

Bures boahtin guossi!

(Welcome, foreigner!)

This short setting introduction depicts background information and rules for a role-playing game set in the Northern Scandinavian regions inhabited by the Sámi. We collected information about the Sámi culture and traditional everyday life and designed a system of rules to bring this unique culture to a low fantasy role-playing game. The setting we created is based on the real tribes of the Sámi located in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Although the setting is based on the actual Sámi culture, it is still a fantasy role-playing game. We deeply respect the Sámi culture and wanted to stay as historically accurate as possible in our descriptions. At the same time, we took the liberty of merging different historical facts and mythical elements to create the most playable culture and to make an epic storyline possible.

The Sámi are an indigenous people inhabiting Sápmi, an area spanning different countries of Northern Europe. For a long time they led a nomadic life, living from fishing and trapping and following the reindeer herds. They worked mainly with stone tools, while other cultures around them already used and processed metal. They commonly traded animal hides and furs in exchange for salt, metal blades and even coins, which they used mainly as ornaments. They were also incredibly adaptable to the rough arctic weather. The most northern parts of Europe are a very harsh and unforgiving environment. Long periods of darkness and low temperatures throughout the year make life there difficult and demanding. The Sámi survived there even in medieval times, defying the dangers of freezing, starvation or wild animals. Traveling is difficult and exhausting. Resources are valuable, so Sámi tribes don't wage wars against each other or against foreigners. On the contrary, the Sámi live a peaceful life and strangers are not regarded as invaders, but are welcomed as guests in the village, called Siida. The greeting provided in the beginning uses the word "guossi", which means both "foreigner" and "guest" at the same time.

The Sámi philosophy is one of peace and respect for nature and people, therefore never attack anyone without reason. There isn't even a lot of evidence suggesting that they fought for self protection, instead modern opinion holds that they simply merged with neighbours when forced back north by the Vikings.

When faced with problems or mistakes the Sámi are willing to admit their own faults. So it is no wonder that many Sámi tribes trade with outsiders and generally have a good relationship with them, but it might also be the reason Sámi culture lost a lot of traditions over the past few hundred years, when everyone else was dictating their way of life.

The respect is not only for other Sámi or other people. It also includes everything in nature, including stones and plants as well as animals. Everything has a soul, meaning everything deserves respect, not only people. This philosophy also means a willingness to accept outsiders, although one could imagine that even the Sámi can show a reluctance in accepting outsiders when they are not respectful to nature and everything in it. Within their small Siidas, a group of a few families living and working together, most Sámi help each other out. They are dependent on the others in the siida, however, never in a degree that would leave them lost without the other families of the group. This allows for a peaceful co-dependent living. The leader of a siida, most of the times the oldest man or woman, controls daily life and makes the decisions for the group. Men and women are equal and tasks are assigned on abilities and skills, so female hunters and herders are not unheard of. Everyone has to do their share to survive in this harsh environment. The Sámi live a modest life and every hand is needed for survival, so the most common occupations are craftsmen, hunters, or shepherds. Magic is regarded as a rare gift given to only a few chosen people, the Noaidi. To emphasise this and the dangers the people could encounter, we decided on a low fantasy setting.

The Noaidi Culture

Healing, repelling evil, and divination are the main tasks of the Noaidi, who are similar to shamans. They are also often asked advice concerning children, marriage or hunting fortune and are highly respected members of a Siida. A Noaidi's training begins at a very young age. Dramatic seizures or special circumstances in the birth of a child can be understood as signs that a child should become a Noaidi. Otherwise good health is very important for a Noaidi and especially loss of teeth is believed to weaken their power. Also old age weakens the Noaidi's power.

The Noaidi have some important tools for their work. The most important is the drum, made of wood and reindeer leather. It is usually decorated with signs of the Siidas, gods, spirits, important animals and often also the Tree of Life. Other important equipment are a hat with region specific decorations, ritual hammers made of reindeer bone, a decorated belt and a leather pouch where the drum could be kept.

