple meanings of 'tradition' and a different type of reindeer husbandry.

Still earlier records give evidence of a different adaptation. The native Jokkmokk herders who first used this site from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries spoke the Lule Sámi dialect. They followed a so-called 'intensive-herding' lifestyle where the reindeer were milked and kept under year-round careful control. They used the excellent grazing pastures around Lake Virihaure and migrated with their small herds across what later became the Norwegian border, all the way to the North Sea coast (Linnaeus 1732; Hultblad 1968; Beach 1981: 132). However, while one might say that these original Lule Sámi herders occupied this site first, these small groups did not remain at Staloluokta very long, nor did these families always cohabit together. Before the arrival of relocated Karesuando herders from further north who mixed with the local Jokkmokk herders, the Viri group used mobile dwellings which could be pitched just about anywhere. To this day one can find the remains of their tent sites dotting the western end of Lake Virihaure (Beach 1981: 132). The earliest photographs show that these tents (as expected, being the primary, long-term dwelling) were of the double-arched type.

I think it is fair to say that while certain people at the dawn of time might have been the first to populate a tract of land, nowhere have they been first to populate a landscape, for they have generally filled it themselves with spirits, monsters, trolls, legendary peoples or dead ancestors well in advance of their own arrival. In this case, the troll, Stalo, who has given his name to the place, is said to have lived in a cave in a huge rock on the other side of the lake. He used to terrorize the Sámi living there until one day a brave Sámi walled up the cave opening while Stalo was asleep inside. In fact, the positioning of settlements, probably at any time in the past as well as today, depended and depends upon the physical characteristics of the land (in relation to their form of resource use) as well as for the (not-merely-human) social map of the landscape. Usually there is a very human social landscape to deal with, be it another group or groups of people of variable social distance ranging from total strangers of different ethnic groups, or strangers within recognizably the same ethnic group, to well-known members of the same community. Each of these types of social relation played a role in the clustering and internal positioning of the first permanent *goattii*, which in time became known as Staloluokta ‘village’.

With the dissolution of the Norwegian/Swedish Union in 1905, the ensuing national restrictions on grazing access and the relocation (both freely but in the main forcibly by Swedish authorities) of many northern Sámi families with their reindeer to grazing lands further south, the grazing lands around Lake Virihaure hosted numerous waves of northern Sámi herders, some who moved on, but many who stayed. Not only did these newcomers, speaking a different dialect of Sámi, bring with them herding traditions originally adapted to other conditions, but their reindeer were also forced onto lands to which they were not accustomed. Naturally, the new group formed its herding partnerships based on kinship bonds (Paine 2009), which did not incorporate native Jokkmokk Sámi. Marriages across the Jokkmokk/Karesuando divide were practically unheard of and are still uncommon today. All of this resulted in the widespread disruption of local intensive herding practices and friction between northern relocated Sámi and local Jokkmokk Sámi groups. This is a story of huge complexity (not least legal), which is still unfolding with many regional variations (Elbo 1952; Åhren 1979; Walkeapää 2010). The social and cultural disruption among Sámi groups, both for the newcomers but also for those forced to make room for them, still lingers throughout the length of Swedish herding territory caused by the forcible relocation of northern Sámi (Beach 2008). For our purposes here, we must limit our discussion to note that Staloluokta, as the defined place along Lake Virihaure’s shore, came to be a situated village of permanent *goattii* of northern Sámi type due to the coming of the northern Sámi. Previous to this, it signified a rather more



diffuse zone in which the early intensive-herding Jokkmokk Sámi pitched their double-arch tents during the summer.

In previous works (Beach 1981; 2000; 2008) I have elaborated on the change from the era of so-called 'intensive' reindeer herding, which relied on the intimate relation to reindeer as a source of milk, to more 'extensive' herding characterized by the loose control of the deer used as a meat-producing animal. The explanation for the decline in the use of the traditional double-arched nomadic tent was brought on by these changes through a set of linked processes. As reindeer-milk pastoralism declined, reindeer calves, no longer deprived of their mother's milk, grew stronger and more independent. This meant that there was much less reason to monitor calves closely during the summer. Herds, which were more dispersed during the summer, were also spared epidemics of hoof and mouth disease, which occasionally decimated tightly controlled herds. As a result of increased extensivity, herds increased in size, and even individual reindeer became better 'meat-producing units'. With the reindeer running freely under loose, extensive control all summer, husbandry tasks during the bare-ground, pre-rut period came to be mainly confined to calf marking (Beach 2008). Freed from milking and monitoring the herd at all times, and with more time on their hands, herding families could take up permanent dwelling. They began to leave supplies at a storage site conveniently located near a sufficient source of birch wood and a good fishing lake, which could provide for their main summer diet.

The so-called 'extensive revolution' soon came to sweep far beyond anything practised by the northern Sámi newcomers and continues its forward march today, driven by inexorable market demands to maximize profits within the limits of sustainability. This is characterized by regulated herd sizes per *sameby* and ideals of selective breeding, calf slaughter, and optimal age/sex composition of herds – that which is known as 'rational herd management' (Beach and Stammler 2006) and which must today hearken to increasingly global dictates and conditions of possibility.

These were the conditions that led to the establishment of Stalo village with permanent *goattii* in the early 1900s, when it was situated rather high on the 'back' side of Unna Titir. This site provided people living in the *goattii* with a good view towards Kierkehare, a focal mountain with snow patches where deer habitually escaped insect pests. At this time, a modicum of intensive control was still desirable, to protect the herd (especially the young calves) from predation, to know when would be the opportune time for calf marking at various corrals and to assure oneself of the ability to assemble the necessary trained pack reindeer needed for further movement toward the lowlands as autumn arrived. Eyes were basically 'mountain oriented'.

