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Sámi Religion
Religious Identities, Practices and Dynamics

Edited by

Trude A. Fonneland and Tiina Äikä

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Editors

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About the Editors

Trude A. Fonneland is Ph.D. and Professor in cultural sciences at the Arctic University Museum of Norway, UiT—the Arctic University of Norway. Her research interests revolve around contemporary religiosity, particularly Sámi shamanism, tourism, and popular culture. Her research on Sámi shamanism draws on ethnographic case studies that explore the dynamics of shamanic entrepreneurships in Norway, the impulses that are at play, and how they intersect and transform. This research has resulted in a co-edited book *Nordic Neoshamanisms* (Fonneland, Kraft and Lewis, 2015 Palgrave Macmillan) as well as a monograph *Contemporary Shamanisms in Norway: Religion, Entrepreneurship, and Politics* (Fonneland, 2017 Oxford University Press).

Tiina Äikäs (Dr) is a researcher in Archaeology at the University of Oulu in Finland and holds the title of Docent in Archaeology at the University of Helsinki. Her thesis (2011) dealt with the ritual landscapes of Saami sacred places, and her post-doctoral research has concentrated on the site biographies and contemporary use of Saami offering places (sieiddit). Her research interests include the archaeology of religion, heritage studies, and industrial heritage. Her most recent book co-edited with Anna-Kaisa Salmi is titled ''The Sound of Silence: Indigenous Perspectives on the Historical Archaeology of Colonialism" (2019, Berghahn Books).

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Editorial

Introduction: The Making of Sámi Religion in Contemporary Society

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Abstract: This Special Issue of Religions approaches "Sámi religion" from a long-term perspective seeing both the past religious practices and contemporary religious expressions as aspects of the same phenomena. This does not refer, however, to a focus on continuity or to a static or uniform understanding of Sámi religion. Sámi religion is an ambiguous concept that has to be understood as a pluralistic phenomenon consisting of multiple applications and associations and widely differing interpretations, and that highlights the complexities of processes of religion-making. In a historical perspective and in many contemporary contexts (such as museum displays, media stories, as well as educational programs) the term Sámi religion is mostly used as a reference to Sámi pre-Christian religious practices, to Laestadianism, a Lutheran revival movement that spread among the Sámi during the 19th Century, and last but not least to shamanism. In this issue, we particularly aim to look into contemporary contexts where Sámi religion is expressed, consumed, and promoted. We ask what role it plays in identity politics and heritagization processes, and how different actors connect with distant local religious pasts—in other words, in which contexts is Sámi religion activated, by whom, and for what?

1. Sámi Religion-Making

What is often termed the Sámi religion or the pre-Christian Sámi religion refers to a set of beliefs and practices performed and communicated by people in an area contemporarily known as Sápmi, and described by missionaries, ethnographers, travellers, and various stakeholders over a long time span. As Pollan (2005, p. 416) argues, "What today is known as "Sámi religion", has for the Sámi themselves simply been their way of life"[1]. More than about a Sámi way of life, what scholars, missionaries, travellers, and stakeholders have been writing about is their own view of human history, and at the same time they have taken part in a social, economic, and political oppression. There are in other words no universals of Sámi religion. It is in creative encounters and in a process of translation that Sámi religion emerges as a category. The circulations of religious themes, which are clearly expressed in these processes, bring our attention to the flows of religion and religious change and renewal.

2. Historical Background

To be able to understand "Sámi religion" in contemporary society, some knowledge on the historical background is relevant. Sámi are the indigenous people whose homeland, today called

[1] "Det som i dag kalles "samisk religion" har for samer selv ganske enkelt vært deres måte å leve på" (Pollan 2005, p. 416, our translation).

Sápmi, stretches from Northern Norway to Northern Sweden, Northern Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. There are 75,000-100,000 Sámi depending on the method of counting, many of them living outside their homeland. Sámi culture is not or has not been uniform in this wide area as is demonstrated, for example, by the use of ten Sámi languages. The traditional livelihoods include hunting, fishing, gathering, reindeer herding, and crafts which are all also practiced today. There have also been differences in the religious practices in this wide area, but also some shared ideas.

The beginning of Sámi religion is hard to trace. Some researchers have seen a connection in the prehistoric rock art of Fennoscandia and the symbols in historical Sámi drums (e.g., Núñez 1995; Lahelma 2008; Joy 2018), a perspective which is also presented in contemporary museum exhibitions (Äikäs 2019). The long temporal and in some cases geographical distance makes the connection uncertain. The dating of the material traces incontrovertibly connected to Sámi religion, do nevertheless move back in time through new research, hence revealing longer roots of ritual practices than have been previously known. The Sámi offering places, *sieidi* (North Sámi, *sieiddit* in plural) have revealed bone material originating from the 6th century AD (Salmi et al. 2015, 2018). So-called hunting ground graves (Sw. *fångstmarksgravar*) and scree graves (Nw. *urgraver*) have been interpreted as even earlier signs of Sámi religion. Hunting ground graves have been in use in the South Sámi area from 200 BC to AD 1200/1300s and scree graves in Northern Norway between 300 BC and AD 1700, but their connection to the Sámi in the early stage of their use is uncertain (Schanche 2000; Fossum 2006; Piha n.d.).

Already in the Catholic times, Sámi had been in contact with the Christian Church. During the medieval period there were attempts to Christianize the Sámi, mainly through the efforts of the Orthodox Church in Russia (Hansen and Olsen 2014). Furthermore, in the Protestant time there were remains of Catholic beliefs, e.g., Johannes Schefferus describes how many Sámi refrained from eating meat on Fridays (Scheffer 1673). The process of Christianization can best be described as a protracted process, and not as a streamlined operation starting in the south and ending in the north. The Sámi people's conversion was in other words multifaceted and occurred at different times in the various communities throughout Sápmi (see Rasmussen 2016, pp. 77–95).

3. Effects of Colonialism

Nation-state colonization has been a destructive presence throughout Sámi history. From the 14th century onward, the contacts between the Sámi and the Swedish- and Finnish-speaking agrarian populations increased as the agrarian population slowly colonized northern areas. From the 17th century onwards the Sámi experienced an increasing pressure of colonial contacts when the Nordic states started to take control of the land in the north by supporting settlement and trade and introducing their own administrative systems. Later, in 1852, the establishment of present state borders led to problems in the traditional livelihoods when yearly migrations in relation to reindeer herding were prevented. In the 19th century, Nordic states launched assimilation policies where, for example, Sámi children were not allowed to speak Sámi languages in schools (Wallerström 2000; Lantto 2010; Hansen and Olsen 2014; Lehtola 2014; Nyyssönen 2014; Äikäs and Salmi 2015).

The 17th century saw the expansion of the Lutheran mission which intensified the building of churches and work of missionaries in Sápmi. Among the Sámi there were those who actively or passively opposed the new religion, but also those who themselves practised missionary work (Rydving 1993). The arrival of Christianity did not nevertheless mean the end of the old Sámi religion but old practices lived side by side with the new ones. For example, the *sieidi* stones still received offerings as well as did some churches (Kylli 2005, 2012; Äikäs 2015), and the use of *sieidi* stones continues even in contemporary times (Äikäs and Spangen 2016; Spangen and Äikäs in this volume). The conversation process has, nevertheless, been seen as a colonizing one. It included the destroying of Sámi sacred places and of ritual drums, and Sámi religion as a comprehensive religious system was disrupted, hence leaving a need for later reconciliation processes by the church (West in this volume).

Even today this conflict is evident, for example in the opposition raised by using traditional Sámi *yoik* singing in churches (https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10849229).

The interplay between Christianity and Sámi religion leads to a challenge with the term "pre-Christian". Sámi religion did not only precede Christianity but was practiced simultaneously with it. Hence other terms such as traditional, indigenous, or ethnic religion have also been used (e.g., Spangen 2013; Äikäs 2015; Lund 2015; cf. Kaikkonen in this volume). On the other hand, Sámi religion can also refer to Orthodoxy practices especially by the Skolt Sámi (Vuola 2019) or to Lutheranism and the Laestadian movement. Lars Levi Laestadius (1800–1861) started working in the parish of Karesuvanto in 1826. His work is another example of the intertwining of old religion and the new one. He formulated and adapted his own interpretations of Christianity to the Sámi environment. In his sermons, he for instance included Sámi mythology by making references to *Stállu* (a figure who appears in various roles in Sámi folklore) and to the mother goddess (áhkká—Virgin Mary) (Hallencreutz 1987).

4. From Noaidi to Shaman

In recent years, attitudes towards "Sámi religion" have changed both within religious, cultural, political, and educational contexts. Contemporarily, the term shaman has become an umbrella term for the Sámi *noaidi* (a north Sámi term for the Sámi indigenous religious specialist), as is the case with religious specialists among people referred to as "indigenous", more or less regardless of the content of their expertise and practices. However, the *noaidi* has not always been perceived as a shaman. As David Chidester points out, the shaman is a religious specialist that initially was identified in Siberia, colonized by Russia, and later transferred to a global arena (Chidester 2018). The "shaman" in other words is an example of the complexities often involved in translation processes over time and across space (see Johnson and Kraft 2017). The term is widely regarded as having entered Russian from the Tungus *samán,* transferring to German as *schamane*, and then into other European languages in the seventeenth century. It was added to academic vocabularies by anthropologists and historians of religions and further related to indigenous people elsewhere (see Wilson 2014, p. 117)[2]. In the 1960s, the term spread to the pagan milieu where the shaman is not only recognised as an indigenous religious specialist, but as a potential enshrined in all humans. When it comes to these types of translation processes that the term shaman has been subjected to, it is important to have in mind what James Clifford highlights in terms of the concept of translation: "Translation is not transmission [. . .] Cultural translation is always uneven, always betrayed. But this very interference and lack of smoothness is a source of new meanings, of historical traction" (Clifford 2013, pp. 48–49).

In the 1960s shamanism emerged as a global category and phenomenon with shamans in many parts of the world sharing common practices, rituals, and a nature-oriented worldview and lifestyle. The highlighting of shamanism as a universal phenomenon is inspired by the English translation of Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Eliade 1964). However, within this global fellowship, diversity is still the most prominent feature and shamanism is not inevitably describable as a uniform tendency on a global scale. Diversity is displayed in terms of the various traditions that the practitioners choose to follow and revive, in terms of practices, politics, values, and where it is all taking place. What this means is that studies of the dynamics of shamanic entrepreneurships in one particular place are not necessarily directly transferable to other local contexts. Although the United States can be described as the cradle of modern shamanism, the spread of shamanic

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[2] Konsta Kaikkonen in his Ph.D. *Contextualising Descriptions of Noaidevuohta: Saami Ritual Specialists in Texts Written until 1871* points out that the discourse of "Sámi shamanism" entered the academic world through the paradigm of comparative mythology as it was adopted by the Finnish ethnographer and linguist Matthias Alexander Castrén in the 1840s, and that the Norwegian linguist Jens A. Friis, building on Castrén's theories and ideas, in 1871 introduced the discourse to the up and coming field of "lappology" (Kaikkonen 2020, manuscript edition).

religious practices and ideas to other habitats is not a uniform process, but involves adaptations to local cultural and political climates.

Indian-style shamanism reached the Nordic region during the 1970s, along with New Age and occult impulses. Prior to the late 1990s, shamanism in the Nordic countries differed little from shamanisms found elsewhere in the Western world. In previous studies, Fonneland has traced the history of the process of giving shamanism an indigenous Sámi flavour to the Sámi author and journalist Ailo Gaup (1944–2014) who is considered the first Sámi shaman in Norway (see Fonneland 2010, 2017). Gaup's story reveals both a strong influence from Harner's core shamanism and a strong desire to bring forth Sámi religious traditions as a basis for religious practice in contemporary society (see Gaup 2005).

The Western world's fascination with shamanism is by no means a recent phenomenon. The historical background has been meticulously documented among others by Ronald Hutton (2001), Von Stuckrad (2003), and Andrei Znamenski (2007). Contemporarily, several researchers claim that shamanism is one of the fastest growing religions in the Western world (Wallis 2003, p. 140; Partridge 2004, p. 47). In the Nordic countries, this growth is reflected in both secular and religious arenas. Various shamanic festivals with different content and scope have recently seen the light of day (see Fonneland 2015a). New shamanic denominations offering shamanic ceremonies are constructed (see Fonneland 2015b), and a growing corpus of shamans are offering their services and products to the public (see Joy, this volume). Furthermore, shamanism and articulations of Sámi religion are expressed in secular arenas like in the tourism industry, in media, in films, in products for sale and consumption as well as in the education system (see Andreassen and Olsen, Kalvig, and Fonneland this volume). Another arena where shamanism has been recently activated is in various forms of political activism, often with a focus on concerns for the environment and on saving the climate (see Kraft and Vassvik, this volume). The diverse and complex contemporary expressions of Sámi religion and shamanism can be described as processes of religion-making. Religion-making, according to a model developed by Markus Dressler and Arvind Mandair is expressed in diverse arenas and is a process that emerges from various positions of power that also comprise secular institutions (Dressler and Mandair 2011).

5. Appropriation and Agency

In the contexts mentioned above, indigeneity and "indigenous religion" is approached as a cultural capital (Bourdieu 1973). By a range of diverse actors and for a variety of reasons, indigenous spirituality is seen as something that is worth pursuing, owning, and consuming. This has led to controversies and to questions about appropriation. Colonialism is not just about territorial claims, economic strategies, and racial ideologies; it also involves the appropriation of material culture (Naum and Nordin 2013; Äikäs and Salmi 2019). The colonial background mirrors the problems in contemporary society, where Sámi cultural symbols are used for commercial and entertainment purposes without proper knowledge or appreciation of Sámi culture (Mikkonen 2016; Näkkäläjärvi 2016; Seitsonen 2018, p. 149). For example, the use of a mock version of the Sámi costume, *gákti*, by non-Sámi has raised strong objections. Furthermore, religious symbols such as figures from *noaidi*-drums are widely used in souvenirs and hotel interiors (Mathisen in this volume).

As noted by Fonneland and Kraft (2013), there is no shortage of convincing examples to support charges of cultural theft and demeaning practices. However, this is not the whole story. Current conditions are, at least in the case of the Sámi, far more complex than those depicted in the established scenario of indigenous victims of appropriation. Such a scenario fails to account for the presence of indigenous people on these same scenes, including Sámi shamans and the voices of indigenous spirituality. The agency of all parties needs to be acknowledged in these types of meetings, which hence does not yield to simple theories of objectivation and appropriation.

In this special issue, we take account of emic categories and connections, focusing on which notions of "Sámi religion" are used today by religious entrepreneurs and others who share and promote these types of spiritual beliefs, and how Sámi religion is taking shape on a plenitude of arenas

in contemporary society. The volume brings together researchers from a wide range of disciplines including religious studies, theology, archaeology, art sciences, tourism studies, cultural studies, and educational sciences and offers manifold perspectives on the making of Sámi religion and of the ways Sámi religion is activated and communicated in contemporary society.

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Article

Sámi indigenous(?) Religion(s)(?)—Some Observations and Suggestions Concerning Term Use

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Abstract: When writing about politically and culturally sensitive topics, term use is of great relevance. Sámi religion is a case in point. Words organise and create the world around us, and labels have direct consequences on how religious phenomena are perceived. Even labelling a phenomenon or an action "religious" carries certain baggage. Term use is, of course, easier when writing about historical materials and describing rituals whose practitioners have been dead for centuries. Nonetheless, contemporary practitioners of age-old rituals or people who use ancient symbols in their everyday lives often see themselves as carriers of old tradition and wish to identify with previous generations regardless of opinions that might deem their actions as "re-enacting", "neoshamanism", or "neopaganism". If, for example, outsider academics wish to deem modern-day Indigenous persons as "neo"-something, issues of power and essentialism blend in with the discourse. This paper critically explores terms used around the Sámi religion in different time periods and attempts to come to suggestions that could solve some of the terminological problems a student of modern practitioners of indigenous religions inevitably faces.

Keywords: indigenous religion; religion; terminology; indigenous terms; translation; shamanism

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1. Introduction: Why Care about What Terms Are Used?

The Sámi are an Indigenous people living in Sápmi, an area stretching across the state borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. They have at least since the 16th century been subjected to coercive efforts to eradicate their indigenous belief systems by the colonising powers of Church and State in the said countries (see the introduction to this special issue; for an overview of the reconciliation processes, see Helga West's article in this issue). This has resulted in a transgenerational trauma, which some representants of the community have dealt with by turning to their peoples' age-old beliefs and practices in their everyday spiritual or religious life; others with silence and denial; some by using indigenous customs, symbols, and stories as sources of interest and inspiration. For non-Sámi outsiders it is important to be as respectful to all these various approaches as possible, and in this article, I will discuss some of my own observations and suggestions concerning scholarly terms in English academic writing.

I have decided not to single out any specific academic uses or users of different terms I criticise, rather basing myself on my own reflections and observations, as well as on several formal and informal private discussions with colleagues and students on matters concerning terminology. The matters that I discuss here have come to my attention largely through the work of the supervisor of my doctoral thesis Håkan Rydving, whose particularistic, attentive to detail, and terminologically rigorous approach has inspired a new generation of scholars of indigenous religions, among them Jelena Porsanger, Bjørn Ola Tafjord, and Olle Sundström. I consider myself as belonging to the same group of scholars and have been inspired by all of the above, having on this basis developed my own terminological approach to Sámi indigenous religion for my doctoral thesis (Kaikkonen forthcoming)—a source critical inquiry

into textual descriptions of Sámi ritual specialists. I found it of importance to develop a terminology that attempted to base on Sámi notions instead of those applied from the outside for the project, having developed these terminological considerations further in this article.

It should be borne in mind that I am a representative of the outsider group and limited in my expertise on contemporary forms of Sámi religion as well as on Sámi languages, having mainly studied the history of Sámi religion and the related outsider interpretations. I have taken here as my task to discuss problems in term use and formulate some suggestions aspiring towards respectful, yet precise use of terms. I do this from a critically oriented perspective of a historian of religions, inspired by scholars of religion advocating for a particularistic viewpoint and forerunners in particularly Sámi methodology. I explore the topic from a point of view that bases on the frameworks of social constructivism and critical studies of religion, as well as some aspects of translation theory.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere (Kaikkonen 2019, forthcoming), an exoticist fascination towards the age-old beliefs and practices of the Sámi, that existed previous to as well as alongside Christianity, has often focused the interest of majorities in the Nordic states—and beyond—towards the Sámi. This has resulted in several written descriptions of Sámi religion, where the beliefs and practices I have decided in this article to label "Sámi indigenous religion" have been translated according to the prevailing zeitgeist as "witchcraft", "sorcery", or "idolatry" before the 18th century; "superstition" in the times of the Enlightenment; and "nature religion", "primitive religion", or "shamanism" in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Despite changing ideological, religious, and political contexts, this fascination has been a driving force for the outsiders describing and defining Sámi traditions, and if one complies with the basic premises of social constructivism and critical studies, one has to agree that these discourses have shaped, on their part, how the Sámi have been viewed and treated by the non-Sámi majorities.

