

## The moose

The moose is forgotten. Not much has been written about it compared to the reindeer. Nevertheless, this king of the forest was once central to the Sami and their ancestors in a very large area, from the Norwegian Atlantic coast all the way far into Russia and the Baltics. Ancient rock carvings, rock paintings and sculptures bear witness to this.

Most of the many thousands of trapping pits for big game in Sweden from the north all the way down to Dalsland and Värmland were for moose. The majority of meal bones at prehistoric trapping sites in northern and central Sweden's interior are from moose. In Sami burial grounds in Härjedalen, 2,000 years ago, elk horns and skulls were sacrificed on people's graves and burned elk bones were placed in other stone settings.

The richest was a man's grave on Krankmårtenhögen by Härjedalen's Storsjö, which has a horn - skull roof of at least twelve moose and four reindeer, all laid down shortly after burial around 175 AD, but in different seasons.

The moose has been embraced by the Sámi in the forest country in beliefs that were similar to those that at the same time came to the reindeer among the Sámi in the mountain areas. Beliefs about the reindeer then became dominant in Sami culture with the domestication of the reindeer.

The elk has been particularly mentioned in the Southern Sami area. In the epic about the Daughter of the Sun and in many legends, it is said that the daughter of the sun must have brought a tame moose herd instead of a reindeer herd. According to another tradition, the Sami were originally given the moose, but it was later exchanged for the reindeer. The daughter of the sun's son, became the progenitor of the *Gallasönerna*, the great hunters, who were the inventors of skis and who hunted and tamed the moose.

The cosmic moose hunt recurs in names of and in conceptions of the constellations. *Johan Turi* has described it like this: the tail of Ursa Major is Faudna's bow. Faudna hunts the moose. The great moose of the sky, Sarvva, consists of a series of constellations. The upper part of the horns is Cassiopeia, the lower part and front body is Perseus and the back body some stars in Auriga. Below the moose are the three stars of Orion, these are the "Gallasönerna". Castor and Pollux are called the skiers. They are all moose hunters.

According to another tradition, it is the hounds of Stallos, Orion's belt, who hunt the moose. In some records Faudna is Sarvva's bane. The very end of Sarvva is said to herald or bring about the end of the world.