The fishing that occurred here was quite limited and not essentially for sale. Private boats in the mountains at that time were small and light and had to be hauled into the highlands by reindeer sled while the land was still covered with snow. Boat motors, demanding a supply of gas, were still unheard of in Stalo, as were the nylon nets which greatly increased fishing productivity. The fish caught were for immediate consumption, and perhaps some for the salt barrel to be freighted out by reindeer.

All of this changed with the advent of the seaplane. Gradually, turf dwellings were relocated and swivelled to be 'lake oriented'. Proximity to the lake meant easy access to boats for fishing as well as to seaplanes for the freighting of caught fish to the lowlands and the distribution of mail and supplies brought by these same seaplanes. Should the time for marking reindeer calves approach, and the herders find themselves with the need to set out on foot to sweep the surrounding slopes and valleys for reindeer, the seaplane pilots could help the herders to position themselves strategically by setting them down at any small lake large enough for landing. During their many trips, the pilots also kept an eye out for wandering reindeer and thus became a major source of information for the herders on where the herds were congregating.

At this time herders began using conical tents again, both of the double-arch and *laavo* type, to extend the fishing reach of families in various shifting directions from the village hub, but tent use of this kind never replaced the permanent turf *goattieh*. The old double-arch tent structure used previously on migrations was too bulky and would cost too much to be put in a seaplane, but it could be transported by boat. The *laavo* could be erected wherever access to trees permitted, and it was also quite common to leave the poles behind at a site where recurring visits were to be expected. The making of a double-arch tent structure, requiring the search for four matching 'ear' arches, took considerable effort, and caused them to be valuable family possessions. They were not likely to be left behind at a campsite, and as their main purpose as a migratory home ebbed away, so were they soon to become a rarity in the mountains, even at short-term fishing camps.

Calf marking was still the number one concern of herders in the summer. More prolonged fishing expeditions would therefore often be left to the elderly who would not have to rush off to a corral at a moment's notice. Tent cloth and nets could be flown out with a fishing couple to any one of a multitude of small lakes, or a fishing camp could be established anywhere along the shore of the big Lake Virihaure. Supplies of all kinds from the lowlands would then be flown up while the catch of arctic char was brought out. It was soon unnecessary to keep goats, as practically any fresh food item available through the lowland road network could be in the mountains with little delay. Seaplanes could be used

to transport large cans of gas for boat motors, and commercial summer fishing gained a dominant place in the herding cycle with considerable financial importance for herding families.

Given the new importance of fishing and the seaplanes, it is understandable that the families began to shift their dwellings to the Viri (short for Virihaure, i.e. the lake) side of the mountain when *goattii* needed rebuilding and young families started out on their own. Eyes shifted to the lake, and lake weather of consequence for seaplane traffic and fishing conditions became often more important than mountain weather. The *goattieh's* (often single) window – the presence of any window at all made possible only through relatively modern means of transportation – turned towards the lake.

Kinship relations are still the best predictor of the relative placement of permanent *goattii* within the village (and are even noticeable when tents are erected near a corral). However, many factors might fine-tune final placement within an area made probable by kinship. As fishing became increasingly important, residents began to experiment with changing the ceiling heights in the *goattii* in order to make a dwelling that could also be used for smoking fish. The technical challenge was to maximize the draw of air without making the lower section too uncomfortable for inhabitants. A dwelling that is situated wrongly in relation to the surrounding slopes can cause prevailing winds to drive smoke back down the smoke hole. For a time, in the early 1970s, dwelling placement for a new construction could even be influenced by (though hardly decided by) the desire to maximize the signal strength of walkie-talkies in various directions.

Technological change further altered the number of different types of dwellings a family would maintain. The growing density of the road network, followed by the coming of the snowmobile, quite swiftly obviated the regular need for sled-deer family transport caravans.<sup>5</sup> Speed and ease of transport made it possible also for herders to work with the herd much farther from a single base. Reindeer could still access winter pastures far westward without it being necessary for the herding families to live there. Therefore, the maintenance of separate spring/autumn and winter settlement dwellings became for many quite redundant. The active herders (usually male) could base themselves at one spot and cover such a broad timespan of herding work from there that a single permanent dwelling for the snow-cover period was adequate. This also allowed the rest of the family to extend their stay in these winter quarters and accommodate more easily the regular Swedish school programme.

As seaplane freight-and-fish-delivery companies grew in number and capacity, they were soon entrusted to fly families and all their seasonal bare-ground-period packing into the mountains for the summer, and then eastward towards the lowlands again with the autumn. The reindeer

might migrate in the company of some herders necessary for the job, but families could move up and down independently by seaplane. In effect, the movements of the reindeer, the herders and their families all became split and were no longer harmonized by the migration of caravans. This meant that the old spring/autumn camps, commonly set midway along the migration route between westernmost summer pastures (and camps) and easternmost winter pastures and scattered homes, gradually fell into disuse and were abandoned.

Larger regional economic development motivated change of the main permanent dwellings towards a completely new form where a family would live for about nine months each year. When the construction of new hydroelectric dams stopped, when agriculture also ebbed and machines replaced manpower in the timber industry, jobs became scarce in northern inland Sweden. Labourers began vacating their homes, releasing a large number of Swedish-style houses onto the market at cheap prices in the lowlands. Herding families began to take over regular homes built to Swedish standards central to their snow-cover grazing lands (for the Tuorpon *sámeby* herders, in or around the town of Jokkmokk). In short, when I first reached Stalo in 1973, the time spent at the so-called winter home in the lowlands for the herders had lengthened (extending over all but the summer months in the mountains), and dwelling forms (for the main family) had become permanent and relegated to two main positions in the grazing cycle: the westernmost summer turf *goattieh*, and the easternmost winter (Swedish-style) home.