In order to recognise this historical baggage and come to terms with the problematic foundations of our discipline, us scholars of Sámi religion must attempt to discontinue this interrogative "Western gaze", and I argue—in unison with the Sámi scholar Porsanger (2018)—that we can begin by avoiding terms that are tightly knit to the exoticizing tendencies in Western academia. As the folklorist Fonneland (2018, p. 5) has written about Sámi shamanism, "[i]t matters what we call things." Coming from a particularistic point of view and conforming with arguments made by scholars such as Rydving (2011) and Porsanger (2018), I find that speaking about "Sámi shamanism" changes things in introducing a theory-laden, generalising, and exoticising concept to the already biased and one-sided textual sources we have to deal with. Or as Atkinson (1992, p. 308) put the concerns of cultural anthropologists against using this term, "The category simply does not exist in a unitary and homogeneous form, even within Siberia and Central Asia—the putative homeland of 'classical shamanism'".

Even though one would agree with arguments postulating an empirically observable phenomenon of "shamanism"—such as those made by Harner and his shamanistic followers on one hand, and the likes of Winkelman (2000) who argue for a neurophysiological unity behind religious experiences among the world's "shamanistic" cultures on the other—one is left with the same questions and critiques when making a translation of non-Western cultural phenomena into the academic concept "shamanism". Even though there would exist a phenomenon called "shamanism" "out there", outside of the "Western" imagination, the concept itself is socially constructed, and if used uncritically it irons out differences between all "shamanistic" cultures and simply sees them as sides of the same phenomenon. Reversely, starting instead with local, indigenous concepts such as the Sámi term *noaidevuohta*—derived from the trade of one type of Sámi ritual specialist, *noaidi*—proposes a more particularistic type of approach.[1]

[1] *Noaidevuohta* in North Saami comprises of two different words; the word for a type of ritual specialist, *noaidi* (with corresponding words in not only all the Sámi languages but also e.g., *noita* in Finnish and *ńajt* in Mansi) and the suffix *-vuohta*, which can be roughly translated as '-hood' or '-dom'. For a more thorough discussion on the word's uses, see (Kaikkonen 2019, forthcoming).

For example, if one starts a research project about Sámi shamanism in the 17th and 18th centuries one would probably come to different hypotheses and conclusions than if one would start a research project about Sámi *noaidevuohta*; the former would probably take as its starting point theories of circumpolar or global shamanism and make comparisons between the Sámi and Siberian "shamanistic" peoples, while the latter might focus on particularly Sámi ritual specialists and start with culture-specific comparisons between different Sámi sources.

I also agree with what the Finnish historian of religions Sjöblom (2002, p. 128) writes about term use, and use his observations as a basis for the approach I have taken in this article:

> The role played by heuristic terms in ethnographic description is highly controversial. The chosen term is always based on the theory-laden assumptions of the scholar providing the description. With his/her choice of term the scholar can and usually will influence how the scholarly community view the topic, which he/she is describing. Even when the scholar strives to produce as reliable and truthful a description of his/her research as possible, the fact remains that heuristic terms only seldom—if ever—cover exactly the same semantic space as the emic concepts they are describing.

Sjöblom's observations show that the use of etic, heuristic terms leaves plenty of space for interpretations and skewed translations, but that it is also inevitable. It is exactly these interpretations and theory-laden assumptions that I am going to discuss in the following, as I take some of the most common labels used for Sámi religion in academic English into critical consideration. Moving then to discuss the use of Sámi analytical terms, I introduce some of the alternatives that have been used in North Sámi, mainly basing myself on Porsanger's terminological considerations. This discussion is followed by introducing the factor of time, showing that term use is also of great importance for discussing current matters where power and politics come into play. I will especially target the terms "shamanism" and "neoshamanism" in my discussion. I conclude with some observations and suggestions for term use that I hope could advance the rigor and respect with which Sámi religion—both past and present—is discussed academically.

2. "Sámi Indigenous Religion" and Alternate Terms in Historical Scholarship

There are numerous terms used for what I have chosen in this paper to call "Sámi indigenous religion". Some of the suggested labels in English that are rarely used today were "paganism", "heathen religion", and "primitive religion", whereas contemporary scholars often talk about "tribal religion", "nature religion", "oral religion", "ethnic religion", "pre-Christian religion", "non-Christian religion", or simply label the whole system of beliefs and practices as "animism", or indeed "Sámi shamanism", as the English Wikipedia does.[2] Sometimes words like "world view", "mentality", or "spirituality" are used in order to avoid the problematised term "religion". All these labels inevitably carry theoretical, historical, religious, and colonial baggage—some heavier than others. In this section, I will problematise the most common terms used in historical studies of Sámi religion, basing myself on a critical and historically oriented approach and following a rough division into three different ways of speaking about Sámi indigenous religion in the academia.

2.1. Terms that Approach Sámi Religion by What It Is Not

First, I will discuss the problems arising from dichotomies that are created by setting Sámi indigenous religion and Christianity directly as opposing polarities. The contemporarily nearly extinct terms "paganism" and "heathen religion", as well as the very much extant "pre-Christian" and "non-Christian", all suffer from this implicit or explicit polarity.

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[2] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%A1mi_shamanism> Accessed 28.7.2020.

It is commonly accepted today that "pagan" and "heathen" refer to the non-Christian, non-Jewish, and non-Muslim populace, and moreover have a connotation of uncivilised, immoral, or barbarous customs.[3] Both terms are today considered pejorative and their use as etic terms in academic literature, at least in the historically oriented Study of Religions, has lately been uncommon. The history and meaning of these terms are shaped by a contrast to Christianity and "civilization", whatever the latter term might mean for its users. Simultaneously, "paganism" has been adopted as an emic term by several groups who often wish to emphasise the contrast to Christianity and link their practice with pre-Christian customs.[4]

A less pejorative trend has been to refer to "pre-Christian" or "non-Christian" traditions of the Sámi, such as I have myself done previously (Kaikkonen 2019). Having since reviewed my position, I argue that the use of these terms proves challenging in light of the source material we have of Sámi religion, and the interpretations made thereof. If we agree with scholars of Sámi religious history such as Rydving (2000, p. 18) who deem the textual material written by missionaries in the 17th and 18th centuries as the most important sources to Sámi indigenous religion, it is impossible to label the phenomena, practices, and beliefs that the sources describe as "non-Christian" or "pre-Christian".

As the historian Rasmussen (2016) has convincingly argued—informed by several previous investigations into the matter—it is only in terms of the pietistic missionaries, their chroniclers, and their views of "correct Christianity" that the Sámi religion encountered in the sources can be labelled non-Christian. Pre-Christian they are, in the strict analytical meaning of the word, not—all of the sources from the 17th and 18th centuries are descriptions of Christian, baptised Sámi and made by theologically trained representatives of the majority cultures who filtered what they heard and saw through a Christian understanding. In addition, it seems that Christianity had spread to Sápmi already in the high Middle ages, several centuries before the most important written sources (Widén 1980; Hansen and Olsen 2013, pp. 315–19).

The most important texts describing Sámi religion in the 17th and 18th centuries are therefore mostly descriptions of Christian Sámi who practiced rituals with influences from both Catholic and Protestant Christianity, as well as from local, indigenous customs, made by Christian non-Sámi. Rasmussen (2016, p. 80), indeed, writes, "Different sources dating from the early modern period indicate that elements of the Catholic faith were incorporated within Sámi culture, even within the Sámi religion; and on the other hand, some elements of the Sámi religion were brought into the Church."

This problem is in line with what Rydving (2010, pp. 39–56) has discussed in relation to interpretations of Sámi drum figures; using the labels "pre-Christian" and "non-Christian" for Sámi religion tends to disregard the Christian influences upon the source material and the few insider explanations, and instead leads to an interpretation where everything that is not in line with Lutheran belief to be of a pre-Christian vestige. The use of these labels entails a pure form of Christianity and a pure form of Sámi indigenous religion, unchanged before the writing of the source material and traceable to times immemorial. Based on what we know from historical sources, the fluidity and interconnectedness between Sámi pre-Christian and Christian religious traditions should instead be emphasised and essentialising notions of pure religious forms cast aside, were we to strive towards using terms which are precise.

To add to the problems of these terms, they define Sámi indigenous religion for what it is not rather than for what it is, continuing the application of a Christian perspective to other, "non-Christian" religions. An emphasis on the difference between pre-Christianity and Christianity in a historical case can, furthermore, be seen to imply a sudden conversion sparked by a religious experience and turning to "the right religion". While this narrative is characteristic of Christian individual conversion stories

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[3] See, for example, *Concise Oxford Disctionary* entries "heathen" and "pagan".
[4] For a short description of modern "neo-pagans", see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s entry on Neo-Paganism <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Neo-Paganism> Accessed 28.7.2020.

it is hardly applicable to the changing of the religion of an entire people in the past.[5] This is not the sense that a serious, non-confessional, and historically oriented scholarship on Sámi religion should in my opinion carried in, and the use of terms like "pre-Christian" or "non-Christian" which categorise religions as antonyms to Christianity is, therefore, religiously biased and analytically imprecise.

The same criticism largely goes for words like "syncretism", "assimilation", and "acculturation" that are commonly used for the colonial situation where Sámi religion was gradually and forcefully replaced by more conventional and orthodox forms of Christianity, as seen from the Lutheran point of view. Speaking of syncretism, of course, takes as its starting point the idea of a "pure" Christianity that is universal and not influenced by local customs, and as such is tightly related to the Lutheran critique of Catholicism. The same problematics that we face when speaking of "pre-Christian" and "Christian" Sámi religion are faced by a scholar speaking of "syncretism": the analyst takes the implicit burden of defining "correct" Christianity or non-Christianity when they define something as "syncretistic".

Following Pye's (1994) suggestions of term use, we could rather speak of an assimilation of Christian elements into an indigenous framework before the missionary era, followed by a forceful suppression of the indigenous religion from the public sphere, with a simultaneous continuation of indigenous practices and beliefs in the private life of individuals resulting in a type of synthesis in people's everyday life. This process cannot be simply labelled "syncretism" when analysing the blurry border of "indigenous" and "Christian" influences on Sámi religion as found in the early modern textual sources if one wants to hold an analytically rigorous attitude to one's topic of study and acknowledge the constantly changing and flexible nature of the phenomena we scholars label "religion".

2.2. Terms that Approach Sámi Religion Typologically

Similar problems arise with terms like "oral religion" or "nature religion", not to mention the term "primitive religion", as they imply a typology of religions based on a notion of progress. To speak of "nature religion" in English is directly related to the dichotomy that puts "nature" and "culture" at opposite ends of a spectrum. Needless to say, if Christianity is seen as the religion of "culture" and Sámi indigenous religion as a "nature religion", this also has implications towards the other being generally more desirable, advanced, and sophisticated than "natural" religion.

While there are none that deny the close relation of Sámi culture and religion to the natural surroundings, the baggage that follows the nature/culture dichotomy implicit in Western thought places "nature religions" in a certain category, which is almost uniform with the notion of primitivism (Porsanger 2018, p. 149). Even if the word *luondduoskkoldat* sometimes used of the indigenous religion in North Sámi might not carry these connotations, and indeed relates Sámi religion to its closeness to *luonddu*—roughly translatable as "nature", "creation", or even "essence"—the English term "nature religion" immediately draws the reader's connotation to a "primitive" *Naturmensch*. Or would anyone use the label "nature" for the other closely nature-related activities of the Sámi such as "nature transportation", "nature clothing", "nature childrearing", "nature housing", or indeed, "nature culture"?

The dichotomy between "oral religion" and "literary religion" can be criticised from the same grounds, but in addition, this typology is completely lacking in analytical use as each and every religion, regardless of being formulated around sacred texts or not, is transmitted orally across generations and people. This division is also reminiscent of Redfield's "great tradition/small tradition" divide, further developed for the comparative Study of Religions by Juha Pentikäinen, who distinguished between literary world Religions with a capital R and "folk religions" with a small case r.[6]

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[5] Rasmussen (2016, p. 79) decides to use the term "integration" instead of the problematic "conversion" when speaking about Sámis becoming part of the "ecclesiastical system".

[6] For the most recent application of this idea to Sámi religion, see (Pentikäinen and Pulkkinen 2018, p. 92 f).

Classifying Sámi indigenous religion as "oral" or "small" while implying Christianity as its "literary", "great" antithesis not only taps upon the above-discussed dichotomies between primitive and advanced as well as Christian and non-Christian religions but is also lacking in analytical strength. Who could, for example, say that the theological views of laymen in Medieval Catholic West Norway were more based on textual traditions than oral and material aspects of religious communication? One could speak of vernacular and textual aspects of a single religion or that of a single group of people in a certain context, but to make typologies based on these aspects is in my view analytically unsound and methodologically outdated.

2.3. Terms that Approach Sámi Religion as a Situated Category

A commonly used term that links Sámi religion to the Sámi as a people is "ethnic religion", sometimes also "tribal religion" is used. The latter suffers from similar primitivist understandings as the examples discussed in the previous section, while the previous refers to the religious traditions of an ethnic group, but still holds a connotation of something "heathen" or exotic; the word "ethnic", of course, derives from the Greek word ἔθνος, "nation, tribe, people". Often, however, "ethnic religion" is used as a category of religions that stands opposite to "universalizing" religions such as Christianity, in a similar manner as the division between "oral" and "literary" does. In this sense, the Sámi ethnic religion would be the original religion of the Sámi people, meant as an antonym to the universal Christianity. If used thus as a typology, the category of "ethnic religions" is subject to the same criticisms as the ones discussed above as it implies a process of conversion or advancement from "ethnic" to "universal" religions.

There are, in addition, further analytical and connotational problems with the term "ethnic religion". If one associates the category "ethnic" to practically anything, the Western mind is drawn to exoticism, as pointed out in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Thompson 1998, p. 463) definition. Terms like "ethnic food" or "ethnic music" do not make one think of Austrian waltzes or French cuisine, but rather something "the other" does, a resource for westerners to tap into and experience exotic things outside of the usual. For me, the word "ethnic religion" does just that; it does not draw one's attention to something familiar, but rather something exotic and "wild".

Furthermore, as has been emphasised by Rydving and others, it is highly problematic to speak of a singular "Sámi religion" in the first place, and adding the label "ethnic" to the mix further accentuates these problems. The fact that Sámi religion was in constant change and not at all homogeneous in time or space—not even mentioning the difficult question of defining Sámi ethnicity in retrospect and from the outside—lades the label "ethnic religion" with serious problems. It irons out the differences between Sámi language and economic groups in space and time, and does not account for the exchange of ideas between the Sámi and non-Sámi populations of Old Norse, Finnish, Lutheran, Catholic, Russian Orthodox, and/or Karelian religious traditions—both written and oral, vernacular as well as "orthodox".

In addition, it essentialises Sámi culture and religion and raises problematic questions such as the following: Was then some form of Sámi religion more "ethnic" than another? Were the reindeer herding inland Sámi, who had less contact with the non-Sámi groups, "purer" practitioners of "ethnic Sámi religion" while the coastal Sámi were so to a lesser extent? Were also the speakers of South Sámi less "ethnic" in their religion than the speakers of, say, Skolt Sámi?

2.4. Landing on a Compromise: Indigenous Sámi Religion

Although not without problems, I prefer to use the etic term "indigenous Sámi religion" when speaking of the phenomena that have been labelled as something belonging to the religious sphere in the historical material. As scholars, it is our job to construct and re-construct, create generalisations, and "do violence" to the sources we study, as a pure description is hardly something that would warrant praise and prestige, or indeed funding, in the scholarly world. In my opinion, our job is to be conscious and explicit with the violence we do to our sources, all the while keeping in mind the

power scholars hold over their topics of study; one great example is the scholar of religions, Tafjord's (2016) observation of how "talking about indigenous religion may change things", as he walks the reader through examples from his fieldwork sites of how scholarly categories create and change the indigenous traditions we study.

Using the word "indigenous" as an adjective together with the word "religion" is not without problems, as Tafjord (2013, 2017) has convincingly shown and identified at least nine different uses—or "language games"—related to the term "indigenous religion" and its plural form. In the next, I will discuss some of the problems with that term and how to possibly overcome them.

The Sámi are almost universally recognised as an Indigenous people. When we speak of Indigenous peoples, it is most often as defined by the ILO convention 169 (Article 1) as "peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions", that also self-identify as "Indigenous'".[7] Tafjord (2013, 2017) has argued that using the term "Indigenous" in this sense as an attribute to "religion" surfaces several problems, leading, for example, to implicit politically charged uses or typologies that follow the problems pointed out earlier. If "Indigenous religions" is identified as a universal category as "the religion of Indigenous peoples" it irons out the differences between all the traditions put under that label and carries political or typological implications.

Tafjord (2013, p. 230) points out that the category "indigenous religion" used in the singular as an emic category by the Indigenous peoples themselves becomes a political tool, "Far from representing precise and unambiguous scholarly language, this schematic use of the category contributes in blurring the boundaries between politics and scholarship, between activism and academic work, and between religionising and analysing."

One way of avoiding the problem of mixing the discourse on indigenous religion(s) with Indigenous politics and the global Indigenous movement could be to employ categories such as "endemic", "native", or "autochthonous" when speaking of Sámi religion. These, however, also suffer from problems: "endemic" (an antonym of pandemic) relates to illness, which at least for me is an unwanted analogy; "native" partly suffers from the same problems as "ethnic" and "tribal"; and "autochthonous" means more or less the same as "indigenous", but is of Greek origin instead of Latin. Difficult to pronounce and spell, I have decided to not add "autochthonous" into my vocabulary. I have played around with these terms, but have still landed on using the term "indigenous religion" in a specific, carefully defined way. I have tried to separate the discourse related to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous politics by capitalising the first letter of the word in these cases, and the discourse related to "indigenous religions" and "indigenous words" as situated categories by using the small case letter.

Indeed, if we use the term "indigenous religion" in the singular, of a carefully defined and problematised historical situation, as a "historically and geographically contingent relational concept" (Tafjord 2017, p. 39), its use becomes clearer when discussing encounters between different religions. This is the use in which, for example, Rydving and myself have employed the term in connection to the Sámi religion. It is used for the religious traditions of the Sámi in a situation where they were described by Lutheran missionaries—the very missionaries responsible for its eradication, a process tightly related to colonial aspirations by the state powers.

It should be noted that "indigenous Sámi religion" used in this sense is not completely free of the problems stated in the previous subchapters—a contrast to Christianity, typology, and essentialism. As "indigenous" is an autonym of "foreign" or "exogeneous", its use in the Sámi case contrasts it with the "exogeneous" Christianity, opening up the question of a "pureness" of the indigenous religion

[7] <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169> Accessed 28.7.2020.

encountered by the Lutheran missionaries in the 17th and 18th centuries. Indeed, it should be kept in mind that the "indigenous" Sámi religion at that time had assimilated both Western and Eastern Christian as well as other beliefs and customs "exogeneous" to the Sámi.

