

## Sami goddesses

Goddesses ruled the destinies of people throughout life. Most of the written records about them come from the South Sami area.

**Máttaráhkká, the Primordial Mother, and Máttaráhttje, the Primordial Father,** have above all left traces in the myth where they together create man. She creates a body around the soul, which he has brought to her. One of Máttaráhkká's daughters then decides what gender the child will have. **Sáráhkká** if it will be a girl, **Juoksáhkká**, the bow woman, if it will be a boy.

**Sáráhkká** and **Juoksáhkká** continued to protect the child throughout childhood. Máttaráhkká's third daughter **Uksáhkká**, the doorwoman, stood as protector of the child when it began to move outside the hut. The goddesses were needed - the fire in the barn, the raging stream and the underground were all looming dangers for the little child.

**Sáráhkká** was the protector of the whole family. It was in her name that the child was renamed if it became ill. They asked her for forgiveness when they had taken communion in the church. **Sáráhkká** has lingered in people's minds for a long time. In some areas she merged with the Catholic Virgin Mary. Both protected the family and were someone you could turn to in times of need.

**Biejvve, the Sun Goddess,** was also protective. She was the mother of all the animals and above all the reindeer calf was under her protection. Her life-giving rays and warmth caused greenery to regularly return in the spring and provide pasture for the reindeer. She was one of all the divinities that the reindeer-herding Sami had to guarantee the well-being of the reindeer. Even fisher men Sami could pray to her out at sea, for light and guidance.

Illness and death could be caused by **Jábmemáhkká**, the woman of death. In her realm, the dead lived in a new body and all of them could intervene in people's lives. The *nájd* knew how to tell about the perilous journey down to **Jábmemáhkká's**

kingdom in the underworld and how they were forced to negotiate with her to get back the soul of some seriously ill person.