### 35 years later

Returning to my two photographs (Figure 6.1), one finds that the most immediately striking difference between the two pictures, which are separated by 35 years, is in the vastly increased number of four-sided cabins, insulated for all weather conditions (not to be confused with the much smaller four-sided outhouses and storage huts). Bedding and gear can now be left in summer homes all winter, and travelling up and down between mountains and lowlands can be done with minimal packing. With generators, TV, satellite phones and gas stoves, life in summer camps has become increasingly similar to life during other seasons in the lowlands – increasingly similar but for a decreasing amount of time.

The number of permanent turf *goattii* has decreased, although I can attest to the fact that at least a couple of them are indeed still there, only hidden behind a cabin or submerged in greenery. What is not immediately discernable in the pictures is how use of these dwellings has changed and why.

Today, most of the turf *goattii* are used minimally and some hardly at all. They might still be used for the baking of traditional flat bread, 'ember cakes' over an open fire, or for the smoking of fish still taken from the lake for household consumption or sale in small numbers to hikers passing by. However, large-scale fishing for sale to air-companies with swift daily flights to lowland restaurants has all but disappeared. The *goattii* can still serve as quarters for the many summer guests, extended family members and good friends who often prefer to experience the old life on a reindeer or moose hide around the central hearth (Sámi *arran*), but this will often demand a good deal of preparatory work – for example, cutting a new floor of birch branches and keeping a large supply of firewood. Some owners have eased this work by laying a wooden floor in the *goattieh*, and maybe by installing an iron stove with a permanent smokestack and bringing in cots.

The old turf double 'ear-arched' *goattieh*, like the traditional reindeer-drawn double-arched mobile tent, as well as the straight-poled *laavo*, all shared the same basic floor plan, with the same rules of movement for people inside and the same social significance of seating positions (Beach 1993). But once the *arran* gets replaced by an iron wood stove (often positioned at the *goattieh*'s perimeter, since a smokestack does not require a central position), and floors are laid with permanent wooden planks instead of the annual renewal of fresh birch saplings, the way people use the space changes. For instance, a larger unified floor space unbroken by a hearth in the middle allows for the central positioning of a table with chairs. Since the smoke is funnelled out the smoke pipe and does not hover throughout the interior, pressing inhabitants towards the floor, people are far more prone to stand or sit in chairs. Such modernized accommodations can even be rented out to summer visitors, but it is not common to bring complete strangers into the village for extended periods, as this can bring an imposition to all villagers. Most of the old *goattii* are paired with a new cabin, both owned by the same family, with the shift of use as indicated above. However, there is no simple binary opposition between traditional and modern in permanent dwelling form, as illustrated by the turf *goattieh* or the frame cabin. There are a few herders who maintain a good deal of the old style of life who use (often modernized) *goattii* as their prime residences during the summer, and who have not (yet) built a cabin.

Maintenance of the old *goattii* is to some degree supported by grants provided expressly for their restoration by the Swedish National Heritage Board. Funds have been given to *goattieh* owners to cover both the cost of new materials and also the labour necessary to restore the *goattii*. Not all applications to the Heritage Board are granted, however, for the Board wants to promote the preservation of traditional dwellings and to ensure

that they will remain in use (so that there is a real incentive to keep them in repair). Were it not for this restoration programme by the Heritage Board, a number of old *goattii* made redundant by cabins as primary dwellings would surely have lapsed into disrepair and then been torn down. Usage accepted by the Heritage Board encompasses use of the *goattii* for such things as baking and smoking fish, uses which give them a purpose and value to their owners. Heritage Board funds are not granted, however, for the modernization of *goattieh* architecture or of the interior layout.

Besides individual predilections, there are also other reasons governing the choices taken about what kind of dwelling to live in, how to construct it and how to furnish it. Among these, the most important is a law declaring that the construction of permanent dwellings on Crown land is allowed at certain sites for herders only.<sup>6</sup> Within the large national-park areas of northern Sweden (overlapping most of the summer grazing territory of many *samebyar* like Tuorpon), restrictions are all the more elaborate. Children of herders who would not themselves become herders would not be granted permission to build a home on Crown land, especially not in a park's mountain regions. However, they are always allowed to inherit any such property from their parents.

The so-called 'structural rationalization' of the herding industry, which began seriously in the 1970s, squeezed herders out of their livelihood through carrot and stick policies (cf. Beach 1981: 323ff.; 1983). The logic of these reforms was that those remaining in the industry might enjoy a greater slice of the total herd limit, increasing their profits and their living standards. This meant that the children of herders, more than ever, embarked upon non-herding livelihoods. While they were still active herders, herding parents who were unsure of their children's future as herders saved money<sup>7</sup> in order to build cabins to replace their traditional Sámi-style dwellings, both to have a more comfortable pensioned life, and also to have dwellings of value that could attract even their non-herding children and families into the mountain camps – prime 'nursing grounds' for Sámi identity and social cohesion.

The building of expensive permanent Swedish-style cabins in the mountains was naturally hampered by problems transporting building materials. Almost all of the material for the building of the traditional *goattii* could be obtained in situ, but the lumber, insulation, windows and other materials for the cabins had to be purchased in the lowlands and freighted to the mountainside. Heavily laden snowmobiles could take much more than the reindeer caravans, but even snowmobiles have their limits, and the job could be treacherous. The helicopter, able to lift and carry huge burdens suspended underneath for placement anywhere, revolutionized transport. However, the advent of new transportation possibilities was

insufficient to bring about a building boom in Stalo. Instead, herders had to struggle against government regulations.