In addition, if we contrast indigenous religions with universalising religions such as Christianity, there is a chance of slippage into an unwarranted typologising when spoken of as a general category in this sense. Nevertheless, perhaps the largest challenge with this suggested use is the problem of essentialism. If—in whichever way it is defined—Sámi indigenous religion is viewed as a singular phenomenon covering all Sámi groups, the same questions of local variation, external influences, and "pureness" come into play. One could rather speak of "Sámi indigenous religions" in the plural, but then the contingent nature of this term is compromised. I would settle on the singular form, and instead emphasise variation in time and space by delimiting the use of sources carefully, or when attempting to create a reconstruction of the common core elements in all local variants of Sámi indigenous religions, being overtly explicit and careful about the "educated guesses" to be made of this imagined construction.

To summarise, there is no easy way out. The etic, heuristic terms a historian of religions uses to discuss Sámi religion are all loaded and problematic in one way or another. The way out, as I would see it, is to be explicitly aware of these problems and at the same time respectful to the Sámi whose religious history has all too often been described by outsiders with terms that carry problematic baggage. This should be done while aspiring towards analytical rigor and clarity in term use and awareness of possible points of blurriness and confusion.

My suggestion is to use the concept "indigenous Sámi religion" as a relational category to refer to the practices and beliefs documented by missionaries mostly in the era of colonial activities directed towards the Sámi in the 17th and 18th centuries. I use it as a "geographically and historically contingent relational concept" in the sense Tafjord (2013, p. 39) has suggested.

Of course, "religion" is a highly problematic term, and there are also some alternatives to using this term, with suggestions such as "mentality", "world view", or "way of life" being offered in English. One recent trend of avoiding the pitfalls discussed above has been to turn to Sámi terms when speaking of Sámi indigenous religion. In the next section, I will briefly discuss some of the alternatives in North Sámi, mainly basing myself on Jelena Porsanger's pioneering work.

3. Sámi Analytical Terms and Translations on Three Levels

3.1. Translations on Three Levels and the "Indigenous Turn"

The rise of Indigenous political issues and Indigenous scholarship in the past few decades have resulted in an advancement where local languages, rather than the languages of the majorities or international languages of the academia such as English, French, or German, have been increasingly used in scholarship on issues related to Indigenous peoples. Sámi studies have been no exception, and within the study of religions, especially Porsanger (2004, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2018) has contributed with texts in North Sámi, most notably her doctoral thesis, also advocating for the use of Sámi terms as analytical categories in her English contributions.

As I have noted previously, non-Sámi scholars have also begun to include Sámi terms in their vocabularies, as a consequence of the awareness of Indigenous issues. This is most visible in the use of the word *noaidi* as a replacement of "shaman" and *noaidevuohta* as a replacement of "shamanism", a process I have called "translating back". This, I have argued, is the result of translations on three levels: the translation of words from one language into another, the translation of concepts from one culture into another, and the translations from natural, everyday language into the analytical language of the academia (Kaikkonen 2019).

The terminology for speaking about "indigenous Sámi religion" in North Sámi has been developed most prominently by Porsanger (2007, p. 4 f.), as she has contributed to the project of making North Sámi a language of the academia, translating terms and concepts between the levels of natural North

Sámi language use that she calls the level of object language (*objeaktagiela dássi*) and the analytical level (*analyhtalaš dássi*).

In her doctoral thesis, Porsanger settled on using the term *sámi eamioskkoldat* for Sámi indigenous religion, as the concept "emphasises the continuity of Sámi lands and the Sámi people, the central meaning of elders and ancestors as bearers and teachers of Sámi traditions, and the inseparable reciprocity of people and the natural environment."[8] As the word "indigenous", the North Sámi prefix *eami-* used for both Indigenous peoples (*eámiálbmot*) and indigenous religion (*eamioskkoldat*) has connotations of "home" (*ruoktu*), according to her (Porsanger 2007, p. 6 f.). Some North Sámi alternatives Porsanger (2018, p. 148 f.) points towards as more problematic are *dološ osku*, "ancient belief", which to her sounds like an outdated alternative that does not take the processes of change and continuity into account, and the aforementioned *luondduosku* which is problematic because of its above-discussed connotations to the nature-culture division and the idea of "primitive nature peoples" and their religions.

3.2. Oskkoldat, Religiovdna, Vuoiŋŋalaš Árbevierru, Noaidevuohta

Different critiques of using the term "religion" in relation to peoples whose indigenous vocabulary does not have a corresponding word abound and the Sámi case is no different. Even though the Scandinavian loan word *religiovdna* has been used since the 1990s, Porsanger (2018, p. 147 f.) rather settles on the Sámi word *oskkoldat*, derived from the word *osku*, "belief", "trust", which however also has its origins in Christian discourse and can be considered a translation of Finnish *uskonto*, derived from the word *usko*. In order to avert the Christian connotations of religion-derived words, Porsanger has also written about *sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru*, roughly translated as "Sámi spiritual tradition", although she has not discussed the term as such in more detail.

I believe that we have here a good umbrella term for speaking about Sámi religion for several reasons. First of all, it relates to *árbevierru*, a Sámi concept which emphasises continuity, but is untranslatable to English as the dichotomy tradition–modernity is awkward for Sámi ways of thinking (Porsanger 2011). Porsanger (2011, p. 240 f.) writes, "A comprehensive Sami concept for tradition/custom is *árbevierru* (in this case the North Sami term), which contains two interrelated parts, *vierru* 'mode, custom' and *árbi* 'heritage, inheritance'", and continues:

> *Árbevierru* indicates the continuity of the ways people do certain things and adhere to certain values (*vierru*), which are strengthened and validated by *árbi* (heritage; inheritance). Customs, innovations, wisdom, knowledge, values, heritage and continuity are inseparable from each other in this way of understanding tradition.

Vuoiŋŋalaš on its part relates to *vuoigŋa* with connotations to "spirit", "life", or "breath". *Vuoiŋŋalaš* is almost translatable to "spiritual" but with more culture-specific connotations instead of the usual English ones (Kåven et al. 1995, p. 575; Sammallahti 2013, p. 209). One could, for example, speak of the *vuoigŋas* of the *noaidis* or *vuoigŋas* residing in nature in the natural North Sámi language without connotations to the English word "spiritual", which immediately draws one's attention to "spiritual, not religious" or "spiritual seekers", abundant in the academic discourse on "New Age" and the "religious supermarket".[9]

I, therefore, suggest *sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru* as an umbrella term to replace the term "Sámi religion". Used in this way, *sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru* would be an indigenous term used as an etic one to cover the pre-missionary times, the post-missionary ones, as well as the current interest in shamanism and Sámi traditions within Sámi communities, including contemporary forms of Sámi

[8] "deattuha sámeálbmoga ja Sámeeatnama jotkkolašvuođa, boarrásiid ja máddariid guovddáš mearkkašumi sámi árbevieru guoddin ja oahpaheaddjin, olbmuin ja luonddubirrasa earukeahtes gaskavuođa." (Porsanger 2007, p. 7) My translation.

[9] See, for example, the book *New Age Spirituality* (Sutcliffe and Gilhus 2013) with an article about "New Age, Sami shamanism and indigenous spirituality" by Fonneland & Kraft.

Christianities. Using this term would emphasise continuity, as well as the fact that even if brought from the outside, the Sámi have made different "exogeneous" religious customs and traditions such as Christianity and "core shamanism" as part of their own *árbevierru*, even though these traditions would have not always been labelled as "religious" by the Sámi themselves—such as was the case with Sámi shamanism until the organised practitioners were forced to incorporate "religion" into their vocabulary quite recently, as Fonneland (2017, p. 11; 2018) shows. The term *vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru* covers at the same time most uses that would be included by the scholarly definitions of religion—for example, those employed in the Sámi case by Rydving (Rydving 2004, p. 7 f.; 2013, p. 393 f.)—but the term does not invoke the problematic Western term "religion" or its Sámi translations.

Being an indigenous term without a heavy previous theoretical baggage, using and developing the technical term *sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru* could contribute to a terminology where Sámi matters are discussed with Sámi terms, even by outsiders. Of course, this creates problems for audiences with no understanding of Sámi language. Translations would have to be made on several levels in order to convey the meaning of what the term means in the natural language in order to strengthen its analytical use, but this is a problem that could be tackled by keeping in mind some basic premises of translation theory. Scholarly contributions in other languages than Sámi would then have the task of translating what this term means and defining how it is used in each context as a technical term. This is something scholars do anyway, providing translations that are by default imprecise, but at the same time relevant (see, for example, the introduction to this issue, where the editors refer to James Clifford's ideas on translation).

Indeed, why would central terms related to Sámi religion be translated without critical discussion, while central terms in "world religions" such as *pūjā* or *dharma* in Sanskrit, *dīn* in Arabic, or *rabbi* in Hebrew would remain untranslated? Of course, this would not mean that, in my opinion, we scholars should stop using non-Sámi terms altogether, but rather that we should anchor our term use in Sámi understandings and problematise and define what we mean with analytical concepts such as "Sámi indigenous religion" or "Sámi religion", or words such as "shamanism".

Another word sometimes used about Sámi religion is *noaidevuohta*, often used as a direct translation of "shamanism", in which case it is used not only for the *noaidi*'s trade, but in a wider sense (see Kaikkonen 2019, pp. 559–63). I will not go deeper into the problems with the words "shaman" and "shamanism" in this article than I have done in the introduction, as I have discussed them at length both in my doctoral thesis and in a previous article (Kaikkonen 2019, forthcoming), suffice to say that their use in relation to both Sámi religion in the wider sense, and the trade of the indigenous ritual specialists described in historical sources in the narrower sense, are in my opinion problematic. As I have summarised the problem in the said article:

> without critical evaluation the term "shaman" is burdened with ethnocentric biases and theoretical assumptions. It is far from a neutral concept in a Sami context. The outsider definitions and translations of Sami culture in a colonial setting perpetuate ethnic stereotypes and "othering", starting with witchcraft and ending with shamanism (2019, p. 554).

Shamanism as an emic term, describing modern practitioners who call themselves "shamans" and their practices and beliefs as "shamanism" is in my opinion justified and mostly unproblematic.[10] As Fonneland (2017) has argued, the contemporary shamans have blended Michael Harner's core shamanism with their interpretations of textual and material sources to Sámi indigenous religion, creating a distinctly Sámi version of shamanism (see also Joy 2018, p. 246). I, however, am hesitant as a student of religions to comply with the emic meanings employed by these shamans described by Fonneland (2018, p. 4) who say that shamanism represents a "foundation in all the world's cultures" and that Sámi shamanism represents a continuum from the pre-missionary era. I would rather employ

[10] See also (Rydving 2011, p. 9; Fonneland 2017, p. 10; 2018).

the etic term "pre-missionary *noaidevuohta*" to describe the *noaidi*'s tasks and trade in the main written sources from the 17th and 18th centuries and reserve the term "shamanism" to describe what I have previously labelled with the etic term "post-secular *noaidevuohta*" (Kaikkonen 2019, pp. 555–57). This is not to say that there would not be problems with making these divisions between "tradition" and "modernity", a problem I will discuss next.

4. "Neo", "New Age", "Re-Enactment"—Who Draws the Line?

In recent times, there has been a growing academic interest in contemporary forms of the *sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru*, as this special volume entails. Trude Fonneland and Siv Ellen Kraft have contributed to the research on contemporary Sámi shamanism, Tiina Äikäs and Jorunn Jernsletten on sacrificial activities, Cato Christensen has discussed the continuation of Sámi indigenous imaginary in cinema, and Francis Joy on his part has written about the continuities in *sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru* from ancient times to the present, to name a few of the recent contributors to the topic's advancement.

One of the topics which have drawn the most attention is Sámi shamanism, developed on Michael Harner's teachings about "core shamanism" and cultivated by the likes of Ailo Gaup and Eirik Myrhaug to become a distinct Sámi phenomenon with not only religious but also political and artistic dimensions (see for example Fonneland 2017; Fonneland and Kraft 2013). This phenomenon that I have decided to label "Sámi shamanism" has most often been related to the "New Age" milieu and spoken of with the etic terms "neoshamanism" or "neopaganism", while the sacrificial rituals have been labelled "re-enactments".

Some of the problems with using the term "neoshamanism" will be taken up next. First of all, it is not something the practitioners themselves often recognize, and many even shun. They most often see themselves as continuers of an ancient technique of shamanism, which is by no means new to them but rather the oldest form of spirituality. According to the practitioners themselves, the essence of "core shamanism" is in bringing into life the most profound and ancient features of human culture, shamanism (Fonneland 2018). If then an outsider defines this as "neoshamanism", it suggests that first of all there is an "old shamanism", and second of all that the practitioners do not practice this "old shamanism" but rather belong to a new religious movement that is no older than the 1970s.

Using the label "neoshamanism" thus includes two questionable assumptions: (1) that there is a phenomenon called "shamanism" "out there", outside of the scholarly debate; and (2) that the researcher holds the power of defining what this true "shamanism" is and what it is not, excluding "modern" practitioners who claim to practice shamanism and deeming them as re-enacters. This stand does not only leave the person who draws the line between "shamanism" and "neoshamanism" with essentialist bias but also ignores the grey area between "true traditions" and "re-enactments". In addition, the division between "tradition" and "modernity"—unfamiliar to Sámi epistemology as noted by Porsanger (2011)—is strongly present in such classifications.

To take some examples from outside the Sámi culture, I would like to draw attention to two cases of rituals among peoples most often labelled "Indigenous" that challenge a straightforward division into "old" and "new" forms of "indigenous religions" (if one wishes to use that label as a category of religions). First, I would like to discuss the case of Khanty and Mansi bear ceremonialism as described by Olga Balalaeva and Andrew Wiget and the "revival" involved. While the traditional ceremonies were banned during the Soviet era and were only remembered by some of the elders in those groups, Wiget and Balalaeva have worked among Khanty and Mansi groups in Russia in order to "save" these ceremonies from dying out. Indigenous actors and scholars have contributed together to communicate some central concepts and traditions between different Arctic groups practicing bear ceremonies in order to fill the gaps created by the forceful oppression of the indigenous ceremonies and rituals by the

Soviet state.[11] Would this process that takes up lost or almost lost aspects of an Indigenous culture and reconstructs them with the help of scholarship then count as "re-enactment" in the same way as contemporary offerings at a Sámi sacred site or a Sámi traditional healer speaking of himself as a "shaman"?

The same question could be asked of the *yhyakh* ceremonies of the Sakha people described by Nikanorova (2019); are these rituals continuations or re-enactments, constructed and based on scholarship in order to serve a political means? The answer is, according to her, both *yes* and *no*, and more complex and multifaceted than simply putting a "neo" label on an indigenous tradition from the outside would be. While most scholars who speak of Sámi "neoshamanism" or "re-enactment" would not deem the aforementioned ritual traditions in their contemporary forms as belonging to the "New Age" movement, they might find unity in their political inclinations and their emphasis on indigeneity.

A student of contemporary Sámi religion, or *sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru*, should, in my opinion, face these questions with a reflexivity and a critical approach that acknowledges the complexities, power relations, and problems of essentialism that are involved when defining the phenomena we study. A self-conscious, critical, and precise use of terms is therefore essential when describing both historical and contemporary phenomena that belong to the wide array of *sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru*.

5. Conclusions

In this article, I have tried to take up some of the problems a student of religions faces when choosing terms to describe Sámi religion. I have also implicitly suggested that a system for term use can be developed by each scholar on their own, bearing certain points in mind and minding the power that a scholar holds when defining things. Based on these above-mentioned points, I suggest a vocabulary for discussing the Sámi religion that I now open for critique and hope to develop further in the future (Table 1).

Table 1. Suggestions for analytical terms.

Old Etic Terms	Replacements
Sámi religion, Sámi world view, Sámi way of life, shamanism, animism, etc.	*Sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru*
Sámi pre-Christian religion, Sámi paganism, Sámi non-Christian religion, Sámi nature religion, Sámi ethnic religion, etc.	Sámi indigenous religion (as a contingent, situated category), Sámi autochthonic religion, *Sámi eamioskkoldat*
Sámi shamanism	*Noaidevuohta*
Sámi neoshamanism	Sámi shamanism

Several levels of translation are involved when indigenous terms are used in analytical English, but their theoretical baggage and analytical precision are not as tied to the ever-changing and often competing approaches of the academia. I have decided that the North Sámi term "*sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru*" could be used as an umbrella term to cover traditions, customs, and beliefs that have come to bear a distinctly Sámi character, regardless of their origin. These traditions would still fit under most scholarly definitions of religion. *Sámi vuoiŋŋalaš árbevierru* could then be divided into three historically contingent yet overlapping categories: (1) Sámi indigenous religion (SaaN. *eamioskkoldat*); (2) different forms of Sámi Christianity; and (3) Sámi shamanism (which of course does not cover all contemporary forms of Sámi post-secular practices). The *noaidi*'s trade could be referred to as pre-missionary *noaidevuohta*, post-missionary *noaidevuohta*, and post-secular *noaidevuohta* (or shamanism), as I have suggested previously (Kaikkonen 2019).

[11] See the project's website <https://eloka-arctic.org/bears/bear-ceremonialism#loss-transformation-and-revival> Accessed 28.7.2020.

Defining and categorising religious traditions from the analytic outside is always a delicate matter and involves balancing on the tightrope between the analytical, generalising, and hypothesising etic mode, and the descriptive, particularising, and specifying emic mode. Accordingly, as we take emic concepts from the level of the natural object language and translate them into the analytical language of academia as etic ones, something is always lost. Still, perhaps useful things are also found in the process and translations provide new insights about non-Western epistemologies for the academic community.

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religions

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Article

VUOIĐĐALAŠVUOHTA—Sámi Spirituality, Yoik and Their Connections †

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Abstract: The subject of identity is important in today's political landscape. This article explores the way in which indigenous identity in particular is a contested subject, taking into account the way indigeneity in itself was, and still is, created within colonial contexts. The "validity" of indigenous peoples and their political aims, as well as their right to live according to their own cultural paths, will often be determined according to racist ideas connected to authenticity and its stereotypical demands. Such concepts can furthermore turn inward, disconnecting indigenous peoples from their own heritage. How ideas of authenticity affect indigenous individuals and their processes of identification serves as a central question within this text. Central to the Standing Rock movement was the focus on spirituality and religion grounded in Lakota traditions and other indigenous cultures. The text accounts for how these practices affected Marielle Beaska Gaup, Sámi artist, activist, and mother, especially through her experiences as a *juoigi*, a traditional Sámi yoiker. The ever-present singing and drumming at camp, chiefly during the summer, tied the mundane and ritualistic together, a characteristic mirroring traditional Lakota and Sámi ways of life, in which the spiritual at times seem to be an integral part of daily life. Building upon Marielle's observations, the text looks at the way relationships with spiritual traditions can affect processes of identification, and how indigenous identity can be intimately link to its spiritual heritage. This article employs indigenous methodologies, centering research on Sámi and indigenous perspectives, values and agendas. Marielle's reflections contribute to the exploration of the connections between spirituality and Sámi identities; furthermore, they enable us to connect ideas about moving beyond the authoritarian ideals of "authentic identities", through re-centering on indigenous experiences and processes of identification. My main sources are two interviews with Marielle. The analysis centers on Marielle's thoughts together with my own, with support from indigenous researchers bringing their own knowledge about identity and spirituality forward.

