

The seite from Sieberbuollda

The seite from Sieberbuollda comes from my ancestors' summer camp site and milking mound. It has stood by the *sjalljo*, by the milking mound for centuries, while generations changed. It has stood as an indestructible symbol in the face of the changes of time and nature, and every summer the huts were erected by the mound next to Sieberbuollda with a view of the seite, which stood on a secure foundation.

It is not so difficult to believe that sacrifices were made here to appease the powers that felt so close here and that could affect existence and living, pure luck, the generosity of nature and the influence of the weather on daily work. But then came the new religion that did not accept the customs and practices that our ancestors lived with. The seite would no longer be the visible mediator of customs that drew strength and confidence from the surrounding nature.

My father Mattias Kuoljok told us about the seite at Sieberbuollda. He himself was too young to remember what happened at the end of the 19th century, but he had heard the story told by his parents. They had camped at the milking mound at Sieberjähkä. At the end of the summer, what was feared happened, the *seite* was taken away. Erik von Rosen came to visit and had two porters with him. Everyone was gathered around the stone one last time. The men and above all the porters thought the seite was heavy. But grandmother, who also wanted to feel how heavy the stone was, could easily lift it, she told father. Those living in the camp had of course protested and tried in every way to prevent the abduction, but it didn't help. Christian people would not have pagan symbols.

Von Rosen took the *seite* with him to his estate Rockelstad. But apparently, the abduction was something that gnawed at the count's conscience and therefore he wanted to return the seite to its usual place. A worthy thought after so many years. During the 1940s, Count von Rosen contacted my father and announced that he

wanted to return the sejte. He felt old and wanted to correct the story of the seite. Father and Ernst Manker then went together on this mission to Rockelstad.

The count's real intention was to put the seite in the same place from which he had once taken it. My father didn't think it was wise, because someone else might take it. He had been forced to leave the summer grazing land where the seite stood, where my father grew up, due to pressure from the authorities. Those who now used these lands probably did not have the same feeling for the historic place. Father told us that it felt difficult to leave the sejte, but at the time there was no other solution than to leave it at the Nordic Museum for the time being. The Count offered dinner and at father's seat there had been placed a silver goblet which father recognized from the description he had heard. He saw his father's engraved residence mark and understood that it was the family's silver goblet, which the count had brought home in a less flattering way. Nowadays, the cup is in the museum's silver collection. The count also showed a sejte, which was placed on a hill in the park under which his tame bear was buried. Von Rosen had taken that sejte from another offering ground. That sejte should also return to his altar. This is what von Rosen has written in his documents, but nothing has happened yet.

When the plans for Ájtte, the Swedish Mountain and Sami Museum began to take shape, the possibilities emerged to, as my father wanted, bring the seite home to the Sami area to the regions from where it came. When it could not be placed in its old place, it was natural that it be placed in the museum. As a member of the board and the Sami committee for Ájtte museum, I have for many years fought for the seite from Sieberbuollda to have its regular place in the museum. We are now happy to have, after a hundred years, returned our ancestral sejte to *Sameätnam*. It should be at Ájtte so that future generations can view it and get to know the story of how it ended up in the museum.

Mon gárddádav

Mij lip nâv ávon go dat máttarádjáj siejdde 1 bohtám ruoptus Sámeednamij. Dat galggá gávnnut dánna Ájten sámij vuorkkásajen vaj bohtte buolva oadtju vuojnnet ja diehtet manen dat siejdde gávnaj árromsajev dán mijá muscaj. Valla ij boade ruoptus ietjas vuoras árromsadjaj, Sieberbuolda báhthjemgiette rabddaj.

Apmut Ivar Kuoljok's speech when the exhibition was launched on February 6, 2003