While herders have the right to build dwellings to serve them in pursuit of their reindeer-herding livelihood on Crown and Park lands, the building permits most often issued were minimalist to say the least. State authorities would commonly allow only very small buildings, without any standard comforts, insulation or plumbing. A permanent turf *goattieh* was, in effect, all that was allowed. The first tiny, makeshift cabin permitted for a herder in Stalo was granted in the 1970s because he had become severely asthmatic, and with a letter from his doctor could certify that he should not be overly exposed to the smoke from the open hearth of a *goattieh*. However, it was not until 1982, after a year of negotiations with park authorities, the Environmental Protection Agency and the County Administrative Board, that a larger cabin with higher standards was permitted. Informants in Stalo have explained that the thawing of tight building restrictions was largely due to the enlightened attitude of the current head of the Crown lands in the park area, Bengt Edholm, who had stated that the herders 'were after all not animals and should be allowed habitations befitting people as they wished'. Once this cabin was built, other herders rapidly followed suit to take advantage of a window of opportunity they feared might shut at any moment. This led to the blossoming of new four-sided buildings at the site in my second photograph (see Figure 6.1B).

### **Flying dogs, labour, and time spent in camp**

When comparing contemporary summer life in the village with that of 35 years ago, I find that one of the most significant changes is not to do with location, building type, interior layout or mode of use, but rather with the timing and extent of use of the dwellings. This change cannot be seen in the photographs. Most of the herding families spent far less time in Stalo than previously. They were also far more mobile than ever before. This change can be explained by the arrival of the helicopter. It is also linked to the revitalization of the mobile tent – as we shall see below – but again in a surprisingly new form.

Of course, seaplanes had been in operation for more than 20 years – bringing herders, families and their supplies into the mountains, and taking them out again in many places – before the job was taken over by the helicopter. Not only is the operational cost of a seaplane less than that of a helicopter, but herding families were also given considerable discounts for seaplane transport, since they could be counted as the main fishing employees of the seaplane businesses. Why then should there have been a transition to helicopter use at all?

Both seaplane and helicopter may be flying machines, but their airborne capabilities differ enormously. Significantly, the helicopter does not need water for landing and take-off, and it can easily lift heavy loads for transport almost anywhere. Hence the helicopter is far more useful than the seaplane for work within the National Parks, to lift mobile bridges and construction material, but also for difficult rescue operations. It can fly tourists in and out of the mountains no matter how rough the lakes are. It is also of far greater assistance during the moose hunt, when heavy moose carcasses must be transported with haste from anywhere in the vast mountain-taiga area. The mountain air companies must serve a number of different customers to make ends meet, and reindeer-herding interests and the profits derived from that sector are but a part of their larger business puzzle. Moreover, even if they are more expensive to use, helicopters afford far more flexibility in mode of use for reindeer herding.

When I first came to Stalo in the early 1970s, helicopters were rarely used to transport herding families to the mountains and only occasionally in herding work. Its most likely use then was during the pre-rut slaughter of the bull reindeer, whose rapid hormonal shifts would cause their meat to be inedible if they were not slaughtered before mid-September. The deer were still rather far westward in the mountains then, far from the winter lowland road network. Not only was it critical to bring the bull deer to the corral in the mountains in time, but once slaughtered there the carcasses had to be removed swiftly down to the slaughterhouse trucks waiting at the end of the road. The helicopter could serve both needs. It was used to round up the deer, to drive them into the corral, and later to freight the bodies, five at a time, from the mountain corral to the trucks farther east (Beach 1993: 135ff.). Use of the helicopter to freight bull carcasses from the mountains to the road is not necessary in those *sámebyar* where roads penetrate into the autumn lands, but the use of the helicopter to round up the bulls to ensure their time-critical delivery into the corral has become the rule. Of course, there was a period when the air companies maintained both seaplanes and helicopters, but once large-scale commercial fishing faded to a level that left no profit, and profit from helicopter use rose further, the seaplanes disappeared.

This fading of large-scale commercial fishing by herding families in the summer and the dependence on the helicopter in herding are intimately related, and both of these have influenced greatly the timing of summer occupancy in Stalo. As will be explained in more detail shortly, expanded use of the helicopter, now encompassing the actual driving of the herd into the calf-marking corral (not merely the positioning of herders – as with the seaplane – to perform the gathering on foot) has caused all the calf markings to be completed on a tight schedule, early in the summer. Once these are over and done, and without large-scale fishing to motivate



prolonged stay in the mountains, many herding families have begun to return to their lowland main homes after only a few weeks.

Not only can the helicopter serve to scout for reindeer and to position herders anywhere on the ground. Anyone who has watched a helicopter at work when collecting and driving reindeer to the corral can understand the appreciative but somewhat ironic term for them: 'flying dogs' (since real dogs are so rarely used in herding nowadays). A helicopter can hang still in the air; it can turn on a dime, and it can move slowly, close to the ground. Flocks that try to run off from the sides of the herd can be brought back swiftly into the fold if need be, while the deer can be driven ahead at a calm tempo towards the corral with the helicopter zigzagging at the bottom of the herd. Should the entire herd stampede off in the wrong direction, the helicopter has the speed and commands the 'authority' to turn it back. With a skilled herder sitting beside a skilled helicopter pilot, the flying dog can do the job of many in a fraction of the time. When the helicopter gathering is joined by youths on motorbikes, the drive to the corral is all the swifter. Of course, the final push of the deer into the corral 'arms' and the rolling across of the wire fencing gate requires the presence of 'ground troops', perhaps others on foot waiting by the corral, but the helicopter rarely fails (weather permitting) to deliver the animals into their hands.<sup>8</sup>

Contemporaneous with the increasing use of the helicopter, a development which requires a sizeable expenditure from the *sameby*'s collective purse, is the practice of paying herders' wages from the *sameby*'s collective funds to accomplish special tasks. As we shall see, the payment of wages and the use of helicopters are intimately related, and together they have impacted on the dwellings herders choose to occupy. I have described the wage system as structured by the reindeer-herding law previously in considerable detail (Beach 1981; 2000), and will only summarize its essential features here to inform our understanding of its impact on dwelling patterns.