Keywords: identity; spirituality; yoik; indigenizing; decolonizing; recreating; music; religion; authenticity; indigenous methodologies; Standing Rock; activism; traditional knowledge; relationality; reconnecting

1. Introduction

Marielle Gaup Beaska came to Standing Rock to stand with the Lakota Nation of Turtle Island. Standing Rock, the name of the local reservation, but also the name of the water protector camp, was located by Lake Oahe (the Missoury River), North Dakota, from the springtime in 2016 until springtime in 2017. The camp was set up to protect the local drinking water from a pipeline and with time came to symbolize Native American Resistance, environmentalism and the fight against eco-racism worldwide. It became well known internationally for its many participants, the indigenous people and allies who came from all around the world, and its focus on peaceful ways of protesting.

Marielle is a Sámi woman from Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino), a *juoigi* (a yoiker, yoik is a Sámi traditional form of singing), an activist and a mother. Here, I will use the word yoik (*luothi*) and the

words yoiking about the verb (*juoigan*). The history of yoik is a complex one. Six-thousand-year-old rock carvings and written sources from the 12th, 13th, 17th and 18th century support the fact that yoik has been a part of the Sámi societies for a very long time (Graff 2014, p. 67). Many sources talk about the ritual practice of yoiking, but also the everyday importance of it. How kids often learned to yoik before they learned to speak, for example (Graff 2004). Yoik has also been an important way of communicating and connection for Sámi people in the context of Norwegianisation. However, the strict laws forbidding anyone to yoik from the 17th century and the persecution of Sámi *noaiddit* (Sámi who had contact with other realms, could influence beings and help when someone were unwell or had a problem) have had a great effect on Sámi people. These views on yoik spread to the Christianized Sámi populations and strong beliefs about yoik being a devilish practice have made many Sámi wary of yoik, especially the older generations, and in Sámi core areas. The relationship to yoik is constantly changing, however, as will become apparent in the sections below.

Marielle is the main interviewee in this text. The material builds on my master's thesis "Standing Rock as a Place of Learning—Strengthening indigenous Identities", where Marielle also plays a big role. For my thesis, I interviewed several other activists from Standing Rock, Zintkala Mahpia Win Blackowl is one of them, and also a part of this text. I have also cited other interviews with activists from Standing Rock and spoken with and cited other *juoigit* (yoikers), including Sten Jörgen Stenberg and my father, Torgeir Vassvik. Conversations with friends such as Kristin Solberg, Andreas Daugstad Leonardsen, my mother Neena Sharma Uhre, other relatives and friends along the way have been insightful and helpful. Through these accounts and conversations, I have tried to answer some of my own questions about Sámi spirituality, *vuoiŋŋalashvuohta*, and identity, and ask some new ones.

Here, I will go into relations between yoik and spirituality, identity being central to both of these themes together with a focus on connectivity. Identification is, in my experience, a process and a way of connection (Somerville 2011). In a world where a disconnection seems to be the norm, indigenous people working towards a closer relationship to land, family, community and spirituality is sometimes an effort that is misunderstood by members of the majority culture. Here, I will talk about the way processes of identification can lead to a sense of belonging, wellbeing and a stronger sense of connection. In what way is yoik, an important pillar of Sámi culture, instrumental in this ongoing process for Marielle and other yoikers? How has the role of yoik changed within Sámi communities?

Marielle and I met for the first time in Minneapolis, December 2017, preparing to go to Standing Rock. We were part of the same group of Sámi activists going there to help out in the ways we could and show our solidarity with the water protectors there. The movement gained a surprising amount of media-attention compared to many indigenous and/or environmentalist movements today and in the past. Here is an account from Cannupa Hanska Lugar, an artist, born on the Standing Rock reservation. His reflections put into words some of my thoughts and show how important this movement was for many Native Americans.

> Everybody came in hoping to experience something new, something profound. But when they got there, they realized they're not a part of something new, they've just been absorbed into something that is much older than the entire country. That's incredibly humbling.
>
> (...) The big difference is that I think [people have] had the opportunity to encounter us not as a mystic, romantic other. It's just like, "Dude, we're just human beings." What does "Lakota" mean in English? It literally means "the people." (...) This is why we say this is not a protest, why we are water protectors. We're not just in protest of a pipeline. What we are trying to do is maintain a cultural practice. This is our culture. It's a part of our society.
>
> (...) The amazing thing is that whether you were Native or not, what we witnessed up there is the awakening of a giant that has been sleeping. It's the power of us as living things—rather than us waiting for somebody to save us. It was so grass roots. Native people have never been subject to that amount of solidarity. It left everybody awestruck. And the number of Native people coming together, nothing like this has been seen since the 19th

century. Tribes that had previously been enemies, coming together—there's no way for me to describe to you what that means. It's far too profound[1].

There was something unique about Standing Rock that I think people could pick up on just by following the movement online. Many were attracted by the survivance that shone through via videos, music, articles and posts from Standing Rock that were spread online. Survivance is a term firstly used in the context of Native American studies by the Anishinaabe[2] cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor. It describes a life of active survival, of thriving as indigenous peoples, strengthening and recreating one's culture and identity freely without the confinements of stereotypes and oppressive authenticity (Sissons 2005). Oceti Sacowin at Standing Rock in many ways became a "liminal space" where people felt free to live lives of active survivance.

Hanska Lugar touches on several important points about the camp as a continuation of old traditions, worldviews, and with that the struggle for sovereignty and the right to a nondestructive and close relationship to the land and the water for everyone, stood out as an eloquent way of putting some of my own impressions into words. Personal and communal identity stand as grounding pillars in the work of indigenous activists, community workers, politics, artists and researchers all over the world. Here, I will talk about identity in a relational sense. With support from indigenous methodology, I delve into some of the ways that identity can be seen as connected to land, tradition, spirits and people.

1.1. Colonialism in Sápmi and Decolonizing and Indigenizing Responses

A: Mr. Cox, Spencer. For the last hundred and eighteen years, I have lived in your world, your white world. In order to survive, to thrive, I have to be white for fifty-seven minutes of every hour.

Q: How about the other three minutes?

A: That sir, is when I get to be an Indian, and you have no idea, no concept, no possible way of knowing what happens in those three minutes.

Q: Then tell me that's what I'm here for.

A: Oh, no, no, no. Those three minutes belong to us. They are very secret. You have colonized my land but I am not about to let you colonize my heart and mind. (Alexie 2000, p. 194)

Here, Etta Joseph is visited by the researcher Spencer Cox who want to interview her about pow wow dancing (traditional Native American dance); however, this is not what Etta has in mind. She tells him the story of when she met her first lover, John Wayne. The segment above illustrates the sentiment many indigenous peoples might experience in the meetings with researchers over the years.

I grew up in Oslo (not exactly what one would call a traditional Sámi core area). My father is from Gáŋgaviikka (Gamvik), a costal Sámi village on the northernmost part on mainland on the Norwegian side. In my early twenties, I started reading more about Sámi history and felt a need to connect with Sápmi, Sámi culture, my family and Gáŋgaviikka.

I was unsure about going into these subjects, because I am still figuring out what it is to be a researcher working with indigenous subjects. As a Sámi, I am an insider and I resonate with Etta and her sentiments in the section above. But as a Sámi who grew up outside Sámi core areas, I feel I have to be careful and not act like Spencer, who does research simply for the sake of research, or out of curiosity without realizing that the knowledge that he is seeking is coming from someone, a real

[1] LA Times, "The artist who made protesters' mirrored shields says the 'struggle porn' media miss point of Standing Rock", http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-cannupa-hanska-luger-20170112-story.html.

[2] The autonym for a group of culturally related Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the United States that include the Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Oji-Cree, Mississaugas, Chippewa, and Algonquin peoples https://www.google.no/search?dcr=0&source=hp&ei=8s6WWtmJHoaLsAGd_7zYDQ&q=Anishinaabe&oq=Anishinaabe&gs_l=psy-ab.3..0l10.906.906.0.1275.3.1.0.0.0.0.158.158.0j1.1.0....0...1c.2.64.psy-ab..2.1.157.0...0.0icn8QLO-AQ.

person with a unique story. Etta knows that she will never get anything back from her voluntary work, and that if she ever got to read the results, she would probably not recognize herself or her culture in it. I think that is why she wants to tell him her own story, to make him see that his ideas about her and her culture are so much more than what he could read about in any book. The knowledge Spencer Cox is seeking is a Western construct and has little to do with the culture that he is researching. It does not contribute to a deeper discussion or understanding in the relation between these two cultures. And it most certainly is not giving anything back to the people he is taking the knowledge from.

I want this article to open up for non-colonial and indigenizing ways of talking about Sámi identity and vuoiŋŋalašvuohta, but I also do not want to relate to the "subject" of this article or Marielle, in an exploitative or extractive way in any sense. I keep reminding myself of this because research institutions and educational systems have played an important role in the colonization not only of indigenous lives, but also their minds. It has made indigenous people wary of research, and many have a hard time seeing the "inherent value" of research that many researchers claim. As Etta (A) says to Spencer (Q):

> A: Those books about Indians, those texts you love so much, where do you think they came from?
>
> Q: Well, certainly, all written language have its roots in the oral tradition, but I fail . . .
>
> A: No, no, no. Those books started with somebody's lie. Then some more lies were piled on top of that, until you had a whole book filled with lies, and then somebody slapped an Edward Curtis photograph on the cover and called it good.
>
> Q: Those books of lies as you call them, are the definitive texts on the Interior Salish.
>
> A: No, there's nothing definitive about them. They're just your oral traditions and they're filled with the same lies, exaggerations, mistakes, and ignorance as our oral traditions. (Alexie 2000, pp. 193–94)

Here, want to open up for a discussion about identity and religion or spirituality in Sámi contexts and to write about it in a way that is on Sámi premises, or on Marielle's and my premises at least. This is why I choose to focus on Sámi and other indigenous stories, to make use of Sámi research, carried out by Sámi researchers and to implement indigenous methodologies, focusing on indigenous experiences. To show why and how I am going to do this the next couple of pages will touch upon the history of Western research and indigenizing and/or decolonizing responses to such research.

For indigenous peoples research, the western paradigm of knowledge and education, what Cecilia Salinas (2020) calls "the pedagogy of detachment", historically has done more damage than it has done them good. Residential schools created a physical break from home, preventing indigenous children from learning their cultural practices and culture-based knowledge. Instead, they were taught Western values, worldviews and practices (Kuokkanen 2000, pp. 412–13).

Salinas (2020) writes about how the pedagogy of detachment has shaped her experiences with educational institutions both in Argentina as a child and in Norway as an adult. The pedagogy of detachment is based on Western values of knowledge and learning, removing the connection between our emotional knowledge and our intellectual knowledge. In school, children learn to categorize their thinking, separating it from their physical, spiritual, emotional, cultural, historical and political knowledge—their situatedness (Salinas 2020).

> By disregarding, negating and exterminating ways of knowing and doing, it has been possible to sustain the idea that the alienation of the mind from the body, and the self from others and from their environments, is natural and desirable. However, this notion has led us away from understanding. (. . .) Knowledge about the world is created and imparted through fragmentation, as the whole is divided into parts. It is in this sense I claim that the pedagogy of detachment is intrinsically colonial. (Salinas 2020, p. 12)

The way a society brings up its children shows us a lot about the worldviews and values of that society. Indigenous experiences with colonialism vary, but they do have many similarities, education and missionization often being the main tools of forced assimilation. In Sápmi, as well as in many other indigenous societies, boarding schools were removing children from their parents, breaking ties between generations and disturbing the most important process of learning the knowledge of their own cultures in children's lives. Victoria Harnesk of the Sámi Association in Stockholm stated, "We, the Sámi people, have not been subjected to a bloody genocide but of a cultural, 'soft' genocide, based on hidden but effective tools employed by the swedish state to steal our land, water, language, religion, identity, and the possibility to pursue our traditional livelihoods" (Kuhn 2020, p. 8).

The effect of this "cultural, 'soft'" genocide has left its marks on Sámi, our cultures and our health and wellbeing. Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien emphasizes how Native Women from the South Puget Sound area valued healthy relationships with people, spirits, nature and the dead for the maintenance of a healthy self. The rupture of relationships led to the dissolution of the self (O'Brien 2008, p. 138). In the text called *Restoring Sacred Connection with Native Women in the Inner City*, Alanna Young and Denise Nadeau use the term "psychosocial trauma" to talk about the experiences of many urban Native Americans. They argue that for the women they worked with the relationship with the land and all living beings have been disrupted, causing a spiritual separation. For many, they say, this disconnection led to a feeling of "loss of awareness of connection to both those in their communities and to the land" (O'Brien 2008, p. 121). In essence, the establishment of a self-defined identity through connections with one's community, "the sacred", and the land is more difficult than challenging racism, sexism and colonialism from a place of confidence and "collective power" and to "find one's own truth and resist and challenge imposed structures of thinking and being that have become incorporated in the body" (O'Brien 2008, p. 132).

According to Jens-Ivar Nergård, the most substantial colonization of the Sámi population was not the geographical borders that were drawn, dividing their lands, but rather the offensive against Sámi civilization. While the borderlines were motivated by power interests between nation states, the inner colonization comprise of a more dramatic and thoroughgoing and systematic annexation. Most visible were the attacks on the language. Far less seeable was the offensive against Sámi thinking and world views, beliefs, and cosmology, knowledges and connections to nature (Nergård 2019, p. 21)

The removal of people from their cultures and their lands, however, was based on Darwinistic ideas strongly impacting the scientific writing of the 18th and 19th centuries, reinforcing racial typologies and corresponding behaviors, attributes and capabilities among different populations. Race as an intellectual term and scientific category became a matter of interest, and an important tool in the identity-making of peoples of the Western world, feeding ideas about nations, citizenship, progress, and "otherness" (Alam 2016, p. 80). The cultures of indigenous peoples were seen as lower steps in a series of developmental stages and sociologists would study these societies with the intention of discovering how Western societies had developed. In a way, people now could feel that they were doing the "primitive natives" a favor, taking control over the land they lived on so that it could be used in the most profitable way, teach them how to learn, how to speak, how to dress, how to pray to the right god, and how to feel about themselves.

Decolonization or indigenization aims towards gaining a critical consciousness of oppression, the misrepresentation of history, and discovering our own roles in this unfolding and the degrees to which we have internalized colonialist beliefs and ways of living and challenging the racist, culturalist and dualistic notions prevalent in much of Western ideas and scholarship still guiding many Western and non-Western people's lives. It is also about transforming colonial relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people (Young and Nadeau 2005, p. 10). More specifically, indigenization is about working towards a positive re-building of our communities, it is about empowerment and rejecting victimization and the re-centering of ourselves within indigenous traditions (Stevenson 2000). Here, I will use both terms interchangeably because I do not limit de-colonization to indigenous peoples

only and therefore the term indigenizing will in some cases exclude non-indigenous people from the larger potential that lies in the de-colonizing process.

Jeffrey Sissons, amongst others, comments on the way the nineteenth century's racist ideas have been smuggled into the research of today, and how the ninetieth century idea that "the human species consisted of different races inhabiting different environments and this explained differences in appearance and thought," still is evident in the way humanity today is divided into different cultures, that instead of race "explains" why we think and look the way we do. "Racism now exists as a trace, a ghostly presence that haunts culturalist thought" (Sissons 2005, p. 37).

Kuokkanen reminds us that unlike Western scholars who can ignore this, because outright racist academic approaches has waned somewhat during the last decades, indigenous people cannot remain indifferent since these sentiments still affects us in several ways through degrading and prejudiced beliefs and opinions on indigenous identities, worldviews and cultures (Kuokkanen 2000, p. 413). Within indigenous studies it is thoroughly documented how indigenous knowledge often is reduced to a "subjective", emotional "belief", while Western knowledge is seen to be based on "objective facts" (Sehlin MacNeil and Lawrence 2017, p. 147).

Rauna Kuakkanen underlines the importance of an indigenous paradigm that bring up questions of relevance for indigenous communities and contributes to understanding different ways of knowing and looking at the world (Kuokkanen 2000, p. 414). Here, I raise questions about identity and spirituality, and try to answer them with the help of Marielle and others, in ways that might be illuminating and interesting for some, but also, I hope, helpful or thought provoking for Sámi and other indigenous people that find themselves wondering the same questions, or who might not have thought about these subjects at all.

1.2. Why Indigenous Methodologies?

Indigenous research is primarily for indigenous peoples. The main principle of indigenous research is "that ethics and value beliefs that define relations and responsibilities of researchers to the researched should be addressed before ontological and epistemological questions and should drive the research process from formulation of research proposal to dissemination of findings" (Chilisa 2012, p. 20).

To understand the degree to which indigenous people often are connected to their communities, in many ways is essential to the understanding of indigenous ontologies[3] (Chilisa 2012, p. 20). Realising that both Marielle, Stenberg and myself are talking from experiences that relates to a belonging to a Sámi community, whether it is within a Sámi reindeerherding community, a community that is preoccupied with learning and strengthening Sámi joik, or as a Sámi person relating to Sámi communities as a newcomer and a researcher.

Valuing a relational epistemology[4] is an important part of the indigenous research paradigm. That means appreciating the fact that there are many ways of knowing, and that indigenous ways of knowing is based on relationality: the connection and relationships of all things and beings. Looking at a flower in a laboratory is different from studying it where it grows. Indigenous ways of knowing are based on connections (Chilisa 2012, p. 21).

A relational axiology[5] bases itself on the theory of relational accountability, which means that it embraces the fact that all parts of the research process are related and that the researcher is responsible for and obligated to all relations (Chilisa 2012, p. 22) or connections and the responsibility that comes with it. Opening up about personal and intimate Sámi subjects as representatives for Sámi communities to a largely unknown audience is something that Marielle, Stenberg and myself has reflected on.

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3 "Ontology is the body of knowledge that deal with the essential characteristics of what it means to exist" (Chilisa 2012, p. 20).
4 "Epistemology inquires into the nature of knowledge and truth" (Chilisa 2012, p. 21).
5 "Axiology refers to the analysis of values to better understand their meanings, characteristics, their origins, their purpose, their acceptance as true knowledge, and their influence on people's daily lives" (Chilisa 2012, p. 21).

This means thinking about the ways our words affect our communities. Asking what this research is contributing with to Sámi communities and research is also important.

Relying on Kuokkonen's own definition, the characteristics of an indigenous paradigm are as follows: (1) a social and political agenda aiming at a thorough indigenizing of indigenous societies, (2) a critical view towards Western metaphysical dualism, still shaping most of today's research practices and ways of looking at the world, (3) a holistic approach striving towards a balance between all aspects of life, not separating intellectual, social, political, economic and spiritual forms of human life, and (4) situatedness, an explicit connection to the researcher's own culture, meaning that forms of expression and cultural practice are reflected in the researching process. This is in the use of language, style, structure, methods and assumptions of knowledge and the role of the researcher (Kuokkanen 2000, p. 417). Moreover, this is a direct response to the way research has a habit of separating experience and knowledge from its surroundings and contexts, following the pedagogy of separation. A process that is possible to trace just by looking at the way language is used in research. "Experience becomes data, places and relationships become research sites, and people become focus groups, respondents" (Khan 2016).

