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THEME
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NORDIC ARCHITECTURE
SÁMI ARCHITECTURE
CHALMERS

ATOSTUGAN

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The History of Atoklimpen

Atoklimpen, known in various Sami languages as Átoklimpoe and Aatoeklibpie, and in Swedish as Atoklinten, is a sacred mountain located thirty kilometers west of Tärnaby in Västerbotten County. With an altitude of 1,006 meters, this mountain has been a spiritual and cultural landmark for the Sami people for centuries. Since 2005, the surrounding area has been part of a 940-hectare cultural reserve, rich in archaeological remains, including hearths, bone deposits, traces of pastures, and ancient reindeer enclosures. Today, the Sami community of Vapsten continues to practice reindeer herding in the region. The relationship between the Sami people and Atoklimpen is deeply spiritual. According to tradition, the name "Ato" means "that one," indicating the mountain's sacredness, so much so that it should not be named directly. Atoklimpen was considered a "divine mountain" (Aejlies vaerie), a site of prayer and sacrifices in the pre-Christian Sami religion, where spirits were venerated as protectors of nature and animals.



The landscape of Atoklimpen reflects in the high mountains and winter three different eras: the Sami spiritual pastures along the coast. Herding world, the nomadic period, and the still follows ancient migration routes, modern reindeer herding society. though modern technology is now utilized. The reindeer (Bovtse) has always been a central element of Sami culture, providing milk, meat, fur, and materials for handicrafts. Today, around ten companies operate in the Vapsten district, herding up to 6,500 reindeer, with summer pastures

The Klementsson Family and the Ato House



In the early 1920s, Tomas and Anna Klementsson built a turf hut near Atoklimpen, in the heart of the Sami summer encampment at Risbäcken. In 1925, they completed a wooden house with a kitchen, pantry, and upper-floor rooms—a groundbreaking act at the time, as Sami people were not allowed to build permanent homes in the mountain regions. This discrimination led the family to fight for their right to keep the house, contributing to a change in the law in 1928, which allowed Sami people to construct permanent dwellings.

Next to the house, a nomadic school was established for Sami children, consisting of three huts used for teaching, dining, and sleeping. The Swedish government saw these schools as a way to keep Sami children connected to their culture and reindeer herding traditions. The school remained open until 1945, when a new facility was built in Tärnaby. The Klementsson family home then became the residence of teacher Anna Good.



Historical and Cultural Significance

The Atoklimpen area is one of the oldest documented Sami settlements, with records dating back to the 18th century. The Ato house and turf hut are now open to visitors, serving as important cultural landmarks that showcase the resilience and transformation of the Sami people over the centuries. Even today, reindeer are gathered here before the autumn slaughter and migration to winter pastures, preserving a millennia-old tradition. The place where the Atostugan cottage is now situated is one of the oldest Sami settlements known to literature. Its documentation goes as far back as the eighteenth century and its real name is Risbäckens sommarviste. The tiny Atostugan cottage was built without a permit by a Sami family named Klementsson in the early 1920s. At that time the

Sami people were prohibited from erecting permanent dwellings in the mountain country. It was thanks largely to the uproar provoked by the Atostugan affair that this exceedingly discriminatory law was changed as early as 1928 and the Sami people were no longer forced to live in tent huts. The cottage subsequently became a teacher's residence for the tent hut school for the Sami children who remained in the district until 1945. Lessons were held in tent huts. The children also lived in tent huts similar to the recently-restored example now to be seen at the site.



28/01 Änggården

On January 28th, we visited the Änggården Nature Reserve, a remarkable area located in the heart of the city of Gothenburg. This place is a perfect example of the city's urban dualism, where nature and urban development coexist in a delicate balance.

Our journey began at the Gothenburg Botanical Garden, which hosts an extraordinary variety of plants and tree species, offering a curated and cataloged example of nature. From there, we gradually ventured into the wilder and more untouched part of the Änggården reserve, following the park's designated trails. At first, the path unfolded on a flat terrain, running alongside a picturesque lake, before leading us towards one of the highest points of the reserve. From this panoramic

viewpoint, we were able to admire not only the vastness of the park but also the city of Gothenburg in the distance. At that moment, we realized how essential contact with nature can be and, in some cases, such as in Sami culture, how inseparable it is from daily life.