The Reindeer Act of 1971 restructured the *samebyar* into collectively responsible economic business units, according to the ideals of a rationalized reindeer industry. The new business units were designed to run on balanced budgets. If a *sameby*'s initial annual budget figures showed a deficit, the final account had to be brought into balance by levying a per-head fee on each reindeer owner for the care of the reindeer. The handling fee could change year by year as long as it was set at a level at least high enough to balance the *sameby* budget. Of course, a *sameby* might require no herding fee – for example, by significantly avoiding collective labour expenses, or if the *sameby* in question had money on hand from environmental compensation payments from hydroelectric dams, or from predator damages to cover expenses.

The wage system was devised to go hand in hand with the herding fee and would protect herders with few deer from having their labour exploited by those with big herds. Big herders can rest assured that they will always have enough deer to satisfy their needs for sustenance at any winter corral, whereas the small herder must be far more actively engaged in bringing the animals into the slaughter corral and be sure that all of his new calves are properly marked in summer (see Beach 2008 for the dangers of not doing so). Under the fee/wage system, herders would pay a sum into the collective purse according to the number of deer they owned, but then they would also be compensated by the *sameby* for any labour that they provided (for the collective good) during annual activities.

In terms of a budgetary strategy a particular *sameby* could choose to proceed along the traditional route of minimizing or avoiding all cash expenses, and instead use moral pressure to ensure that each family supplied at least one person to take care of common tasks. Or a *sameby* could choose to take on contracts, even very costly ones, for the collective good, and pay for it by raising the necessary herding fee per reindeer. In effect, there is a great deal of choice to be exercised by a *sameby* when it comes to setting the annual herding fee and deciding how much work to put under the wage system (and at what rate of salary), and what other expenses are incurred.

The helicopter, although extremely costly, will do the work of many men, thereby offsetting the cost of herding fees. Ideally, if a helicopter's 'down time' is reduced, the *sameby* is faced with the salary of only one herder. To rationalize costs even further, adjoining *samebyar* make cooperative schedules for helicopter use. Among the *samebyar* in the Jokkmokk Mountains, a tacit agreement has been reached that one *sameby* must complete its calf markings before the next *sameby* starts. All *sameby* sub-groups and all *samebyar* in the area are thereby forced into the new time schedule. Nowadays the calf markings occur back-to-back, in a few weeks of frenetic activity. There is no time for fishing, and no helicopter is available to transport fish even if fishing were practised commercially.

This rationalization of time leads to the further rationalization of the use of space. When the calf markings are over, in the early summer, there are few if any opportunities for people to earn salaries from the *sameby*, nor any unspoken moral pressure to be on hand for communal work. Herders begin to leave the mountains early. Those who remain in the mountains a bit longer are often the pensioners and perhaps some young grandchildren for whom the post-calf-marking period becomes a kind of vacation and immersion in a Sámi social context. Pensioners can supplement their incomes by providing fish and ember bread to hikers, while older youths might be enticed to stay on in the mountains for the income

they can gain through park maintenance and tourist-oriented jobs. On the whole, however, even these lingering summer residents move down much earlier than before, and my informants complain that the old relaxed summers when families circulated among the *goattii* for long coffee visits are no more. Residence patterns, therefore, have become intense, abbreviated and extremely mobile. This in turn has affected people's choices in architecture.

### The mobile Sámi tent

The pressures of contemporary herding life, including such developments as abbreviated wage payments, combined with the costly but efficient transport of helicopters, and new building codes and inheritance legislation, have led on the one hand to an increased use of the *laavo*-type mobile tent in a modernized form, and on the other to a decrease in use of the traditional permanent turf *goattieh* in favour of the Swedish frame house. Calf-marking events are now so frequent and compressed in time that herders are often flying from one corral to another, day by day, forgoing even the luxury of flying home in between. This has led to a preference of a new type of light, highly mobile dwelling, the Moskosel *laavo*, which shares a common conical shape with the traditional Sámi *laavo* and is marketed on the basis of its indigenous heritage, but uses high-tech synthetic materials. The conical form is achieved thanks to a set number of aluminium poles fitted into a rigid 'crown' holding-rig at the top. The covering is made from synthetic cloth. This internal shape-holding architectural device is entirely new and without roots in Sámi tradition. A gathering of Moskosel tents full of children near a corral can appear in a few hours, only to disappear after the corralling with equal speed. The helicopter can replace the old reindeer caravan when it comes to hauling the home; in fact, the new tents (even of a size hosting five people) are made of such lightweight materials that they can be carried by a single person without difficulty (Figure 6.3B). The tents appear again at the next corral, but after two or three weeks of most intensive marking activity, they are more or less gone for good (for that summer). The tents allow families to bring children and grandchildren along to enjoy the seasonal events. They help herders to achieve tasks and to enjoy each other's company, but they are rooted in a radically new social environment.