The material used here relies on two different interviews with Marielle. The first interview was done the same year we came back from Standing Rock focusing on her experiences there. For the second interview, I asked Marielle if she would like to talk with me about yoik and vuoiŋŋalašvuohta. This interview was done via video call. The interview was informal as Marielle and I know each other and have kept in touch since the journey to Standing Rock. I asked her some specific questions about identity and spirituality, the focus on yoik came through quite organically. As Marielle spoke, the connection that she felt between yoik, vuoiŋŋalašvuohta, the land and identity became apparent. Picking up the threads that she laid out, I followed up with questions relating to her stories, thoughts and explanations. This is a way of doing interviews that lets the interviewee steer the conversation, shifting the power structure away from a classical "researcher—interviewee set up", allowing the conversation to flow more organically and also in a way that makes the interviewees own thoughts and opinions come through. Being a bit unsure about continuing the work of this article because its subject might open up some emotional subjects for some, I asked Marielle what she thought about me planning to write about vuoiŋŋalašvuohta in this way. Her response assured me that as long as I continuously keep asking myself the following questions, I might be on the right track: Why am I doing this? To what cost? In which way? For whose benefit?

In relating to Zintkala Mahpiya Win Blackowl, whom I interviewed for my master's thesis, I informed here about the theme of the article and made sure that she was fine with me bringing up some of her thoughts about the subject. Sten Jörgen Stenberg, whom I did not interview, but whose concerts and talks live streamed via a group called Sámi Sessions on Facebook I have cited here, has seen the article in two versions. His feedback and consent were given. I am grateful for the positive response I got from Stenberg from the very beginning when I approached him regarding this article, which also motivated me to continue this work.

2. Processes of Identification

Here, I will go into the subject of indigenous identities, establishing the foundation for the analysis below. Why is a self-defined identity important for indigenous peoples and in what way is it connected to cultural and spiritual practices?

Here, Salinas talk about her own struggle with a destructive system of education and her need to find a way to care for and protect herself from the negative effects it had on her. She says that along with the intellectual capacity she developed at school, she also acquired an inferiority complex and a lack of confidence: "I still have to work hard not to reject the person I look at in the mirror every morning" (Salinas 2020, p. 17).

> I was disconnected to my world, my senses and my capacity to understand phenomena from my experiences. Moreover, there was not only an attempt to indoctrinate me through

> amnesia, to borrow Vergès' words, "to create a strong disconnect between the child and the world" (Vergès 2019, p. 96), but also through alienation and devaluation. As such, I had to continue finding ways outside school to develop a perspective of care to protect myself from that devaluation. (Salinas 2020, p. 16)

Salinas' openness provides a view into a rarely expressed (especially within research) experience of the long-term effects of the pedagogy of separation can have on a person. To mend those connections is a way of tending to the wounds of colonialism. These connections lead to a sense of belonging, of safety and a place to ground oneself.

My experience is that identifying as an indigenous person is a process that is not so much about "getting to know yourself," as it is taking back what was taken from you, your family and your ancestors through processes of colonization and assimilation. It is also about holding on to and re-integrating what emerges in this process. It is an ongoing undertaking for many and something that requires a lot of energy and space in one's life. But I would argue that it is worth it in many ways. As Poia Rewi (2011, p. 57) says:

> Cultural identity is important for peoples' sense of self and how they relate to others' and contributes to the individual's wellbeing. Identity reassures one's sense of self-worth, confidence, security and belonging. It instills pride. Conversely, to have no culture is to experience a lack of identity. (...) People without identity are like the tree with no roots to establish itself firmly. It is constantly at disposal of the elements.

Due to the lack of knowledge in Norway about Sámi history and culture, both Norwegians and Sámi people (especially those who have grown up outside Sámi core areas) might have a narrow idea about who Sámi people are. One might argue that the only reason why "indigenous purity" is and has been of interest to settler and post-settler governments because they depend upon varying degrees of biological and cultural authenticity before granting support or recognition to indigenous people. This way of thinking about indigeneity have in themselves become oppressive (Sissons 2005, p. 39). One might ask: "Why should first peoples be expected to have authentic identities while settlers and their descendants remain largely untroubled by their own ill-defined cultural characteristics?" (Sissons 2005, p. 37).

Indigenous peoples are expected by majority-society to fulfill the criteria of what an indigenous person should look like and behave. Movements like the water protectors camp at Standing Rock, however, contribute to the process of turning this around, because it reconnected many young Native American and other indigenous people with their cultures, spiritualities and histories. For young individuals who might have been feeling disconnected from their heritage and culture, seeing other people in similar situations and being able to befriend accepting elders or other knowledge bearers was surely meaningful.

Petrillo and Trejo (2008) write about the internal effects on those living under an oppressive government guided by racist colonialism. When told certain things about oneself by the majority for many generations, it can be hard not to listen, and to keep it at a distance. Sometimes indigenous peoples have to fight to resist these degrading words, and to keep those judgments out of their own heads. In some cases, they turn into self-hatred and internalized oppression and the fight against colonialism has to happen inwardly (Petrillo and Trejo 2008, p. 92). Some would argue that this is the most important fight and that getting rid of internalized colonialist ideas is the key to self-determination. Zintkala Mahpia Win Blackowl said: "The real work is dismantling these structures that live within ourselves".

Indigenous people have been criticized and attacked for living out their lives grounded in their own cultures and belief systems, both through violent processes of colonization and forced assimilation, but also through the idea, prevalent among many researchers, that identity and belonging are constructs and strategies designed solely to gain rights to land or political power. The trouble with concepts such as "indigeneity" and "identity" is the inherent colonialist environment in which they were created.

My point is that although fighting for political power and land rights might have become a part of the struggle for indigenous peoples as an effect of colonization, processes of identification are essential for creating those connections that are so important for our health, mentally and physically. I am trying to convey the inherent emotional need that fuels this process. No matter how complex and intertwined our identities are we are entitled to fully claim our heritage and our histories. Just like everyone else's identities, indigenous identities are varied, and they do not fit any descriptions of what they are "supposed to be."

3. VUOIĐĐALAŠVUOUHTA—A Way of Being

When Marielle and I sat down for the second interview, I wanted to ask her about vuoiŋŋalašvuohta and identity in a more direct sense, and what she thinks about the relationship between these two terms.

> Let's say I'm going to sew a pair of *gápmagat* (Sámi shoes made from reindeer hide). Within this knowledge lies so much more than just creating a product. Within that there is a lot of spirituality. Many people think about noaiddit when they hear "Sámi spirituality", something otherworldly, but for me it is about everyday-life. How you act and move in nature. What you think when you're there, how you relate to animals, to the water, the ground, what you do when you prepare materials taken from an animal.
>
> There is a lot more than you can learn from a book within this (sewing the gápmagat). The practical work is one thing, but it is the thinking behind it and also that it (the knowledge) has passed through all these people for many generations. (...) So what I mean is that when I was younger, I thought I was very distanced from this vuoiŋŋalašvouhta. I thought that this was something that belonged to the old days. (...) Because it was presented in *ungdomsskolen* (junior and senior High School, age 13–15) as a separate subject (...) as something from the past, as old Sámi religion. But vuoiŋŋalašvuohta is a lot more than a religion. And I think that vuoiŋŋalašvuohta, the old Sámi way of thinking, isn't really a religion, it is a way of life, it is a philosophy, it is a way of being[6].

In Sámi traditional knowledge, the boundary between the earthly and the spiritual, the empirically "objective" and the intuitive are porous (Nergård 2019). Lovisa Mienna Sjöberg (2018) too talk about the way categories like religion and spirituality are contested, especially within indigenous contexts. A concept such as spirituality presupposes a separation between the spiritual and something that is not; "nature religion" surmises the same dichotomy. The Western, scientific way of looking at the world, through "facts", "objectivity" and research has declared itself as above the spiritual and the religious. The idea that Western secular societies, distinctly separating the worldly and the religious, are the trailblazers of the right, the real and the true is implicit in this. The term secular refers to the temporal, the worldly and the non-religious. The world of science has taken as a starting point that there is a reality "out there" that can be studied and described. This reality can be reached by studying nature through natural science practices (Sjöberg 2018).

Seen from inside of the Western, science-based, materialistic belief system, religion seems like a pit of superstition and irrationality, representing a step on the latter of development that belongs to the past, even if recent research show that religious people struggle less with anxiety and depression than non-religious people, the numbers of suicide are lower amongst religious people compared to non-religious individuals, and they are less prone to overuse of alcohol or other narcotics than the non-religious part of the population (Sheldrake 2017, pp. 20, 22). For those who believe in the materialistic nature theory where everything is mechanical, causation based and all emotion an effect of endorphins and hormonal changes, choosing a life "without meaning" can seem like an heroic

[6] All of Marielle's quotes are translated from Norwegian by me.

act, a brave oath of allegiance to the "objective truth". However, the philosophical materialism is not the truth itself, it is a worldview, a belief system. Even if it has many devotees, the belief in it is not a question of intellectual, logical necessity, but one of ideology or personal or cultural habits (Sheldrake 2017, p. 70). The inherent belief in materialistic nature theory is mirrored in the division between the religious and the non-religious. As Sjöberg says:

> The term faith and faiths are associated with a secular worldview. A worldview where religion and religious practice, especially christianity, has been studied as a phenomenon belonging to the private sphere. This leads us away from the practical and material sides of religious practice. (Sjöberg 2018, p. 19)

Sjöberg reminds us that realities are not explained by practices and beliefs but are instead produced in them. Realities are produced and have a life through their relations (Sjöberg 2018). Yoik and yoiking can be seen as one of these practices, connecting the listener or the juoigi to their surroundings or inner worlds in ways that creates and affirms lived realities also on a spiritual level.

The fact that yoik can be seen as a spiritual practice might not sit well with everyone. Marielle, however, sees yoik as vuoiŋŋalaš, and she is not the only juoigi I have heard talking about the healing power of it and of the connections that are made through it. Here, Marielle talks about what she sees as the relationship between *luohti* (yoiking song, subject) and vuoiŋŋalašvuohta:

> I have always known that of course there is a link both to the past, future and now in luohti, and that there is a strong vuoiŋŋalašvuohta in there. I learned very early, it was a juoigi who told me when I was young, that these *luođit* (plural form of luohti) that were used in ceremonies, those that we have had through history, and that no longer exist in that form, these juoigis said that there have been luođit that have been ceremonial, that have been in use only in these ceremonies that are a bit different than those that are yoiked today.
>
> So when I was young I thought that these vuoiŋŋalaš (spiritual) luođit were gone. (. . .) As I became a traditional juoigi myself, I was joiking for many years, learning more and more, until I felt I had the basis to call myself a juoigi. But along the way I learned that luohti is vuoiŋŋalašvuohta, but on many different levels. It is between humans, it is in communication between people, it is in the way you perceive the world. So it is clear that it is like you write in your thesis about Standing Rock, of course luohti is essential to identity and vuoiŋŋalašvuohta.

Before we left for Standing Rock, Marielle talked about how she hoped to be inspired by the indigenous people she would meet there to explore Sámi vuoiŋŋalašvuohta further. In the first interview we did together the same year we came back from Standing Rock, I took the opportunity to ask her if she felt that her time at Standing Rock inspired her to dig deeper into these subjects.

> There is a lot in Sámi spirituality that is unsaid. Sámi spirituality lies in the way we are and what we think. So we don't speak very loudly about it, but it's there. (. . .) And the camp, it was very spiritual, and all of it was very familiar, the not so familiar part was the vocal aspect of it. That so much was said aloud, like, "Now we're going to have this ceremony." But I think that if its (vuoiŋŋalašvuohta) to survive we'll have to talk about it, because it will disappear if we're not conscious of it. I feel that we're the middle generation who were taught by the elders, who in turn practice it, but never talk about it. We have learned by observing, while not actually practicing it ourselves, so how will the kids learn, right? Then we will actually have to talk about it and do it consciously.

Similarly to Marielle Lovisa, Mienna Sjöberg stresses the need for a verbalization of Sámi knowledge, translated from Swedish by me:

> Those arenas where knowledge, also about spirituality, earlier were transmitted are disappearing and replaced by new ones. In these situations there arises a need to verbalize

> and transform this knowledge so that it becomes transferable to other arenas and the coming generations. Maybe it becomes extra vulnerable when the everyday use of these practices aren't verbalized and formalized, since the everyday is also what is changing so quickly. (Sjöberg 2018, p. 8)

During a conversation with a *guvllár* (someone that can heal and help you solve problems, communicate with the being of the ground and/or find lost objects) in Guovdageaidnu, she told me how her mother had told her to be careful and keep quiet about her powers because they used to burn people like them[7]. It was surprising to me because to me the witch hunting days seem to be a long time ago, but for her it is still a living memory. It made me realize how hard the struggle to reinforce Sámi spirituality still is today and how present the memories of condemnation against Sámi rituals and spirituality can be, especially in the Sámi core areas, where the connection to elders, who have these experiences even fresher in mind, is strong. This might be part of the reason why the verbalization of Sámi spiritual knowledge has been muted and led to some additional challenges for people like Marielle who wants to strengthen the traditional Sámi spirituality.

Yoiking is also a part of this verbalization or vocalization process for many, connecting Sámi individuals to their communities and lands. The relationship is not as straight forward for many Sámi as one could wish, however. It is also steeped in a colonial soup of missionization and forced assimilation. In the next section, I talk about the changing role of yoik in Sámi communities, and the way that yoik in itself can serve as a means to heal and gain new strength in a world where Sámi lives and livelihoods are threatened by colonial and capitalist forces.

4. Strengthening Connections

Yoik in itself is and has been a way to communicate and create bonds between people, to the extent that, in some cases, according to written sources, people have been using it instead of speech. In the 1800s, Petrus Læstadius, a Swedish priest and missionary, spoke of how yoik and speech were blended.

> As the conversation becomes more lively, the prose ceases and 'one begins to talk through song. One's feelings are expressed in song, people start to hug each other, and one talks and responds to each other with song'. (Læstadius quoted by Graff 2014, p. 71)

Another story about yoik as means of direct communication is from a text by Ola Graff, a Norwegian researcher specializing in yoiking. Here, he talks about a Swedish teacher who knew two friends whom at times changed from talking to yoiking when "some strange mood came over them." Graff quotes the teacher saying: "Now and then it might not be possible to resolve minor conflicts with ordinary prose but 'with ascending and descending tones of Sámi rhythm, they 'overwhelmed' each other with what was in their hearts'" (Graff 2014, p. 71). More than talking about the functions of yoiking, these stories convey its strong presence in Sámi traditions. The process of Norwegianization was an attempt at exterminating yoik, amongst other Sámi traditions.

Some Sámi people today have conflicting feelings about yoiking. An example is an experience in Guovdageaidnu, where I studied North Sámi at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences with a group of around 20 Sámi students of various ages, many of them around my age at the time, 26, or a bit younger. The class was asked by a teacher to yoik one of our teacher's yoiks, as a sign of gratitude at the end of our first term. However, many of our classmates almost did not make any sound during practice. One of the students spoke up, saying that people might be uncomfortable with yoiking, because they do not feel they have the skills and experience to be able to do it properly, at least not in

[7] Later she said that she wanted me to specify that the noaidis where the ones who got burned, but that a guvllár had to be careful not to be noticed for their powers so they would be burned too. In her view only noaidis were the ones who had the powers or the will to affect others negatively. This is not an opinion shared by all Sámi.

front of others. When we changed the yoiking sounds into more Western sounding singing sounds, people seemed to feel more comfortable actually singing the melody out loud.

I could empathize with the feeling of my classmates, still struggling to break through these barriers inside that we in some way have been conditioned to put up. Being the daughter of a *juoigi*, I have grown up with luothi. I have quite recently started to learn yoiking, and have found it challenging at times, the sounds and melodies hard to master, and many times having the feeling that it is too late for me. But I think this is a feeling that is not so much grounded in the bodily capacity but in the psyche.

A part of it for many might be the feelings described by Hämäläinen et al.'s text about the use of yoik in dementia care in Northern Norway: "On the one hand, one might long for the language, the yoik, the acknowledgement of who one is. On the other, one may bear a general sense of shame for the very same things, transferred through generations of Sámi people who were oppressed and devalued" (Hämäläinen et al. 2020, p. 33). As Petrillo and Trejo (2008) write, the narrative written by majority society has an immense effect on minorities, and in this case the devaluation of yoik and Sámi culture has left its mark on many. This is where the internalized oppression has to be recognized and dealt with.

What might seem like a contradiction at first glance is the presence of the ghost of oppressive authenticity in this situation. Sámi people from outside Sámi core areas might feel that they do not have the skills or even the permission to yoik. Because there is a lack of realistic and "non-authentic" Sámi role models portrayed in popular media, representing the reality of many Sámi (those who do not speak any Sámi language, those that never have yoiked or who grew up in a city), some might feel like they do not fit into the image of who a "real" Sámi is. This can stop us mentally and physically from taking part in activities like yoiking. The fact that the Norwegian reality shows about yoik mostly portrayed non-Sámi learning yoik from competent Sámi *juoigit* (or an already competent juoigi preparing with other juoigis to perform), instead of including Sámi who do not know how to yoik and who want to learn, also attests to the unwillingness to go into stories about "non-authentic" Sámi. This would probably have created some discomfort for the Norwegian audience but would have been a great opportunity to talk about why so many Sámi have been disconnected from this part of their culture. This part of Norway's history is unknown to many Norwegians.

Yoiking today is something that many might see on television or at concerts, instead of at home in a non-performative setting. It seems like yoik has been moved out of the private sphere and into the public one. Yoik is more and more being appreciated in a performative setting, through recordings, concerts and TV-shows than in the private, intimate and practical way. Nils Oskal (2014), a Sámi professor in philosophy, talks about the Sámi *náhppi,* and its use in Sámi reindeer herding communities. The náhppi was used by the women to milk their reindeer. By the end of the 1940s, the reindeer industry and the communities overall underwent a series of changes, which resulted, among other things, in the end of reindeer dairy production and the economy began to focus solely on meat production. This change happened at the same time as the institutionalization of *doudji*, Sámi handicraft. And, as the náhppi gradually lost its practical function during the 1950s, it gained a new life in the duodji-tradition as an object of traditional Sámi handicraft (Oskal 2014, p. 88).

The tendencies that might point towards a changing role of yoik in the daily life of Sámi people can be compared to the náhppi's situation. Yoik seems to have been moving out of the practical and private sphere into a more institutionalized and formal one. This is a part of a longer process, starting according to many with Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, a multitalented visual artist, juoigi and poet, who became one of the first to merge yoik and rock with great success during the late 1960s. Through him, yoik became a strong symbol of Sáminess. Yoik seemed to be ready for stages and recordings, it became a much awaited and needed source of pride and created bonds between many Sámi people (Angel 2015). But what happens to yoik when it is brought up on stage? Ánde Somby, a *juoigi*, reflects:

> The feature of dialogue becomes a challenge when the yoik came on stage, it became a monologue. That was maybe the part of the negotiation that was central in the Davvi Šuvva[8] time, the yoik was now on stage, but how should it be? What kind of form should it have? (Angel 2009, p. 96)

Although I am still seeing many examples of Sámi taking yoik back into their lives, it might seem like the role of yoik on a larger scale has shifted. This is of course a very natural process. Practices change and peoples interests and priorities will always fluctuate. Yet it is also a fact that the reason for this changed relationship is colonialism and the strict assimilation politics, specifically targeting yoik and Sámi spiritual practices.