The differences in elevation throughout the route, the surrounding silence, and the purity of the natural environment provided valuable insights, bringing us closer to the themes of our case study.



Atostugan

Year of Construction: 1920s

Function: Residence 1925-1928, Teacher's residence for the kâta school 1928-1945, Entrance to Atoklimpen Cultural Reserve 2005-.

External dimensions: 4x6 m and 5 m high.

Interior: Clear division of space. Big room with a fire place to the right of the entry for gatherings. Two bed in the open space on the secondfloor.

Construction: Walls of spruce timber with external board cladding, red-colored. Turf roof.

Atostugan is a historic log cabin in the Vapsten Sámi village, located at Risbäcken's summer settlement near Atoklimpen in Storuman Municipality. Atostugan holds a central place in the historical struggle for the Sámi people's right to establish permanent housing. When the Sámi family Klementsson built the cabin in the early 1920s, it was illegal for Sámi people to have permanent dwellings in the mountain region. The controversy surrounding Atostugan became a key part of the debate on Sámi rights and played a significant role in the legal change of 1928. After the law

was amended, Sámi people were granted the right to build permanent houses, marking a crucial step toward greater self-determination. Between 1928 and 1945, Atostugan served as a teacher's residence for the kâta school operated on-site, where both education and accommodation took place in kâtas. After the closure of the kâta school in 1945, the area continued to be used by the Sámi community, and the cabin was preserved as an important part of Sámi history. Today, Atostugan serves as the entrance to Atoklimpen Cultural Reserve.



Kåtan

Year of Construction: Unknown

Function: Nomadic dwelling until 1928, kåta-school 1928-1945

Area: Estimated external dimensions, a conical geometry with a base radius of approximately 3 meters and a height of about 5 meters.

Interior: The center of the kåta was defined by the arran, the fireplace. Positioned with one short side facing the entrance. From the entrance toward the fireplace, two poles were placed in a slightly inward-tapering formation, creating the kåta's vestibule. Between the rear wall of the kåta and the fireplace was the kitchen area, påssjon. On either side of the central aisle was the main living space.

Construction: A bow-shaped birch pole supported straight birch poles that formed the frame.

These were vered with birch bark, with an outer layer of turf.

The place where Atostugan is situated is one of the oldest known Sámi settlements documented in literature. Records date as far back as the eighteenth century, and its original name is Risbäcken's summer settlement. Around 1920, Tomas and Anna Klementsson built a turf kåta near Atoklimpen, in the heart of the Sámi village's summer settlement at Risbäcken. In 1928, a nomadic school (kåta school) was established at Atostugan, where Sámi children received education during the

summer months. The school consisted of three kåtas, each serving a specific purpose. One kåta was used for teaching, another functioned as a dining hall where meals were prepared and served, and the third kåta was a dormitory where the children stayed during the school period. The school was closed in 1945 when a new nomadic school was established in Tärnaby. Today, a restored kåta stands on the site, providing visitors with insight into this part of history.



Njalla

Year of Construction: Unknown

Function: storage building

Area: 4x4.5 m and 5 m high

Interior: The interior of the building is open and undivided, creating a fluid and spacious environment. There are no internal partitions, and the structure is entirely developed on a single level, without any upper floors.

Construction: Rough timber

These were vered with birch bark, with an outer layer of turf.

The Njalla is a structure traditionally used as a storage building by the Sami people, intended for keeping supplies and other essential items for daily life. Typically, this structure is built on a pole, elevated from the ground to prevent animals from accessing and stealing provisions. Unlike traditional constructions, in the case study analyzed, the building is not suspended on poles. Instead, it is slightly elevated by precisely stacked stone blocks, on which the entire structure rests.

In the Atostugan, the Njalla measures 4 x 4.5 meters. Following tradition, it features a pitched roof covered with wooden elements and is entirely made of wood. The material used is rough and untreated, with the natural imperfections of the wood clearly visible on the façade as well as in the structural elements, including the logs supporting the roof.





The redness of evening

Birch topd aways against the sky

The reflection of lights in the river

Everything remains unsaid

Still.

Nils-Aslak Valkeapää