In the early 1970s herders walked to the calf-marking corral and might have to wait there for a day or two if the reindeer proved difficult to drive. Walkie-talkie communication in the mountains was often haphazard, and it could be extremely difficult to follow the whereabouts of the gathering team. Small children could not embark on a long hike to a corral; nor



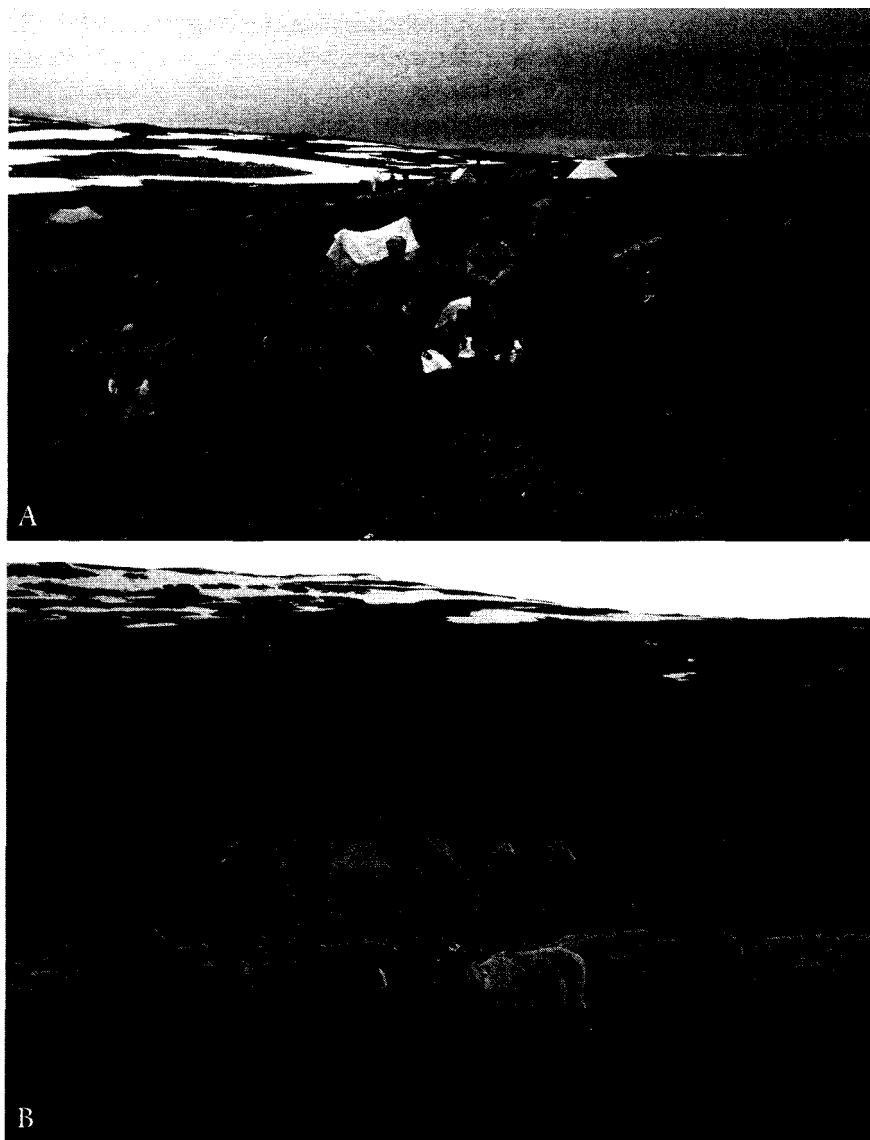
**Figure 6.3** *This paired set of photos shows family tents at a calf-marking corral. Both are taken near the Arasluokta village in Jäkkäkaska sameby territory near a spot (and river) referred to as 'Meläidno'. Image A on the top is from 1973 and Image B on the bottom is from 2008.*

were their young mothers likely to attend the corralling. There could be a long wait, the work could also last most of the night, and living conditions were not particularly comfortable, especially in poor weather. Nowadays, on those occasions when corrallings are not too far from the



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village, families, even those with small children, can congregate there for the marking with a modicum of comfort, with considerable assurance that the marking will occur, and without long periods of waiting. Mobile telephones provide sure communications. Before the calf marking, a few *sameby* members have probably been sent ahead of time by the *sameby* to prepare the corral and the camp for both the herders and their families. In the case of those calf markings which occur in another *sameby*, possibly quite far from the range of a herder's home *sameby* (and therefore less likely to have its reindeer at the corral), it is common today for the *sameby*'s collective purse to finance the attendance of a few herders, chosen carefully for their wide knowledge of ear marks, to perform marking tasks for all of their *sameby* mates, thereby sparing them the considerable (private) flight expense. Lightweight poles and roles of wire fencing can also be transported by helicopter to set up corrals in many new places. The advent of flying corrals, flying dwellings and flying herders with less time but longer 'reach' brings together herders from greater distances, from *samebyar* farther away. Their herding schedules grow increasingly entwined.

With a helicopter in constant use by many *samebyar* during the marking season, its schedule of bookings is tight. The pilot must give top priority to the transportation of herders rather than accompanying family. Nor can the helicopter be booked for days sweeping vast tracts to bring a large mass of deer to a single corral. Each corralling must be a one or at most two-day affair, if schedules (and budgets) are to hold. As the herders say, 'We have begun to bring the corrals to the deer rather than the deer to the corral' (cf. Beach 2008).

