

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS ADMINISTRATION

The Rovaniemi area paid taxes to both Sweden and Novgorod at the beginning of the 14th century, and although the Treaty of Pähkinäsaari (Orekhov) in 1323 established the head of the Gulf of Bothnia specifically as part of the territory of Novgorod. Sweden continued to expand its power in the area, supported by the Roman-Catholic church, and had incorporated the Kemi-joki Valley as far up as Rovaniemi into its province of Korpholm by the 1370's.

Sweden organised a system of local administration at the beginning of the 15th century in order to collect taxes, safeguard people's rights and practise other forms of supervision. Rovaniemi became part of the parish of Kemi and did not have any permanent government representative of its own in the 16th and 17th century. Court sessions were held twice a year in a building close to the church in Kemi. Jurors were also needed from Rovaniemi, however, to attend the court sessions and to conduct business in the intervening times.

Rovaniemi was an important centre for trade between the Birkarlar and the Lapps in the 16th century, and although King Carl IX had decreed in 1611 that the Kemi Lapps also had to do their business in Tornio, King Gustaf II Adolph restored their rights to trade in Rovaniemi in connection with his granting of a charter to the town of Tornio ten years later. Taxation was still fairly light in the 15th century, but it increased considerably on account of the wars in the late 16th cen-

tury and was particularly harsh in the early 17th century.

Church administration

Although the settlers from south-western Finland who colonized the Rovaniemi area had already adopted the Roman-Catholic faith, the original inhabitants had kept to their old popular beliefs, involving their own gods, fairies, spirits, ghosts and the worship of the dead. This old religion persisted side by side with Christianity for a long time, as suggested by Jacob Fellman, who reported that he saw an idol erected close to the salmon dam at Muurola as late as 1803 and that food and to-

bacco had been sacrificed to it.

Rovaniemi was part of the vast parish of Kemi from the very beginning. Tradition has it that there had been small local churches on the island of Linnasaari in Muurola and close to the Oinas farm at Paaniemi in the Catholic era, though no remains have been found to verify this. Even as late as the 16th century, the inhabitants of Rovaniemi still had to make compulsory journeys to Kemi to attend church several times a year.

Rovaniemi was declared a chapel parish under the jurisdiction of the vicar of Kemi at the beginning of the 17th century, and the first actual church, in

Taxes had to be paid in kind, often in furs, which were obtained by organizing hunting expeditions in winter. This drawing by Claudius Alanus from 1674 is somewhat mistaken regarding the bow, however, as this was in reality long and fairly straight.





Until 1785 Rovaniemi belonged to the parish of Kemi, the church of which was far away at the mouth of the river. The people of Rovaniemi nevertheless took part in the building of the church in 1519–21, even though they gained a priest of their own only in the late 1630's.

which the vicar or his curate conducted services a few times a year, was built in 1605–1611. This was destroyed by the Karelians from the White Sea area in 1611, but a new church had been built by 1622, and was replaced by another in 1688.

Rovaniemi must have had its own parish clerk by 1630 at the latest, though the curate Christer Erici did not move to Rovaniemi permanently until the end of the decade. Rovaniemi became a parish in its own right in 1785.

Going to court

Almost a half of all cases on the court records for the years 1630–1705 involved either the collection of debts or the confirmation of farm ownership and management rights, one fourth disputes over fishing rights, access to meadows and the ownership of livestock, one in ten taxes or military service, whilst actual crimes such as indecent behaviour, violence and theft made up only another tenth. A local woman was once accused of witchcraft, but her skills in

the matter were so meagre that no proper evidence could be found against her.

A major threat to personal safety at that time was fire, to the extent that a joint liability system was established in the 1650's, when the court decreed that all the inhabitants of the parish should contribute to the assistance paid to people who had suffered serious losses on account of fires.

Drawing the boundaries

The old border with Tervola

Murola was regarded as old as part of the upper quarter of the parish of Kemi, which in time became the chapel parish of Rovaniemi. Vammavaara presumably marked the southern boundary of the village of Murola even in medieval times, separating it from Koivukylä.

From a diocesan boundary to a provincial one

Although the area between the rivers Oulujoki and Kemijoki belonged to Novgorod rather than Sweden in the early 14th century, the bishops of Uppsala and Turku must have agreed by that time on the allocation of the Tornionjoki salmon tithes to Uppsala and the Kemijoki tithes to Turku. The resulting diocesan and later provincial boundary which set out from the River Kaakamajoki may already have extended as far as Rovaniemi by the end of the 15th century, though its exact location remained a matter of contention for another 300 years. The border was finally confirmed in 1786.

Looking for the boundary with Lapland

The northern boundary was a provincial one, with the parish of Kemi belonging to Ostrobothnia and Kemi Lapland to Län-sipohja. A more important issue, however, was that the border at the same time defined the territorial rights of the Lapps and the Finnish settlers. It was for this reason that it aroused serious disagreements in the 17th and 18th centuries in particular, when its location could well vary within a range of 20–30 kilometres depending on the 'authority' responsible for determining it.

The border between Lapland and the area occupied by the Finns was finally established with the help of the governor. It set out from Porkkavaara in the west and ran to Pyhäntunturi in the east.

The border with Kemijärvi

The village of Kemijärvi was established in the parish of Kemi in the early 17th century by pioneer farmers who began to form permanent settlements in this area that had traditionally been regarded as part of Lapland. At that point the boundary between the villages of Kemihaara and Kemijärvi was drawn at Pirttikoski. When Kemijärvi became a parish in its own right in 1778, its northern boundary with the parish from which it had been divided was set at Poovaara and its southern boundary at Puntarikero, which had been regarded as the border between the old parish of Kemi and Kemi Lapland at a very early stage.

The boundary in the south

The southern border of Rovaniemi originally corresponded to that between the large parishes of Kemi and Ii. On maps from the beginning of the 17th century it runs from Kultamalmi in Simojärvi directly to the Gulf of Bothnia coast at a point between the rivers Simojoki and Kuivajoki. It was then re-defined in 1630 to run from Losossaari in Kitka south of the Lake Simojärvi river system to the Gulf of Bothnia, but when the parish of Pudasjärvi was established in 1639, its northern boundary extended to Puntarikero, now Palotunturi, and Kultisalmi and passed north of Lake Portimöjärvi to Vammavaara.

The Lake Simojärvi area, which was formerly part of the village of Kemihaara in Rovaniemi, was annexed to the parish of Ranua when this was established in 1899.