Noaidi can use herbs and drumming to release their own spirit to roam free and to negotiate with the nature spirits. As protection and guidance each Noaidi has different, usually animal shaped helper spirits, sometimes spirits can also be shaped like humans. It is believed that everyone has some helper spirits, but only the Noaidi is able to communicate with them. Some of the Noaidi are believed to be able to travel in the shape of these helper spirit in the real world as well, travelling far and sometimes even recovering stolen items. In death the Noaidi join the helper spirits.

As healers the Noaidi treat ordinary maladies with herbal medicine and chanting songs or joik but a serious sickness is the result of a person's soul being stolen by the spirits or the dead. In such a case the Noaidi can go for a spirit walk to recover the trapped soul or find out what sacrifices are needed to amend the situation.

In predicting the future the Noaidi drop a specific small item often made out of bone on the drum and read the answer from the drum's markings where the item stopped. This method is also used when asking something from the gods or spirits. The Noaidi are considered to be the community's only protector against otherworldly threats. Keeping good relations with the spirits is an important duty of the Noaidi and usually this is done by giving the right sacrifices and behaving with respect towards nature.

One of the key parts of Sámi spirituality is the existence of multiple worlds which are connected to each other and whose borders can only get crossed by certain individuals.

The worlds are commonly split into four:

The **netherworld** Saivo is mostly inhabited by the deceased and ruled over by the goddess Jabmaekka. It is further split into three sections, Jabaimo, the biggest part, is where the ordinary deceased humans get to stay. It is said that they have the same lifestyle there as they did in the middle world, which is why the living humans give animal sacrifices to feed its inhabitants. Dead Noaidi get to stay in a separate part of the underworld called Savoaimo, which is a place of much spiritual importance. Rutaimo, the smallest part, is the home of the evil god Ruto.

The **middle world**, the human world, keeps all humans and earthly spirits. Regular humans are unable to leave this world before their death because their soul is bound to their body. Noaidis on the other hand are able to leave their physical bounds and enter the netherworld with their spirit, often in the shape of an animal. To leave their body behind, they use drumming and joiking to fall into a trance. In the netherworld they would negotiate with ancestors and spirits to help their tribe.

Parallel to the middle world lies the **shadow world**. It is similar to the middle world, but completely grey. In and around the plentiful, foggy forests it is inhabited by shadow people. Humans who eat any of their dishes can never again return to the middle world.

The **upper world** is inhabited by the gods, most importantly Veralden-radien, the god of fertility and ruler over all the worlds.

All four worlds are considered to be of equal importance and a lot of effort is put into keeping them in balance, such as sacrifices and chants. The people inhabiting the netherworld are still considered parts of their families, and are just as important as the people still living in the middle world.

The Rules

When we created our settings, we wanted mobile and dynamic gaming sessions. Maybe your adventures lead you to a beach or a small forest but wouldn't it be nice if you actually could go there, enjoy the scenery and still be playing? If you traveled to play in Sweden, you do not want to be bound to a table, but be able to roam around old forests while playing your session. Or maybe it is a lovely day outside, so sit down with your players in the park. To achieve this, we developed a role playing system with simple rules and tools that allow you to play either at a table or during a walk outside.

All players hold a little bag in their hands, called the Pouch of Fate. But you could also just use a big pocket of your trousers. In this pouch, there are 21 little stones called Runestones. Three different symbols or colours mark the stones and there are 7 Runestones of each kind in the pouch. The symbols represent a value, that is a degree of success. We typically use little glass stones in the colours white, blue and green.

White: +0, Green: +1, Blue +2

For an attribute check, the player must draw 5 Runestones from the Pouch of Fate at a time. The values of the drawn stones are then added together with the value of the attribute that was asked for. The higher the resulting number, the better the task has been carried out, or the more fortunate the player's luck has been in performing this specific task. At the end of each check, all drawn stones must be put back into the bag.

Typical difficulties are:

Easy: 6-7, Normal: 8-9, Hard: 10-11, Very Hard: 12-13, Epic: 14+

In the unlikely event that a player draws 5 Runestones of the same kind something special happens. It might be something horrifyingly awful or something really great, depending on the value.