That old-time feeling (perhaps romanticized but present in memory nonetheless) when children ran between lasso practice and the hearths or outdoor, more collective fires where their parents congregated to chat leisurely around the coffee pot, depends precisely upon the waiting for the reindeer. Inclement weather and delay in bringing the deer into the corral creates the calm to socialize across family lines, at least for the old timers, the women and small children. Poor weather will find groups eating and talking outdoors with eyes scanning the mountainsides and ears assessing the nearness of the helicopter. Truly foul weather will push everyone inside the tents, but here too fires will gather people around them, although naturally people will tend to disperse into smaller tent-family groups. Usually, however, the weather, even if poor, will be sufficiently good for the helicopter to bring the herd to the corral. The smallest children can be fed or put to rest sporadically in the tents, but most of the time the tents stand vacant, their erstwhile inhabitants congregating with the reindeer in the corral and chatting with each other in abruptly ending bursts between breaks to catch a calf for marking. The talk grows longer as the majority of



calves become marked, but once the job is all done and the herd released, the herders also quickly disappear, and the tents are hurriedly dismantled. Only a few smouldering fires and unused piles of willow brush remain as an indication of the whirlwind of work that occurred at the corral site not long ago.

Admittedly, these temporary clusters of tents can hardly emulate the tent camps of the old days of intensive reindeer herding. The tents may still be pitched with some regard for family connections, but such concerns must now accommodate more immediate concerns such as being placed close to the corral but out of the path of the herd. Inside the tents one will find usually only the barest of essentials for eating and sleeping. Of course, such things as baking stones, wrought-iron frying pans or thickly matted birch branches covered by moose or reindeer hide on the floor, common in village tents in the past, will not be found in these short-term dwellings. Nevertheless, the conical tents put a much more indigenous stamp on the landscape since they allow smoke to rise from Sámi tent clusters – in contrast to nylon backpacker tents where lone herders would be forced to make their fires outside.

Yet for the herders there are tangible benefits and appreciated cultural gains to be had from these ephemeral clusters of modern tents of unsurpassed (retro) design. First and foremost, as noted, they make it far more likely that entire families, even those with small children, will attend corraling events. Nowadays, with the helicopter to transport a modern tent able to hold a fire, the reach of young families seems to have increased. Even tiny children with small lassos or homemade toy snags can follow close behind their parents in distant corrals. Considering the expense of helicopter transport for families to distant corrals, togetherness can be costly. With a shorter summer season in the mountains, however, time for acquiring herding skills becomes all the more precious.

How one lives, in which kind of dwelling, where and when, have become matters governed also by issues of culture, enskillment, indigenous politics and conscious identity formation. Assuredly such matters have influenced choices since the dawn of time. For the contemporary herding family in Sweden, however, the alternatives have quickly come to span a vastly more globalized array of choices than ever before, and choosing a path of Sámi modernism, traditionalism or revitalization makes statements about questions which previously were hardly asked. The new social geography of the new Sámi (Moskosel) *laavo* serves both economic restrictions and identity building. Families experience a kind of Sámi village feeling of togetherness even if it is very ephemeral. If the eyes from the early *goattii* (both the old double-arch tent and the first turf dwellings) looked to the mountain, and then from the turf *goattii* to the lake, now eyes look inward into a revitalized community.



## Conclusion

This chapter has examined seven specific Sámi dwellings which have been put into use at various times over the past 100 years: (1) a mobile conical double-arch tent *goattieh* (used mainly in the days of intensive herding); (2) a permanent turf *goattieh* (once built to face the mountain, but later built by the lakeshore and oriented to face the lake); (3) a modernized *goattieh* (with a stove and with different flooring); (4) a traditional conical *laavo* (with wooden poles); (5) a Moskosel conical *laavo* (with aluminium poles); (6) backpacker tents; and (7) a Swedish frame house.

When considering dwelling constructions *per se*, it is common for social scientists to speak in terms of ‘revitalization’ and ‘devitalization’ when referring to degrees of traditional structural forms or degrees of use. I have presented two traditional Sámi dwellings, the permanent turf *goattieh* and the mobile tent (*laavo*) as caught in a cycle of ‘devitalization’ and ‘revitalization’. However, these terms highlight a problematic point: the ‘devitalization’ of a traditional construction form might occur in order to ‘revitalize’ a traditional relationship to the landscape. When speaking of ‘revitalization’, for example, one might be unconsciously focusing on building form, when so much more is actually involved. For example, the chapter by Andrews in this volume illustrates a ‘revitalization’ of a rare Dene caribou-hide-covered tent dwelling found in a museum collection. In a cooperative effort by museum staff and Dene community elders, the building techniques, and material procurement and preparation, were brought back in the (re)making of such a dwelling – a new generation became enskilled in the process, and a wealth of traditional lore extending far beyond the tent construction itself was revived.

In the case of the Sámi tent, described here, revitalization did not focus on the recreation or repatriation of a specific old dwelling, in material, in traditional structure or in lore. Enskillment of traditional tent construction was not the issue here. The term ‘revitalization’ was applied to these tents (albeit perhaps naïvely) because of the temporary social life their use at the corrals afforded, the ‘feel’ of the old-time smoking tent villages, and the enskillment they facilitated of very young children in herding work, rather than in tent making. Actually, it can be argued that the possibility of purchasing the modern Moskosel tent, with the advantages of its conical form and inside hearth, has made it all the less likely that the truly traditional Sámi *laavo* will be revitalized for anything more than a museum project. The Moskosel tent has the traditional conical form, but its materials and internal structure are significantly different from the Sámi *laavo*. Use of the Moskosel tents is not conducive to the enskillment of Sámi youth in traditional *laavo* construction.