For Marielle who has been encouraging people around her to yoik, both through YouTube videos and in real life[9] through courses and talks (and through mentoring a Norwegian participant taking part in the TV-show Muitte Mu), there is more than yoik in itself at stake. For her, it is also about maintaining and strengthening the core of Sámi culture and spirituality. And while Marielle is working for yoik to become a larger part of people's lives again, yoiking has also become something that some Sámi today feel a certain distance towards. This is what Oskal says about the institutionalization of duodji and its effects on the role of the náhppi:

> The organization Sámi Ätnam appointed a dedicated duodji consultant. This was partly due to a desire to allow those making duodji to earn a living from it. (...) Courses on judging duodji were also held. I find this very interesting. It is something new, and it is the starting point for a new set of autonomous criteria for evaluating the náhppi.

I myself have gone to a yoiking course at the musical conservatory in Tromsø, where our end exam was to perform a yoik that we had caught[10] ourselves, to which we received a grade based on what is considered a good, traditional yoik and what is not. There have also been two different TV shows ("Muite Mu" and "Stjernekamp") where the participants, most of them with no experience in yoik, have had to learn yoik over a period, guided by competent yoikers and in the end give a performance that was, in some instances, to be evaluated by well-known yoikers from the Sámi community.

Oskal describes the similarities between the history of the náhppi and the liberation of art. According to Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas, he says, "autonomous art emerges alongside institutions of art critique as a result of division forming within society" (Oskal 2014, p. 86). From this division, the institution of art, along with a unique expert evaluation system is established. In the same way, the yoik courses and TV shows are creating opportunities for people to learn about yoik and yoiking. One might argue that a tendency toward a separated institutionalization of yoik can contribute to further alienation for many Sámi people. And the risk is, as Kuakkanen says, that institutionalization has a binding effect, facilitating structures of power and authority. However, it needs to be said that, for many Sámi people, one of the few opportunities to learn yoiking today might be through these channels. But the question is, inspired by Oskal's analysis of the evolving náhppi, can the yoik be taken so far away from its practical and communicative context that it loses its original meaning or purpose, its ability to relate and communicate with people, and with that its connection to the spiritual?

Marielle, who clearly has given a lot of thought to the subject of Sámi people's mixed feelings about yoiking themselves, also has a more positive view on everyday yoik and its current role in Sámi cultures.

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[8] Dávvi Šuvva was a Sámi festival held for indigenous peoples for the first time in 1979. It took place on Kaarevaara, on a hill west of Gáresavvon/Karesuando on the Swedish side, but there were also events taking place on the Finnish side Kaaresuvanto (Angel 2015).

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2LhBAi-Q8I.

[10] The way a yoik comes about in our world is by being caught by someone, "it comes from the big everything and will show itself to you. The idea is that the yoik is out there, and will manifest itself to the yoiker." Torgeir Vassvik (2019, private communication), juoigi.

> (W)hen it comes to luohti and yoiking I don't see it as totally negative that people have this barrier. Because that shows that you have a very personal relation with it, that you have some kind of feeling of ownership nevertheless, and a respect for it.

For Marielle, the ambiguos relationship to yoik and yoiking that some might experience can be a sign of regard that is there despite norwegianization and missionization. It is a relationship after all, and thus it is not a broken tradition. It is a relationship that can be strengthened. Marielle has been encouraging people around her to yoik, both through YouTube videos and in real life[11].

> So I am working with yoiking-courses, but I can't say I'm a yoiking teacher, because no one can teach anyone to yoik, it is a personal journey that everyone has to work on themselves. But what I can do is to be a kind of a motivator. (...) But as I said this is a journey and you're not a juoigi within a course or two. It's a long journey. But everyone is allowed to be a beginner. And to work with their voice and their identity. I wish that all Sápmelaččat (Sámi people) would work with this (yoiking) or at least establish a relationship with it. «Do want to be a juoigi or not?» At least think about it. And «why not?», or «why do you want to?» and «how?». And don't just let it slip away without thinking about it. I don't want that.

For Marielle, yoiking is also a way of connecting to the land and to nature, and she says that she knows what a disconnection from place and nature feels like.

> It is hard in those areas where the tradition is totally broken. Because luohti and identity is strongly linked, because of that special juoiganmalle (yoiking dialect), that dialect that belongs to you belong to the place you are from and the family. But I understand that it is hurtful. I have those feelings myself because I never got to hear luohti from my mother's area which is totally Norwegianized. And I feel that that it is difficult for me to fully connect to those waters and that area where my mother was from because I haven't heard those luohti, I will never learn them.

Nevertheless, she believes that a relationship to ones homeplace and the land and waters can be restored through yoik.

> Why it (luohti) is so connected to the place you're from and your identity is because luohti isn't just a song about that specific place, it is the melody *of* that place. The best way, I think, is if you can hear an older luohti, but if it doesn't exist its good to hear a new one too. If you just catched or put a yoik, that is also good. So I mean that you can revitalize that part of the culture in those places where luohti is gone. But it takes more than just one person, it takes more people to work on it. Becoming yoikers and working to find the area's dialect.

In our most recent interview Marielle shared her experiences as a performing yoik artist, accentuating that for her there is a clear difference between performative and everyday yoik: "I am a Sámi artist myself, a stage yoiker, but it has been and still is very important to me that I continuously define to myself what I'm actually doing". While Marielle distinguishes between performative and private yoik, Sten Jörgen Stenberg shares other perspectives regarding the effects of yoik, also in a performative setting, below. Marielle is also clear on the fact that, even though she has been teaching yoik to non-Sámi, she believes they can never call themselves a juoigi. And that is just because of the connections she talks about above. Commenting on a near-finished version of this article she said, or rather, wrote:

11 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2LhBAi-Q8I.

> I would like you to add, where it says that I urge people to yoik more, that this is about our people. I also have courses for non-sámi, to spread knowledge about our culture. It is the practitioners of a culture that holds the right to develop their own culture in the directions they prefer, and it should not be defined by people from outside that culture and society. That is why I think that non-Sámi can't be yoikers and use it to their own preference. Do you understand what I mean? During these courses I talk about why and how it is so connected to Sámi identity (as you already mention, it has to do with ancestors, connections to place and so on). It is yoik as a language/communication that is threatened, yoik on stage and the likes of it is a one way communication and mostly entertainment.

For many indigenous people re-claiming identity has to do with a return to tradition (O'Brien 2008, p. 9). "Traditions", as James Clifford observes, "articulate—selectively remember and connect—past and present" (Clifford 2013, p. 57). Traditions are constantly in the making, engaging with the now, revisiting the past, and exchanging ideas, concepts and motivations with its surroundings. In connection with indigenous health and healing, traditions are often seen as the right path toward living a healthy life physically and mentally (O'Brien 2008, p. 11). Young and Nadeau write that "The ability to survive and even thrive in the face of adversity" has been linked with tapping into our own natural spiritual resilience," and that "cultural identity is a primary source of strength and spirituality is a core aspect that contributes to this cultural resilience" (Young and Nadeau 2005, p. 2). Furthermore, they write:

> The many aspects of colonialism that attacked religious identity, many of which continue today in different forms, also eroded communities' sense of their spiritual identity. For many this spiritual dispossession was and is expected in loss of awareness of connection to both those in their community, and to the land." (Young and Nadeau 2005, p. 4)

As the movement in Standing Rock also points to, it is not only missionization that is creating disconnection; extractive projects on our lands are doing the same. The fight for undisturbed lands and clean water is taking place in Sápmi too. This is a story from Sten Jörgen Stenberg, a reindeer herder from Málåge (Ume Sámi) or Maalege (South Sámi) (Malå on the Swedish side of Sápmi). During the heaviest phases of the COVID-19 quarantine in Scandinavia, Stenberg live streamed a mini concert via Facebook to the group Sámi Sessions from his kitchen table. He starts the following part of the concert by showing the area where his reindeer graze. The map is filled with colorful shapes, dots and lines, all representing different activities and settlements in the area that gradually have taken over the land that used to belong to the reindeer. As a way of telling the backstory to the yoik *Losses Beaivi* (a difficult day), he talks about the ways the land itself has become separated from its vuoiŋŋalašvuohta, the beings of the land, and how the local reindeer herders are being separated from traditional Sámi ways of living, spirituality and life views and with that their sense of belonging and identity.

> You first have to understand this picture to understand the pressure that the reindeer husbandry is under. And this whole situation that led to this yoik Losses Beaivi. Because we human beings are changing the grazing patterns and the grazing peace is changed and disturbed. But the human grazing peace or our soul peace is also disturbed in a very deep sense. And that is hard to explain in a society where all these points (on the map) symbolizes development in the Swedish society. And the fact that we are changing, and reindeer herders ways of thinking are changing, and amongst the Sámi, so that we are almost giving up without noticing. And we are talking about this in a very western way when we are explaining how the pastures are disturbed[12].

[12] All quotes from Stenberg is translated from Swedish by me.

But an old, old reindeer herder who is dead now was there when the first windmills came. We had a heart to heart conversation and he cried and was very sorrowful because the spirituality of the place disappeared, as well as the beings of the ground. And he felt burdened by this because it felt like he had betrayed; even if it was not his responsibility to defend it all, he felt as if it had been his life mission.

> And when you lose the spirituality it is easy to say that reindeer husbandry is just an industry. That we have to look at it in an enterprise wise type of way. And there are people within reindeer husbandry who think about it in this way. (. . .) But if you lose your own attachment to the land via spirituality, then we lose ourselves. And it was this sadness that led to this yoik. And I felt very weighed down at that time. And the perspective shifts a little when you . . . In my case, I carried a colleague to the grave because he shot himself. And one does know others who have been in the same situation. And many who have been feeling very, very low. And that's when the perspective changes and you see what's important and what isn't. And this yoik, conveying all this pain, it was needed just then. Simply to unload those emotions[13].

Here, Stenberg talks about two subjects central to this text that I will bring forward: the relationship to land and its beings and his healing use of yoik in this case, and the way that these are connected. The deep sense of loss that comes with the disconnection from the land and vuoiŋŋalašvouhta there rises a need to connect again. It seems like yoiking, for Stenberg, facilitates both an outlet for these emotions and a way of finding one's way back to "what's important".

Marielle has an interest in both of these aspects of yoik. At Standing Rock, yoik was valuable for her as a means to connect to the host, the Lakota people, and to create a relation so that, in Marielle's own words, the Sámi group could: "Learn more from the Lakota about how we could help them protect their land and their water." This is Marielle's account of their first visit to Standing Rock:

> When we came there, me and Inger, we were the first Sámi people. We wore our *gáktis* (Sámi traditional clothing) and we were just being ourselves, but we were not "approved", in quotation marks, as indigenous people until we had yoiked. Then we were. And we got asked a lot of questions (. . .) people were interested in who we were and where we came from. And we got to share and talk more about that and I think we got to learn other things than we would have if we were non-indigenous. So in that way it was a very good thing to yoik.
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> Also it was a very special thing for a yoiking heart to hear people singing and singing all the time. And that we could fall asleep to the drumming and singing, and waking up to it and to people walking past the *lávvu* (Sámi traditional tent) singing. It was in the people's pulse that September. Everything was song. (. . .) So that was proof for me that the traditional music is so crucial when it comes to giving people a sense of community and a common ground. And that also confirms the sorrow I feel for the ongoing disappearance of yoik in the daily life (of Sámi people), because I know it is so important for us as a people and our identity and spirituality. So that is something that we still have. Yoik and traditional singing is a part of the strongest and the most spiritual we have left, and our language of course. So that (the music) was a very beautiful thing and something that made me and Inger feel very much at home.

Sometimes it can be hard to convey the multiple feelings, stories and associations that are necessary for people to meet and understand each other on an emotional level. Through yoik, they managed to convey, without words, something that might have been hard to explain in another way. They earned

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13 https://www.facebook.com/jorgen.stenberg.5/videos/3089166351122068/.

the willingness of these people to communicate[14] and let Marielle and the rest of the Sámi group know how they could help protect the water and the land in the best way. Marielle's ideas about yoik being important for peoples feeling of community and belonging was confirmed at Standing Rock, validating the sadness she has been feeling about the disappearance of yoik in people's everyday lives.

Oskal's account of the changing role of the náhppi mirrors a possible development in the role of yoik in the daily lives of Sámi. Marielle and Stenberg's stories show the emotional commitment to yoik that many still have and attests to the willingness to strengthen and develop the connections that already is present in yoik and yoiking.

5. Situating Our Bodies

It has been established that the relationship to land is often considered to be central to the identity and with that the wellbeing and survival of indigenous peoples and communities (I would argue that this is true for all people, however). Rauna Kuokkanen says that "Regardless the region, indigenous people commonly describe self-determination as a relation with the land" (Kuokkanen 2019, p. 40).

Jens-Ivar Nergård talk about Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas about the body not being an object to our consciousness, but itself a form of consciousness. In this way of thinking, the body is not an object, as it is presented when one believes that body and soul is separate, but an active and experiencing subject. Merleau-Ponty talks about the living and performing body, emphasizing how we understand through and think with our bodies. And how we are connected to our environment through our bodily activities, localizing our consciousness about the world. Our bodily actions are centered in our consciousness and unite body with understanding. Understanding and thinking are connected to the activities of our bodies in motion or stillness and our activities "install themselves" in our bodies (Kuokkanen 2019, p. 65).

Nadeau and Young came together through an interest in the body as a site of decolonization. They see the process of decolonizing the body as a journey of discovering its voice, innate wisdom and goodness, and to re-connect with land, culture and community (Nadeau and Young 2008, p. 117). Reestablishing a connection with one's body, or a connection between the body and spirit as Nadeau and Young say, is crucial both for healing and decolonizing and they see healing and decolonizing as two parts of the same process (Nadeau and Young 2008). Taking responsibility for our own health and choosing to be well through traditional medicine and lifestyle is also to take a stance against assimilation and colonial control (O'Brien 2008, p. 9).

Young and Nadeau have more specifically used singing as way of "re-inhabiting one's body", "recovering one's voice" and building a "cultural self-esteem" (Young and Nadeau 2005; Nadeau and Young 2008). More specifically, Nadeau and Young have developed a form of "cleansing ritual" addressing internalized oppression where they "cast off" "negative feelings or self-concepts that have been generated through cultural stereotyping and injustice—that live in the body" (Young and Nadeau 2005, p. 8). Similarly to Marielle who also uses yoik to connect and strengthen relations to one's own identity and spirituality, Nadeau and Young use the voice as a tool when working with the women in their courses.

> We know how violent internalized racism is. So instead of having to introduce an intellectual analysis of the entire colonial historical dynamic, we are able to sing a song publicly

[14] It should be mentioned that this is not the first time yoiking has created a room for dialogue between the Sámi and other indigenous peoples. When all the indigenous representatives met for the first time in United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in 1975, the Sámi and their "indigenousness" was questioned. The South-American Indigenous representatives "did not want to acknowledge "those rich white Europeans" (Sámi people) as indigenous and protested against the presence of the Sámi people. Anthropologist Helge Kleivan had to "emergency-lecture" on the history of Sámi people in Spanish. However, the one who eventually managed to convince them was Áillohaš, who entered the stage and yoiked for the assemblage—skepticism and distrust was yoiked away and the conference could begin." (Harald Gaski cited in Angel 2015, translated by me).

and voice our sacred power in song as a way of restoring pride in where we come from. (Young and Nadeau 2005, p. 6)

Nadeau and Young are clear on the fact that these methods of connecting to one's body, one's community and nature are effective ways of healing. They use what in a Western context might be called "untraditional" methods, but song and movement, localizing and working with trauma in the body are all elements that are slowly taken back also within Western traditions of health work. These methods of healing, connection and wellbeing have been a part of human life for as long as we know and yoik is one of them (Sexton and Stabbursvik 2010; Hämäläinen et al. 2017).

In his second yoik concert from his kitchen, Sten Jörgen Stenberg talks about his experience with yoik in dealing with losing his father and uncle whom he was very close to. They had been working with reindeer since they were young, his uncle Bertil started in 1930, and through them, he says, he got access to that time which was very important to him.

> They both died at the same time and it came as a shock. And sorrow comes in many forms. And for me, it was like going into this state of sickness, as if something was happening inside my head, somehow. I wasn't myself for a long, long time. I couldn't get out of that state of sadness. It got ahold of my body and soul and gripped it firmly, and it locked me down. And then I went down into the garden I have that is behind my house, during the summer or fall. I remember that moment exactly. So I walked, and wherever one looked, one only saw the memories. That was how it was everywhere, one lived only in the past. One is only sorrow. And that's when I decided to try and yoik. And just with the first notes the heaviness let go. That which had locked my mind and paralyzed me. And already with the two first notes, something happened. And so it was that I started using this, so I yoiked myself well, or to the degree that I could start working again. This yoik became the antidote, and I yoiked it only when I was alone, for several years. No one else got to hear that yoik. It was so incredibly private. I tried performing it a couple of times, but the tears would come. It was too emotional. But when some years had passed it got the opposite way around, I could almost not walk up on a stage without performing it. And that is partly because I think its beautiful, but it is also something I want to share with my environment, because I, and this might be pretentious of me, but if it had that effect on me it might have that effect on others[15].

Stenberg recovered through yoik, and he feels that this effect can be passed on through yoiking for others. This theory is supported by a recent study called "The art of yoik in care: Sámi caregivers' experiences in dementia care in Northern Norway" by Soile Hämäläinen et al., concluding that "The participants expressed that the bodily impact of yoik is clearly visible in elderly people living with dementia."[16] (Hämäläinen et al. 2020: "Yoik enlivens and brings to life" section, para. 1) and that "Yoik may manifest and enhance connectedness to oneself, to the natural environment and to the community" (Hämäläinen et al. 2020: "sammendrag" section, para. 4).

At Standing Rock, there was one particular yoik that was more present than others and it might have been given a bit more attention because of its history that is short compared to other yoiks, but that already had gained a powerful and extensive web of connections. The yoik *Gulahallat Eatnamiin*, or "we speak Earth", was caught by Marielle and became the bearer of one of the central messages from the Sámi activists and artivists who went to Paris during the United Nations Climate Change conference in 2015. The group of Sámi played a significant role, emphasizing the indigenous presence in the protests taking place during the meeting. Gulahallat eatnamiin was yoiked here, both by Sámi and others. "We speak earth", as it was called in English, conveys the understanding of Earth's language. Gulahallat Eatnamin, however, in North Sámi, translates more directly as *communicating*

[15] https://www.facebook.com/jorgen.stenberg.5/videos/3040445852660785/.
[16] All quotes by Hämäläinen et al. (2020) translated from Norwegian by me.

with the earth. And as the Sámi artivist Jenni Laiti says, talking about the meaning of this yoik, "It takes two to communicate", establishing a relationship with the Earth, not solely interpreting its language (Sandström 2017, p. 78). In Laiti's opinion, this perspective is one that is part of the core in Sámi culture. The person yoiking a place, a river, a human, is in close relationship with these. You are not just beside them, you *are* the water of that river, the fish living in it and the people belonging to that place (Stoor 2017, p. 202).

