

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

How wonderful that you are interested in Sámi crafts! We get a lot of questions related to Sámi handicrafts, so we have compiled this frequently asked questions page. If you can't find an answer to your question here, contact us by e-mail [sami.duodji@co.inet.fi](mailto:sami.duodji@co.inet.fi). Please note that we receive a lot of questions and therefore it may take some time to respond. Thank you for your interest!

### **1. Can anyone use products purchased from the Duodji Shop?**

Many people seem to be wondering what products non-Sámi people are allowed to buy and use, and whether using certain items makes you guilty of cultural appropriation. It's great that you care about cultural sensitivity!

We have pondered responsibility issues a lot, and found solutions both in the association's operations and in the Duodji Shop. Most of the products purchased from the Duodji Shop can be freely used like any other items, proudly and in good conscience. In the Duodji Shop, we have separately labelled the items that have traditionally been used only in the Sámi community, i.e. identity items. They can be freely purchased, but their use is associated with certain cultural expectations.

Identity items are hand-crafted items that carry special meanings specifically in their internal use in Sámi culture. Using these items tells those who know their meaning, that the person wearing them is Sámi. They therefore act as indicators of ethnicity. They usually signal a person's connection to a certain part of the Sámi region and/or to a language or cultural group, and they are used in accordance with certain principles of internal laws and regulations.

At Duodji Shop, we sell many products other than identity items. From the point of view of Sámi laws and customs, these items are suitable for casual use by everyone, i.e. the Sámi consider their daily use suitable for other than members of their own cultural group. We share parts of Sámi culture with pleasure and satisfaction, and we hope that Sámi handicrafts bring joy to their users. We hope that you will use the products you buy from Duodji Shop with pride. By doing that, you are also supporting Sámi handicraft workers and entrepreneurs!

The Sámi Duodji association has long been involved in the Sámi Duodji trademark system. In the Duodji Shop, you can find products from many artisans, which are marked with the special and long-used Sámi Duodji certification mark. This sign guarantees the buyer that the product is handmade by a Sámi craftsperson or craftspeople. The label also means that the item is made of traditional materials and is inspired by traditional Sámi craftsmanship, traditional design or traditional cultural use. The criteria for the Sámi Duodji certification mark can be found at [www.samimade.com](http://www.samimade.com). This trademark system has been reformed in recent years, and will soon become more visible to consumers.

When you buy hand-crafted items from Duodji Shop, you can be sure that the products are made and produced by Sámi people. By buying Duodji Shop's products, you are supporting Sámi handicraft workers, the female-dominated handicraft industry and Sámi culture as a whole. The Duodji Shop also offers much more than handicrafts, including books and music. Take a closer look at our online store <https://duodjishop.fi/> or visit our shop in Sajos, Inari.

## **2. What is cultural appropriation and why is it being discussed?**

Cultural appropriation is mostly about the non-Sámi using key parts of Sámi culture without permission for commercial or other purposes, without understanding their significance for the Sámi minority.

Over the years, Sámi culture has been exploited to promote Lapland's tourism industry and even Finland, in ways that have caused negative effects on Sámi culture. These include perpetuating old-fashioned and stigmatising stereotypes, and copying Sámi handicrafts or their style. It is taxing for any Sámi to have to correct prejudices, and besides, there have been instances of outright racism. On top of this, cultural appropriation has had a negative impact on the Sámi handicraft industry and the opportunities for Sámi handicraft workers to succeed in the industry.

Due to these negative effects, the Sámi people have brought the issue into public discussion. At the same time, social movements based on individual themes have sparked a wider public debate and scrutiny of structures. Companies have started to re-examine their products also from the perspective of minorities. To our delight, we have noticed that both consumers and businesses are increasingly interested in operating responsibly. For our part, we are now trying to better respond to questions of responsibility and sensitivity by clarifying the division of products in the Duodji Shop, so that consumers can safely and proudly use products made by Sámi people.

## **3. Are you interested in producing Sámi handicrafts commercially, or in being inspired by Sámi heritage, or would you like to suggest an artistic collaboration?**

The purpose of the Sámi Duodji Association and the Duodji Shop is to support Sámi craftspeople and develop these traditions, as over time it will have a positive effect on all Sámi people and the vibrancy of their culture. As a member of the Sámi community, a Sámi craftsperson should have the right and opportunity to profit from their own heritage within the internal cultural and judicial principles of the Sámi culture. We also encourage Sámi creators to take part in commercial and artistic collaborations. Sámi craftspeople know the ethics of the Sámi community and are able to consider regional and heritage ownership, culturally bound social norms, as well as the boundaries between private and commercial use.