Attributes

Your hero has 4 physical attributes (**Strength, Endurance, Nimbleness, and Agility**) and 4 mental attributes (**Intellect, Mind power, Presence, and Awareness**). Choose the levels (1 - 5) for each attribute of your hero. You have 45 points to use. Every attribute raise a player makes during the hero creation costs as much as the attribute value it is used for. Also, a point can only be spent if the preceding values have been "bought" already. A value of 5 in an attribute, for instance, has a total cost of 15 hero points ($1+2+3+4+5 = 15$), a value of 3 only costs 6 points ($1+2+3 = 6$). Every attribute needs to have at least 1 point put in.

Health: A hero's amount of Health (H) is a combined value of the chosen physical attributes. Strength, Endurance, Nimbleness and Agility all together add up to a person's fitness and physical state.

Soul Essence: The Sámi believe that each and every thing has a soul. A representation of the state of the soul is a hero's Soul Essence (SE). Parallel to the Health, the amount of Soul Essence is the sum of all mental attributes (Mind power, Intellect, Presence and Awareness).

Regeneration: The heroes regenerate Health and Soul Essence naturally. Health regenerates with a rate of 1 Health per day, given that the hero may rest properly. Thus, a hero traveling far with the party cannot recover any Health. Soul Essence is much harder to get back; it only regenerates at a rate of 1 Soul Essence per week. Again, the hero must not be mentally distressed during this time. Any mental exhaustion lengthens the time of recovery accordingly.

Physical Defense Value: The defense in combat is determined by the sum of 5 and the Agility or the Awareness attribute value, whichever one is lower.

Mental Defense Value: The defense against mental attacks is the sum of 5 and the lower attribute value of Endurance or Intellect.

Combat

All the players state their plans to act or react to what is happening before all the actions are carried out as if they were happening simultaneously.

Again, in order to attack someone, the players must draw five Runestones from their Pouch of Fate. The drawn stones' values are added to the player's Strength or Nimbleness attribute score, depending on the type of weapon that is used (Strength for hand-to-hand weapons, Nimbleness for ranged weapons). The combined result is then compared to the opponent's Physical Defense Value. If the total check result is equal to or higher than the Defense Value, the attack will hit.

The white (+0) stones from the attack draw each represents an additional point of damage that is dealt to the opponent, together with the damage value of the weapon. The combined damage from the attack is reduced by the opponent's armor value and gets subtracted from the opponent's Health.

Typical weapons and their respective damage: **Dagger: +1, Spear: +2, Sling: +1, Bow: +2.**

A successful attack with a **Lasso** doesn't deal damage, but disarms you opponent.

Typical armour and defense values: **Fur Armor: +1, Leather Armor: +2**

Mental Combat

Beings without physical form attack and can be attacked with mental attacks. It works the same way as physical combat, with Mind power as the attack attribute, which is added to the +1 and +2 stones and Presence as the damage attribute, which is added to the +0 stones.

Simple Talisman: +1 Defense, Silver Talisman: +2 Defense

Requests

On rare occasions, the most skillful Noaidi can even address the very souls of things themselves. In doing so, a Noaidi can make a request, asking a soul of a thing or a creature to act according to the hero's wish. This requires great skill training and will always consume Soul Essence from the Noaidi's soul. Communication between souls is different from verbal communication. Once a connection has been established, the Noaidi may send or receive an emotion, an image, a feeling or an idea to or from the other soul. One cannot simply talk to another soul, so direct speech will not have any effect. Usually the souls will not or only reluctantly agree to the communication with the Noaidi, unless the urge and importance of the request are made clear. They normally do not interfere with mere human businesses

In order to perform a request, Noaidis start by concentrating and focusing their mind, exerting their own will, their very emotions and soul beyond the borders of the body. They feel the presence of the souls that are nearby. The further away a soul is, the weaker the connection. A weak connection between souls can only transmit vague images and has a chance of sending false meaning. Indeed, some Noaidi say that touching a soul's body enhances the communication quality.

Inscription:

This short version of a setting inspired by the wonderful mythology of the Sámi is dedicated to the 100 year anniversary of the foundation of the Sami Parliament, which is celebrated on the 6th of February. It is the result of the combined effort of many members of the Dragon Legion and gives an outlook on the full setting and rule book, which is still work in progress.

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