Similarly, in this chapter the term ‘devitalization’ was invoked to illustrate the transition from use of the permanent turf *goattieh* to the Swedish-style modern cabin. The comparative opposition of the terms devitalization and revitalization was to be found, again, in the realm of ensuing social effects: the transition to cabin living promoting (and reflecting) a shorter season of summer work in the mountains and further distancing from active herding. Yet, as we have seen, the transition to cabin use was to some extent occasioned by legislation, which enabled the children of herders to inherit property (and thereby have a better chance of remaining) in their traditional mountain landscapes. From this perspective, the transition to cabin life might be regarded as a revitalization effort.

In effect, on both counts we find that revitalization and devitalization cannot be conceived of as mutually exclusive. Even in the case presented by Andrews, with a focus on the recreation of a traditional material artefact and the reawakening of knowledge and processes of intergenerational learning, there are obvious, unavoidable aspects of the context of the tent recreation project which are far from traditional and revitalizing of former enskillment processes – even when creativity is acknowledged in past works and fostered in contemporary revitalization efforts. In the end, nothing can be more traditional than the attempt to survive in the place one calls home, pursuing a livelihood one desires, and to achieve this one must be willing and able to change in all kinds of ways. When cultural politics enter into the equation and influence one’s success in this venture, for example when majority perceptions of what is traditional for an indigenous minority becomes enmeshed with the power of the majority to change indigenous life, it is then that concepts of revitalization or devitalization take on meanings as significant as they are overly simplified. The how, when and where of dwelling become fraught with political ramifications, and the care devoted to accepted or overly static categories of revitalization swells. My own experiences among the Sámi lead me to believe that appropriate dwelling for them is in essence governed by pragmatism, and when conscious efforts at traditional preservation, revitalization or, for that matter, devitalization of dwelling are manifest, it is because these also have pragmatic sides.

## Notes

1. ‘Staloluokta’ means ‘troll inlet’ in Sámi and is the name both of an inlet of Lake Virihaure and of the Sámi village by its shore.
2. *Sameby* (sing.) and *samebyar* (pl.) are Swedish terms meaning Sámi ‘villages’, but these so-called ‘villages’ in fact designate the ca. 50 territorially defined grazing zones for reindeer herding in Sweden. The term is also used when referring to the social group of Sámi who traditionally inhabited these areas, but in contemporary legislation is limited in reference to

those allowed to exercise their reindeer herding rights there and who thereby form a business enterprise and judicial entity.

3. The term 'permanent' in the sense used here among transhumant reindeer-herders is, of course, not meant to indicate that the herders reside there permanently, but rather that the dwellings are fixed in the landscape to the extent their materials of construction last. Hence they are permanently situated in contrast to mobile, tent dwellings. Of course, the 'permanent' home of a family might relocate should the old structure burn down, be in need of total repair, or be poorly situated with respect to mountain slopes encumbering good smoke flow. Relocation of any dwelling, permanent or mobile, can also occur to bring peace to the spirit of one who had died there, a death accruing to the place in the landscape more than to any shelter, which might have surrounded it.
4. Actually there are a number of permanent Sámi dwelling forms, and hybrids thereof, all of which might come under the term *goattieh*. Those in Staloluokta are of the northern Sámi turf-covered variety whose dome-like inner construction of birch timber is notably supported by four curved birch timbers put together so as to form two arches, in Sámi called *biellie* or 'ears'. Hence these are *biellie goattieh* as discussed in chapter 5.
5. The term 'caravan' in the sense of a string of reindeer hauling sleds can conflate many meaningful distinctions. Naturally, one must distinguish between caravans pulling basic provisions for a work team of herders moving between fixed cabins along a migration route, and one hauling not only provisions but also the entire herding family along with the double arches and poles with which to set up a tent dwelling for encampment anywhere on route.
6. Herders from one *sameby* are permitted by the Reindeer Herding Act to build small, simple (no water, no insulation) shelters for use during herding operations on the territory of another *sameby*, but a *sameby* can prohibit the building of living accommodation (i.e. a cabin) for a herder who is not a member of the *sameby* in question.
7. It is extremely rare that a herder can obtain any sizeable loan, since his reindeer property according to law cannot be used as collateral.
8. Based on my own field experience over the years at innumerable corrallings, I believe the development of helicopter expertise today for work in summer calf markings to be a consequence of previous enskillment over the years when working with the corrallings of the more volatile pre-rut bull reindeer in the autumn. Skill in use of the helicopter for a herder (who almost never has a flying license and who is a passenger in the seat beside the pilot) involves such things as how low to fly, how hard to 'push' and from what angle to approach a herd to move it in the desired location. The herder must work in three dimensions, and a wrong or too aggressive approach can scatter the deer. Most likely he forms a skilled team together with a pilot who has 'flown many corrallings'. Assuredly, helicopter skill for work with reindeer can be acquired in a variety of practical ways, but for the Sámi in the Jokkmokk mountain area I think it is fair to claim that it grew from its role in the critically timed autumn bull slaughters. The helicopter had been used for the transportation of herders, families and equipment, as a more flexible alternative to the seaplane, long before it was used as a vehicle to drive a herd – something a plane can never do – but it came to be used in this way, as a 'flying dog', for the first time when the bulls had to be corralled in the autumn for pre-rut slaughter. In the old days, large-scale pre-rut slaughter was unlikely, as the bulls were too far west, up in the mountains where there were no roads by which to move the meat into cold storage. Rising hormone values in the bulls makes the window of opportunity for this slaughter very critical. Use of the helicopter provided a way for herders to bring the bulls together swiftly to a mountain corral for slaughter and also to transport the carcasses with speed down to the lowlands where mobile slaughter units waited at the end of the road.

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