Marielle and the other yoikers in the group at Standing Rock yoiked Gulahallat Eatnamin as a way to present themselves, but also as a way to connect with the land, with their hosts and their struggles.

6. Decolonization Is a Process That Demands a Reconnection with Each Other and/including the Earth

Building a relationship to our heritage, ourselves, the land on which we live and/or the land we or our ancestors came from is important for everyone. In Sámi traditions, these relations to land and community are strong, but, for many Sámi, they have not been. Today, indigenous lands, ways of life and cultures are constantly under threat. At Standing Rock, Marielle became more conscious of the importance of yoik for Sámi people, and of a more vocal spiritual tradition. Like Salinas, we can center on the challenge of detachment. The project of identification is not only for those with indigenous or minority backgrounds, everyone is entitled to a sense of belonging and feeling of connection to one's surroundings, community and history. The movement at Standing Rock was a fight against disconnection—the same sense of disconnection that facilitates all extractive projects and destructions of land and waters in the name of "development". Letting go of the ties to lands, our bodies, our histories, our water, our communities, our songs, our ancestors, our spirituality, and the beings of the ground is a process that is hurtful for everyone. However, indigenous peoples today are often the last bastions of these experiences and can tell stories today about the pain of experiencing these disconnections and the fights that are taken to re-connect, re- integrate and heal, while standing up against further extractive projects on indigenous lands and waters.

The role of yoik within Sámi communities have gone through many changes. Most recently, a move towards a more performative setting is prevalent. Although this is a change that is also deeply connected to the process of assimilation and colonization of Sámi communities. A push toward a more open and proud yoiking culture in the 1960s, led by Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, took the yoik up on stages. It created a new context for yoik and reached a larger audience. Today, yoik has spread even further than ever and is embraced by popular culture and reality TV. It is worth asking how this development is affecting yoik on a deeper level. Maybe as a response to these more recent changes people like Marielle and Stenberg are sharing their knowledge via social media and through concerts and workshops. They have similar thoughts about yoik and its capacities, while they have different views about yoik in a performative setting. Marielle focusing on performative yoik purely as entertainment and Stenberg on the possibility of a healing aspect also within this context.

As we have seen, yoik has been an important part of both Marielle and Sten Jörgen Stenberg's lives. According to Marielle and Stenberg, yoik has the potential to connect people with their homelands, with a vuoiŋŋalašvuohta, and with themselves. This is supported by Hämäläinen et al. and Young and Nadeau who also talk about the importance of yoik and song to the health and wellbeing of people who have experienced colonialism on their bodies.

Writing from Sámi perspectives has been emphasized in this text, making use of Sámi research and resources and opening up for a discussion on Sámi premises. In this way, it is easier to produce research that gives back to the communities it builds on, and perhaps contributing to a constructive debate around vuoiŋŋalašvuohta, identity and yoik.

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Renegotiating Relations, Structuring Justice: Institutional Reconciliation with the Saami in the 1990–2020 Reconciliation Processes of the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway

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Abstract: Social reconciliation has received much attention in Christian churches since the late 1980s. Both the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway initiated reconciliation processes with the Saami (also "Sami" or "Sámi"), the indigenous people of Northern Europe, at the beginning of the 1990s. As former state churches, they bear the colonial burden of having converted the Saami to Lutheranism. To make amends for their excesses in the missionary field, both Scandinavian churches have aimed at structural changes to include Saaminess in their church identities. In this article, I examine how the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway understand reconciliation in relation to the Saami in their own church documents using conceptual analysis. I argue that the Church of Sweden treats reconciliation primarily as a secular concept without binding it to the doctrine of reconciliation, making the Church's agenda theologically weak, whereas the Church of Norway utilizes Christian resources in its comprehensive approach to reconciliation with the Saami. This article shows both the challenges and contributions of the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway to the hotly debated discussions on truth and reconciliation in the Nordic Saami context.

Keywords: colonialism; Christianity; institutional reconciliation; justice; Saami people; Church of Norway; Church of Sweden

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1. Introduction: Churches Confront Their Participation in the Colonial Oppression of the Saami

On 25 March 2001, an intriguing act took place in the Undersåker[1] district, in Jämtland County, Sweden. At the Undersåker church, the then bishop of the Härnösand diocese, Karl-Johan Tyrberg, acknowledged that the Church of Sweden had perpetrated injustices against the Saami in its missionary activities:

> Today, in the diocese of Härnösand, we explicitly want to express the lack of trust, openness and respect that has characterized many of the Church of Sweden's relations with the Saami people. In our history, we have contributed to preserving prejudices about Saami life and thereby reinforcing people's vulnerability. —As a church, we acknowledge that we are part of the guilt that stems from the past. (Engvall 2003, pp. 8–9)

Tyrberg's public pardon has been considered an important milestone in relations between the Church and the Saami of Sweden (Nordbäck 2016, p. 135). The same has been said in my native Finland[2] about the public apology offered by the then bishop of the Oulu diocese, Samuel Salmi,

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[1] *Såahka* in South Saami language.

[2] The author of this article is a Teno river Saami from Northern Finland, Utsjoki. Northern Saami is her mother tongue, and she is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Her Saami Christian roots are in the Laestadian movement and its branch called the Firstborn.

in February 2012 on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Salmi apologized for the church's racial misconduct towards the Saami (Lehtola 2016, pp. 1085–87). Such public acts are reflective of the ongoing discussion about the roles of the Christian churches in the colonization of the indigenous Saami (also "Sami" or "Sámi")[3] people.[4] The debate will only become more amplified during the upcoming decade, since the Nordic countries traditionally inhabited by the Saami—Sweden, Norway, and Finland—will hold their first national Truth and Reconciliation Commissions to examine the forced assimilation of and discrimination against the Saami (Kuokkanen 2020; TRC Finland 2020; TRC Norway 2020; TRC Sweden 2019). The former state churches' roles in these histories are in many respects yet to be fully revealed.

The Saami people[5] traditionally live in Sweden, Norway, Finland, and also Russia, making the realities impacting the Saami international, multifaceted, and multilingual in scope. Despite the many similarities they share with each other—for example, experiences of residential schools—the Saami communities differ in terms of livelihoods, languages,[6] local histories, even religious denominations. In Finland, the Saami historically belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland.[7] For methodological reasons, I will not include these churches in my analysis, since not enough textual sources have been produced by the two Finnish churches regarding the idea of reconciling with the Saami.[8] For example, the above-mentioned speech by Bishop Salmi has not been documented or published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; parts of it have been reconstructed from quotations written by journalists who covered the apology in the Finnish media. The Saami reconciliation patterns in the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway resemble each other more closely, yet they are not identical.

This begs the question, how is the following analysis relevant for religious studies? First, given the underlying tensions and the ongoing political developments, it is topical to examine how the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway conceptualize reconciliation with the Saami and how they contribute to discussions on the need to redress the past. Secondly, it is relevant to examine whether and how the churches utilize Christian heritage for reconciliation, especially since it is such a key category for Christian churches and theology (Nordbäck 2016, pp. 141–42). Thirdly, this analysis may be useful as a heuristic tool when evaluating the success of reconciliation processes in the Saami context.

If the matter of reconciliation is handled only via an apology, then it unnecessarily narrows the idea of reconciliation. For instance, Fanie Du Toit has proposed that reconciliation should be perceived as a rather undefined process (du Toit 2002, cited in Tombs 2017, p. 120). However, applying a loose definition of reconciliation to Christian churches may prove tricky because the concept itself is so

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[3] In this article, I use the form "Saami" since I regard it the most reader-friendly alternative of the three forms ("Saami", "Sami", "Sámi") that are currently being used in English. In the document "Strategic Plan for Sami Church Life", the variation "Sami" is used, and I have kept the original form when quoting from the document.

[4] The Saami were first recognized as an indigenous people in 1977 in Sweden, in 1990 in Norway, and in 1995 in Finland (Finlex 1999; Regjeringen 2020; Sveriges riksdag 1977). In Russia, the Saami belong to "the group of Northern nations who are few in number" (*korennye maločislennye narody severa*) (Saarikivi 2016, p. 9).

[5] It is estimated that the number of Saami has remained relatively the same, with 45,000–50,000 in Norway, 15,000–20,000 in Sweden, 10,000 in Finland, and 2000 in Russia. However, the figures should be viewed critically. In the Nordic countries, the question of who among the more-or-less assimilated Saami should be officially defined as Saami is contested (Seurujärvi-Kari 2011, pp. 13–14; Saarikivi 2016, p. 9).

[6] Of the approximately 70,000 to 80,000 Saami, less than half are thought to speak one of the Saami languages. The Saami languages belong to the Uralic language family. The languages differ so much from each other that linguistics has traditionally divided them into ten Saami languages. The western Saami languages include Southern, Ume, Lule, Pite, and Northern Saami, while the eastern languages include Inari, Skolt, Kildin, and Ter Saami, as well as the recently extinct Akkala Saami in Russia. All Saami languages are on the UNESCO list of endangered languages (Church of Norway 2011, p. 16; Kulonen 2014; Kulonen 2015; Porsanger 2015; Seurujärvi-Kari 2011, p. 20).

[7] In Sweden, the Saami have traditionally belonged to—in addition to the Church of Sweden—the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden. In 2011, it merged with the Baptist Union of Sweden and the United Methodist Church of Sweden. The denomination is now called the Uniting Church of Sweden (*Equmeniakyrkan*) (Ekström 2006, pp. 118–119; Uniting Church of Sweden 2014).

[8] However, it should not be concluded that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland have not engaged in any reconciliation processes with the Saami. Either way, written reflection on reconciliation has not been of a priority in these churches.

complex, ambiguous, and heavily laden with theological meaning and legacy (Baum 1997, pp. 188–89; de Gruchy 2002, p. 14). To borrow from indigenous notions of a trickster figure, the moment that you presume to know what form reconciliation should take, it is transformed before you even notice that your grip on its tale has slipped. Therefore, the approach used in this article is contextual and the central question builds on the work of John W. de Gruchy (de Gruchy 2002, pp. 21–22, 31, 153): What does reconciliation mean as a concrete process?

The type of reconciliation analyzed here is called institutional reconciliation, as opposed to other types of social reconciliation: interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international reconciliation. By institutional reconciliation, I mean a form of social reconciliation that concerns people or peoples and their relations to an institution that initiates a compensational process as a result of their having suffered—or continuing to suffer—from structural violence caused by the institution. According to the Oxford Dictionary, an "institution" is a "society or organization founded for a religious, educational, social, or similar purpose" and an "established official organization having an important role in the life of a country" (Oxford Dictionary 2020). The English word "reconciliation" (derived from the Latin word "reconciliatio") (de Gruchy 2002, p. 24) carries with it the idea of estranged parties attempting to put a stop to enmity and restore friendly relations (Cambridge Dictionary 2020). In a multicultural setting, some indigenous representatives contest whether the word is the best alternative in an indigenous context if one assumes that the notion of "re-conciliation" presupposes an idea of returning to a previous (historical) relationship one would not want to restore (Sterritt 2019). The reason why I use the term "reconciliation" in this article is that it is the standard translation of the Swedish word "försoning" and the Norwegian word "forsoning",[9] the words that the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway use in their church-Saami documents.

The Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway are evangelical Lutheran denominations of Protestant Christianity and the largest Christian communities in their respective countries.[10] Public reflection on the need for reconciliation with the Saami started on a national level in the Church of Norway in the 1980s and in the Church of Sweden at the beginning of the 1990s (Church of Norway 2011, p. 20; Ekström 2006, pp. 145–53). From a historical perspective, Tore Johnsen in Norway and Carola Nordbäck, Daniel Lindmark, Karl-Johan Tyrberg, and Olle Sundström in Sweden have written about these processes (Johnsen 2012; Johnsen 2013; Johnsen 2017; Nordbäck 2016; Lindmark and Sundström 2016; Tyrberg 2013). In brief, the Church-Saami dialogues have shaped the understanding of reconciliation adopted on a national level both in the Church of Sweden and in the Church of Norway. A closer study of the internal church dialogues taking place between the Saami and Church representatives is beyond the scope of this article.

The reason for limiting the scope is methodological. There are two principal pathways to constructing a conceptual understanding of reconciliation discussions occurring in the Church of Sweden and in the Church of Norway: a broad and a narrow approach. The broad approach focuses on Church processes, like dialogues, ecumenism, ideological influences, and structures, to obtain a broader view on reconciliation with the Saami, whereas the narrow approach focuses solely on written articulations and the reasoning underpinning reconciliation discussions. These two layers, naturally, are intertwined.

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[9] The Swedish word "försoning" has similar meanings as the English word "reconciliation". However, "försoning" can be interpreted as broader in scope and also conveying meanings more in line with the English word "atonement". The same cannot necessarily be said about the Norwegian "forsoning", since in a Norwegian context it would be more natural to use the word "soning" when referring to "atonement". Nevertheless, for practical purposes the relationship between "reconciliation", "försoning", and "forsoning" is semantically quite close (Academic Norwegian Dictionary n.d.; Free Dictionary by Farlex 2020; Swedish-English Dictionary 2020).

[10] Both churches have also recently gone through a considerable structural change concerning their legal church-state relationships. With the Church of Sweden, the transition happened in 2000, and in 2012 for the Church of Norway (Church of Norway Official Website 2020a; Church of Sweden Official Website 2020a).

Despite the fact that I refer to the latter approach as "narrow", it does not mean that the approach is in any way insignificant or less important. Quite the contrary: by meticulously scrutinizing the written argumentation, it is possible to uncover hidden attitudes, contradictions, and deeper forms of reasoning that otherwise could remain undiscerned. Research on the Church-Saami reconciliation processes so far has primarily focused on processual steps, examining which historical events and ideologies led to the next stages, while theorizing on the different stages (Johnsen 2017; Lindmark and Sundström 2016; Nordbäck 2016). This is of utmost importance; however, this approach has been insufficient to answer the question of how the churches as institutional bodies conceptualize a process that is so relevant for Christian theology and ecclesiology—reconciliation. This article focuses on the narrow approach in a systematic attempt to analyze the theological reflections behind reconciliation in the Saami context.

The main research questions are as follows: How do the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway understand and argue for reconciliation with respect to the Saami? How do they use theological resources to justify the need for reconciliation? Or, do they engage in theological reflection in the first place? In this article, I provide answers to these questions by analyzing written documents published by the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway in the years 1990–2020. I will analyze their documentation by doing a thematic close reading of them, focusing especially on the parts where the churches explicate their ideas on reconciliation. Methodologically, I use conceptual analysis to tackle the nature of reconciliation as it is understood by the churches. The theological scrutiny of the texts employs theories on the theology of reconciliation and social reconciliation. In theology, social or horizontal reconciliation is referred to a process between individuals and/or groups, whereas vertical reconciliation refers to reconciliation between humankind and God (Schreiter 2005, pp. 1–2). The church documents have been written in Swedish (the Church of Sweden) and in Norwegian, Bokmål (the Church of Norway).[11] In this article, translations of direct quotations and the titles of documents from Swedish and Norwegian into English are done by the author. The first "Strategic plan for Sami church life in the Church of Norway" is an exception among the sources, since it has already been translated both into Northern Saami and English, and hence, direct quotations are taken from the English version.

The resolutions of the General Synod and the document "Strategic Plan for Sami Church Life" (*Strategiplan for samisk kirkeliv*) from 2011 and its revised version, "Strategic Plan for Saami Church Life 2019–2027" (*Strategiplan for samisk kirkeliv 2019–2027*) from 2019, are the most significant textual sources for understanding the Church of Norway's position on the matter in question. The relevant sources shaping the Church of Sweden's understanding of reconciliation with the Saami are, likewise, the resolutions and other documents relating to the General Synod. I will also use the following two reports: "From Curitiba to Jokkmokk" (*Från Curitiba till Jokkmokk*) from 1993 (hereinafter called the Jokkmokk report) and "Saami Questions in the Church of Sweden" (*Samiska frågor i Svenska kyrkan*) from 2006 (hereinafter called the document on Saami questions). In addition, I will use the aforementioned acknowledgement by Bishop Tyrberg, which can be found in its entirety[12] in the book *The Saami Church: The Time Is Now for Practical Solidarity with the Saami* ("Samisk kyrka: Nu är rätt tid för praktisk solidaritet med samerna") published by the Church of Sweden in 2003.

In 2016, the Church of Sweden published a lengthy article collection called *Historical Relations between the Church of Sweden and the Saami* ("De historiska relationerna mellan Svenska kyrkan och samerna").[13] The 1135-page anthology (hereinafter called the anthology on historical relations) consists

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[11] Archbishop Antje Jackelén's forewords in the anthologies from 2016 and 2017 are provided in Swedish and in three Saami languages: Northern, Lule, and South Saami.

[12] Tyrberg's short speech can also be found in its entirety in the following report: "Report Based on Ságastallamat, a Conference on the Saami and the Church of Sweden in Kiruna on 11–13 October 2011" (*Rapport från Ságastallamat, en konferens om samerna och Svenska kyrkan, i Kiruna den 11–13 oktober 2011*) (Tyrberg 2011, p. 50). Urban Engvall notes that the speech has also been published in the South Saami church magazine *Daerpies Dierie* (Engvall 2003, pp. 8–9).

[13] During the same year, the Church of Sweden also published another book concerning the Saami and the Church of Sweden called *When I Was Eight Years Old, I Left My Home and Have Not Yet Returned: Recollections from the Saami School Time* ("När jag

of 35 research articles that shed light on historical relations between the Church and the Saami. The following year (2017), the Church published a popular science publication on the first anthology titled *The Saami and the Church of Sweden: Basis for Church Reconciliation Work* ("Samerna och Svenska kyrkan: Underlag för kyrkligt försoningsarbete"), which "summarizes the results and offers tools for working in future conversations" (Church of Sweden Official Website 2020b). In 2018, another popular science anthology directed at an English audience was published: "The Sami and the Church of Sweden: Results from a White Paper Project".[14] Taken together, these three anthologies (spanning the years 2012–2017) formed the fruits of a general project called "the White Paper Project".[15] I will only make use of the prefaces from the anthology on historical relations and the popular science anthology from 2017 in my analysis,[16] both written by Archbishop Antje Jackelén, where she explains the motivations for commissioning the anthologies (Jackelén 2016, pp. 11–12; Jackelén 2017, pp. 7–9).