It's difficult to give any general rules to non-Sámi people regarding what is an appropriate level of cultural inspiration for commercial purposes. However, Sámi political activists have simplified their message and taken the stand that the Sámi people have ownership on their cultural heritage. For instance, the Norwegian Sámi Parliament has made an official statement in 2021 that both individually and collectively, Sámi culture such as aesthetic elements, music, language, storytelling, history, and other traditional expressions of culture, are property of the Sámi people.

From this point of view, any commercial use of Sámi property and culture requires permission from the owners, just like any other immaterial or intellectual property owned by another party. It's important to note that copyright or ownership can exist on multiple levels, for instance it can be regional or traditional or universally Sámi owned. The discussion about future permits and procedures regarding the commercial use of collective Sámi property is ongoing.

#### **4. Can I buy Sámi handicraft patterns or guides, and are there courses I could take?**

Unfortunately, we do not sell patterns of regional Sámi costumes, nor models or instructions for any other Sámi crafts. Some of the books we stock may of course contain some instructions or patterns, but we do ask you to take into account Sámi justice, regional and traditional ownership, questions of appropriateness, and the limits between personal and commercial use. (See questions one to three).

We usually carry do-it-yourself kits from Stoorstálka, which include materials, tools and instructions in one kit. This kind of kit will enable you to weave bands. The DIY kits take the responsibility guesswork out of the process.

We also offer handicraft courses to our members. If you fulfil the membership criteria, you can apply and thus enter these courses.

#### **5. Do you distribute or purchase old or second hand Sámi dress?**

We do not distribute second hand Sámi clothing commercially, and we do not buy them for resale in the Duodji Shop. However, we will accept your old costume for postage and either keep it as a donation to our historical collection, or recycle it properly in a way that respects the Sámi culture. Unfortunately, however, we cannot pay for your old Sámi dress.

There is a Facebook group managed by individuals called "Osta-Myy-Lainaa-Vuokraa-Tilaa Saamenpuku", where you can offer a usable costume to others. Please note that the group sells and exchanges modern Sámi dress, i.e. suits intended for contemporary wear. As in other matters, the Sámi people's needs, values and standards of beauty evolve over time.

If the costume you find is already quite old, it probably has more historical or sentimental value. Often, old costumes can be something other than the Sámi costumes worn by the Sámi themselves. For example, in the Rovaniemi area and in the Lapland region more widely, the so-called overcoat has been used, which in some areas was the work uniform of Finnish reindeer herders. In Lapland, there was a tradition for a long time, where those attending the last grade of high school dressed in suits resembling Sámi costumes for their end-of-school party, "penkkarit". Originally, penkkarit was a rather formal event, but over time the tradition changed its character to a more carnival-like celebration. Sámi costumes have also been copied for souvenirs and fancy dress parties. Such costumes can still be found, so it is possible that from a Sámi culture point of view, the costume is not authentic.

We can estimate the value of your costume, for a fee of 40 euros. Just send us a lot of photos of the costume, as much detail on it as possible, and your billing address, to [sami.duodji@co.inet.fi](mailto:sami.duodji@co.inet.fi)

#### **6. Offering products to the Duodji Shop**

As a rule, Duodji Shop only sells products from Sámi producers, but we may consider carrying other items with Sámi content if they fit our selection. See more at <https://duodjishop.fi/>. You can offer us your products by contacting us: [shop\[at\]samiduodji.com](mailto:shop[at]samiduodji.com).

## **7. Researching the Sámi and Sámi handicrafts**

It is important that Sámi topics gain interest from the research community. That way research can also benefit the Sámi community and culture.

The association receives a lot of cooperation requests and proposals in which the Sámi people and Sámi handicrafts are research topics. Unfortunately, don't usually have the ability to participate in research projects and be a partner or part of the steering group of research projects. Also, for data protection reasons, we cannot share our members' contact information, and as a general rule, we do not forward research project requests to our membership.

If the research concerns the cultural heritage of the Sámi people, we ask that you take into account the procedural guidelines prepared by the Sámi Parliament in research projects concerning the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of the Sámi people. The instructions can be found on the Sámi Parliament's website.

## **8. Using Sámi languages and the Sámi people's reputation in commercial contexts**

For other questions, please contact the official representative of the Sami people, i.e. the Sámi Parliament ([www.samediggi.fi](http://www.samediggi.fi)). You can also contact the Sámi Council for questions related to the management of Sámi cultural resources ([www.saamicouncil.net](http://www.saamicouncil.net)).