What is worth noting here is that the Church of Sweden had not authorized any of the White Paper Project anthologies by the General Synod or other church bodies. This is somewhat confusing, since generally a white paper constitutes an authoritative document in which an institution or a government provides an official policy or solution for a certain subject (Collins English Dictionary 2020). Even though the General Synod is the body with the highest decision-making power, the foremost representative in the Church of Sweden is the archbishop (Church of Sweden Official Website n.d.). Thus, I consider Jackelén's forewords to present the Church's own voice on the matter, whereas the actual articles in the anthologies represent the voices of researchers and/or Church figures irrespective of whether some of the writers have been involved in the Church-Saami reconciliation processes.[17]

The question of *who* represents the Church as an institution is not trivial, especially when the aim of this study is to answer the question of *how* the churches of Sweden and Norway comprehend reconciliation in their Saami relations. In providing a meaningful answer to the research question, the broader question of *what* the Church is, and more specifically, who speaks with the official voice of the churches cannot be disregarded. Both in the Church of Sweden and in the Church of Norway the General Synod is the body with the highest decision-making power (Church of Norway Official Website 2020b; Church of Sweden Official Website n.d.). This means that the resolutions by the General Synods form a focal part in my analysis. The above-mentioned reports—except the White Paper Project documents—have been accepted either by the church councils with executive power or by the dioceses, both of which speak with the ecclesiastical voice of the respective churches. However, other alternatives exist for outlining the relevant voices. Especially in the case of the Church of Sweden, strictly delineating who officially speaks for the Church becomes complex, as later shown in this article. This article argues that although the two neighboring Lutheran folk churches share many characteristics with each other regarding the Church-Saami reconciliation processes, they differ greatly in how they perceive reconciliation towards and with the Saami.

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var åtta år lämnade jag mitt hem och har ännu inte kommit tillbaka: Minnesbilder från samernas skoltid") (Jackelén 2017, p. 7).

[14] There are many differences between the Swedish and English popular science anthologies. The most relevant difference with respect to the overall aim of this article is that Archbishop Antje Jackelén's foreword is not included in the English anthology. Thus, the English anthology is without any type of church authorization and should be viewed as an independent publication by its authors.

[15] Interestingly—and parallel to the White Paper Project—the Theological Committee of the Church of Sweden published two anthologies concerning the theology of reconciliation and its social implications: Tala om försoning: *reflektioner över ett centralt tema i kristen teologi* in 2015 and Liv i försoning: *om upprättelse i kyrka och samhälle* in 2016 (Bokus 2020a; Bokus 2020b).

[16] Some articles included in the anthologies are made use of in this article, but not as sources, unlike the forewords by Jackelén.

[17] For the same reason, I will not include the following three reports in my analysis: (1) *Reconciliation Is a Way To Begin: Report from the Seminar about the Reconciliation Process between the Saami and the Church and its Historical Background* ("Försoning är ett sätt att börja om: Rapport från ett seminarium om försoningsprocessen mellan samer och kyrka och dess historiska bakgrund") from 1999, (2) *The Saami Church: The Time Is Now for Practical Solidarity with the Saami* ("Samisk kyrka: Nu är rätt tid för praktisk solidaritet med samerna") from 2003, and (3) *Report Based on Ságastallamat, a Conference on the Saami and the Church of Sweden in Kiruna on 11–13 October 2011* ("Rapport från Ságastallamat, en konferens om samerna och Svenska kyrkan, i Kiruna den 11–13 oktober 2011") from 2011.

2. A Broad Overview of the Church-Saami Reconciliation Processes: From Grassroot Dialogues to Structural Changes

The processes that comprise both Tyrberg's acknowledgement and the textual sources are formally called *the Church-Saami reconciliation processes*. They include the histories on establishing the Saami Church Councils first in the Church of Norway in 1993, then in the Church of Sweden in 1996, and finally in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland in 2009 (Church of Norway 2019, p. 35; Ekström 2006, pp. 49, 105; Niittyvuopio 2013, p. 155). By establishing the Saami Church Councils, the churches aimed to support and develop Saami church life[18] and the severely endangered Saami languages. The Saami Church Councils play a significant role in the overall church-Saami reconciliation processes by creating space for dialogues between the Saami communities and the Lutheran churches. In practice, many of the churches' decisions and action plans relating to the Saami are based on grassroot dialogues with the Saami and pastoral experiences of Saami church life.[19]

On a broader scale, the ecumenical movement—especially with the emphasis for member churches to restore their relationships with indigenous peoples by World Council of Churches (WCC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and Conference of European Churches (CEC)—has inspired both the Church of Sweden's and the Church of Norway's Saami initiatives (Church of Norway 2011, pp. 31–32, 78; Church of Norway 2019, pp. 10–11; Ekström 2006, pp. 47, 83). Also, the two Scandinavian Lutheran churches have influenced one another; the Church of Norway's examples, in particular, have affected the Church of Sweden's approach to reconciling with the Saami (Ekström 2006, p. 156; Tyrberg 2013, p. 164).[20] Within the past few decades, the two Lutheran folk churches have been in a dialogue with one another over Saami matters, even collaborating to strengthen the South Saami[21] church life and language (Church of Norway 2011, pp. 17, 77; Ekström 2006, p. 58).

By recognizing colonial oppression and injustices of the past, both the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway are acknowledging wrongs done to the Saami as a result of Lutheran missionary activities since the 17th century. The Church of Norway has addressed the "demonizing and persecution of Sami religious concepts and practice", and the efforts where "Sami cultic drums were confiscated, and Sami holy places desecrated". Moreover, "the church's official attitude to Sami languages has varied in time with contemporary ideological trends" and Saami music—specifically the yoik—has been heavily stigmatized in the Laestadian Saami contexts (Church of Norway 2011, pp. 18–19, 23; Church of Norway 2019, pp. 38, 41). The Church of Sweden has not acknowledged such spiritual destruction, but it has addressed the unjust language policy and school system,[22] racist biological studies, and the suppression of Saami identity (Ekström 2006, pp. 9, 25, 43–44, 83, 106–108; Engvall 2003, pp. 8–9). Both churches admit that their participation in the assimilation policy—Norwegianization and Swedification—caused them to suppress the Saami languages and cultures in line with contemporary ideology (Church of Norway 1997; Church of Norway 2006; Church of Norway 2011, pp. 8–9, 17–19, 24, 36–37, 40, 66; Church of Norway 2019, p. 35; Jackelén 2016, p. 11). The churches do not specify their Saami audiences, meaning they do not identify to *whom* exactly they are directing their reconciliatory motifs. However, according to their action plans it seems that they are aiming to communicate with Saami communities in the areas now known as Sweden and Norway.[23] This means that their

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[18] The Church of Norway proposes the following ecclesiastical account of Saami church life in the Norwegian context: "Sami church life in the Church of Norway is manifested when Sami, in the setting of the Church of Norway, rooted in the Sami people, and nurtured by Word and sacraments, participate in God's universal church with their own response to the gospel" (Church of Norway 2011, p. 37).

[19] Some of the dialogues have been documented by both churches (Church of Sweden 2011; Steffenson).

[20] Norwegian Saami theologian and former General Secretary of the Saami Church Council of the Church of Norway Tore Johnsen has greatly influenced reconciliation theology in The White Paper Project (Lindmark and Sundström 2018, pp. 16–17).

[21] The severely endangered South Saami language is spoken both in Norway and in Sweden.

[22] In Sweden, cathedral chapters were responsible for the education of the Saami from 1526 until 1962 (Church of Sweden 1993, p. 33).

[23] This concerns the Lule, Northern, and South Saami communities of Norway and Sweden. The Skolt Saami living in Norway, Finland, and Russia traditionally belong to the Orthodox churches of their countries (Kalkun et al. 2018, p. 6).

reconciliation processes are directed not only at their Saami church members, but also at a larger Saami audience.

What is worth noting in the Church-Saami reconciliation processes is the importance of distinguishing a fundamental shift in practice. Instead of proclaiming a one-way communication channel on reconciliation matters, the churches are publicly exploring the possibilities to reconcile—even to receive forgiveness—from the people they have suppressed. Furthermore, such institutional reconciliation is a challenge for Christian churches since it may call into question, even jeopardize, the Christian mission (Norheim 2019, p. 108). In the following chapters, I conceptually analyze how the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway have seized upon such a challenge.

3. Narrowing the Scope: A Conceptual Analysis of Reconciliation in the Church of Sweden and Church of Norway in Relation to the Saami

3.1. Theoretical Tools to Tackle Reconciliation and Justice

The overarching theory used in this research adopts a distinction first provided by Dietrich Ritschl (Ritschl 1986), who discerned two levels of expression in the statements of reconciliation. First, a "primary level of expressions" deals with reconciliation through faith convictions, as a God-given reality (Ritschl 1986, cited in de Gruchy 2002, p. 18). Theologically, this means perceiving reconciliation as a soteriological concept of atonement that refers to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ who—according to Christian understanding—reconciled the relationship between God and humanity, a relationship previously broken by human sin and guilt (Beilby and Eddy 2008, p. 84; Schlenke 2011). However, such faith language may be out of place when uncritically linked to political discourse and equated with political reconciliation. As de Gruchy aptly puts it, this would only lead to "conceptual confusion" (de Gruchy 2002, p. 18).

A "secondary level of expressions", in contrast, is closely bound with Christian understanding, but according to Ritschl the expressions are such that all "rational and responsible human beings" can relate to them, even if they do not agree with the Christian claims to reconciliation. Such expressions could, for example, refer to freeing the oppressed, healing the sorrowful and sick, or seeking justice and hope (Ritschl 1986, cited in de Gruchy 2002, pp. 18–19). Even if the secondary level of expressions is tied to the Christian worldview, a non-Christian can still have access to the content and language of such statements. The overriding question here is, how is the connection being built between the primary and secondary expressions of reconciliation? Or, phrased differently, how is the nexus made between the theological aspirations and practical contribution to public life? In addressing such issues, de Gruchy writes as follows:

> The challenge in speaking about reconciliation from a Christian perspective is not simply that of proclaiming primary expressions of reconciliation but engaging in public life in ways that make God's gift of reconciliation and Christian hope a reality through secondary expressions. (de Gruchy 2002, p. 19)

Both the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway tie their understanding of reconciliation to the concept of "justice" (in Swedish *rättvisa* or *rättfärdighet*; in Norwegian *rettferdighet*), as will be discussed in more detail later. That is why it is necessary to take a closer look at how the churches explicate their ideas of justice at the Church-Saami reconciliation documents. As reconciliation, justice is by no means a univocal concept; rather, its meaning varies in different reconciliation processes. That is why Robert J. Schreiter has pointed out that it is precisely the complexity of the past that makes it crucial to clarify just what kind of justice is being aspired to in any reconciliation process (Schreiter 1998, pp. 121–123). For that purpose, I apply theoretical categorizations of justice to define the nature of institutional reconciliation with the Saami, first by the Church of Sweden and then by the Church of Norway.

3.2. Renegotiating Relations with the Saami: The Church of Sweden

3.2.1. Bishops Voicing the Need to Reconcile with the Saami

In general, the reports published by the Church of Sweden about its Saami relations mainly deal with Saami church history, language policies, and suggestions for enhancing Saami church life on a practical level while helping the Church reclaim its own history. This process can be viewed as a crucial truth-telling phase vital for truth and reconciliation commissions elsewhere as well (Nordquist 2017, pp. 48, 66–67; Schreiter 1998, p. 113). The Church, however, is not running a national truth and reconciliation process,[24] but instead aiming to reshape formal Church-Saami relations. How is the Church of Sweden then articulating its efforts at gaining pardon for past wrongs, its theological understanding of reconciliation, and the need for reconciling with the Saami?

The Jokkmokk report published in 1993 is one of the earliest documents by the Church of Sweden dealing with the Saami relations and the past.[25] It was inspired by a plea by the LWF and the WCC to their member churches to restore relations with indigenous peoples.[26] The Jokkmokk report states that "we acknowledge" that Church representatives have not always acted wisely towards the Saami and "from the righteousness point of view, there are reasons to ask for forgiveness of sins and seek redressing wherever possible" (Church of Sweden 1993, p. 34). While the term "reconciliation" does not yet appear in the recommendations, interestingly the report makes reference to "sins" by the Church, signifying a rare—if not the only—occasion when the Church of Sweden mentions the word "sin" in official Church-Saami reconciliation documents. The Jokkmokk recommendations can be viewed as a prototype of a public acknowledgment wherein an institution officially acknowledges discriminatory policies and practices.[27]

Basically, there are only a few pages altogether of textual material wherein the Church of Sweden explicates the idea of reconciliation and uses the actual word "reconciliation". To better identify and define its ecclesiastical voice on the matter, it is thus important to approach the research question by looking more closely at expressions by bishops on the matter. The highest decision-making body of the Church of Sweden—the General Synod—has not made any official theological argumentation about reconciliation with respect to the Saami. The General Synod's decision paper, titled "The identity of the Saami people in the Church of Sweden", only states that "the General Synod expressed its support for the coming year to celebrate regional worship services characterized by reconciliation and restoration" (Church of Sweden General Synod 2000).

The decision was made at the General Synod in 2000 as a response to a motion put forward by three bishops, Karl-Johan Tyrberg, bishop of Härnösand, Rune Backlund, bishop of Luleå, and Claes-Bertil Ytterberg, bishop of Västerås, all from dioceses familiar with Saami realities. The aim of the motion—as they proclaimed—was to draw the General Synod's attention to three areas where the Church should struggle together with the Saami to create "real reconciliation":

(1) Human view: The Christian message shows the equal value of all people. When the Church assigned the Saami less human value as a result of racial thinking and through the depreciation

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[24] I do not consider a national reconciliation process to fall into the category of institutional reconciliation. See my definition of the latter provided in the introduction.

[25] The report is an outcome of a conference held in Jokkmokk on 17–18 November 1992. The recommendations were drawn up by those participating in the conference. The list of participants is presented in the introduction of the report.

[26] In Curitiba, Brazil, the LWF held a general assembly and the resulting resolution urged member churches to give moral, political, and material help to indigenous peoples. This prompted the General Synod (then *ombudsmötet*) of the Church of Sweden in 1990 to commission a study about Swedish Saami church life. In 1991, in Canberra, Australia, the WCC repeated the message, urging member churches to examine their actions towards indigenous peoples (Church of Sweden 1993, pp. 1–2).

[27] According to Jeremy Bergen, "ecclesial repentance" is "the act in which church/denominational bodies makes official statements of repentance, apology, confession or requests for those things which were once official church policy or practices" (Bergen 2011, p. 3). The reason why I do not attach terms like "repentance", "attitude", or "guilt" to describe an institutional reconciliation is because I hesitate as to whether an institution can have such attitudes and emotions.

of the Saami culture, it did not clearly stand up for the rights of weaker persons, but contributed instead to a downgrading of their spirit through silence;

(2) Language and spirituality: Faith must be expressed in one's own mother tongue and with one's own cultural symbolic language. The Church has in the past disparaged Saami symbols and has not been open to integrating Saami symbols into Christian religious life;

(3) Legal and ethical issues: The Church has a prophetic mission to give a voice to those who cannot make their voice heard. The Church has not participated in the recognition of the injustices committed against the indigenous Saami people. As regards the customary rights to use land and water, the Church has not shown the path forward towards strengthening important ethical principles. (Backlund et al. 2000)

The three bishops then gave practical suggestions to the General Synod about how to reinforce Saami church life. One suggestion was to hold regional reconciliation services (Backlund et al. 2000). The Faith Committee[28] supported the motion, as did other committees (Church of Sweden Worship Committee Report 2000, sct. 8). The committee elaborated on its position as follows:

> There is every reason for the Church of Sweden to critically examine its participation in the oppression of the Saami that deprived from of access to Saami languages, Saami history, and Saami cultural and religious traditions. —Ignorance and thoughtlessness have promoted prejudice and bitterness. The now-necessary reconciliation process must include knowledge seeking and personal meetings that can be deepened through joint prayer and worship. Specific regional reconciliation services can be important to confirm what has been achieved and further to encourage communion that is mutually enriching and deepening. (Church of Sweden Faith Committee Report 2000, sct. 14)

Overall, the theme of making amends for wrongs committed in the past characterized the Church of Sweden's General Synod meeting in 2000, where Archbishop Karl Gustav Hammar gave the colorful opening speech. In the speech, Hammar listed various atrocities done in the name of Christian mission throughout the course of history. Moving from the Christian crusades to more contemporary oppressions of the Romany people and the Saami, Hammar clarified why it is necessary for the Church of Sweden, and for all churches, to take a critical look at the past. He argued that without this critical approach, the Church carries a burden that covers its role to witness God's love and secret of reconciliation:

> We—here and now—long for a lighter packaging, a packaging that makes me more free, free to serve, free to witness, free to be. (Hammar 2000)

As a result, the Church of Sweden has taken a clear stand in acknowledging its institutional responsibility for the oppression of the Saami and has stated that further examinations are needed. The anthology on historical relations from 2016 can especially be interpreted as a critical academic study in this regard (Jackelén 2017, pp. 7–8; Johnsen 2017, p. 108; Lindmark and Sundström 2016, p. 26). The wordings from 2000, however, represent a public acknowledgement wherein the Church acknowledges that its prophetic voice has been used to exclude the Saami, their languages, identity, spirituality, and struggles for customary rights to use land and water.[29] Here, reconciliation takes

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[28] In the Church of Sweden, bishops do not have a right to vote in the General Synod, but their role in the Faith Committee of the General Synod is significant. All bishops belong to the Faith Committee, which is chaired by an archbishop (Antila 2016, p. 247).

[29] Tore Johnsen considers "acknowledging the past" as the first stage in a reconciliation process (Johnsen 2018, p. 102). In this article, I avoid applying step-by-step formulas for reconciliation since, in my view, such formulas simplify the aporic nature of reconciliation and reconciliation processes. Nevertheless, if one were to seek "the first step" in the Church-Saami reconciliation processes, many alternatives emerge other than just acknowledging the past: for example, engaging in grassroot dialogues with the Saami, (reconciliation overtures), structural changes (establishing Saami Church Councils), and examining the history more closely before just offhandedly acknowledging the wrongs of the past.

on a human and social embodiment in a specific context addressing social structures that need to be redressed. In other words, reconciliation is not dealt with as a divine (vertical) matter; instead, it is very much characterized by a horizontal relationship between peoples or a group of peoples where the parties involved are a Christian community and the Saami, a historically marginalized people. Notably, reconciliation is always a relational term by nature regardless of whether it has to do with humanity and God, the restoration of interpersonal relations, or the renewal of society (de Gruchy 2002, pp. 2, 19; Nordquist 2017, pp. 22–23). However, there is no consensus regarding how to relate reconciliation to a political venue. Or—in more theological terms—there is no consensus regarding the relationship between the politics of reconciliation and Christian doctrine of reconciliation (de Gruchy 2002, p. 13).

The challenge becomes obvious when applying the theory on primary and secondary levels of expressions to the General Synod statements by the Church of Sweden on reconciliation, where no reference is made to the Christian doctrine of reconciliation. Hence, the language and argumentation are characterized by the secondary level of expressions: "ethical principles", "oppression", "racial thinking", "degradation of the weaker", and "customary rights" to use lands and waters. The Church claims for itself both a prophetic mission to give voice to the silenced and the Christian message about the equal value of all humans. However, these claims refer to social justice and Christian ethics rather than to primary statements on the given reality or reconciliation as decreed by the Christian God.

In addition to the General Synod documents, a few other textual passages are rather informative when trying to understand how the Church of Sweden conceptualizes reconciliation with the Saami. A symbolically important milestone was reached in 2001 at a church in Undersåker[30] when then bishop of the Härnösand diocese, Karl-Johan Tyrberg, acknowledged the Saami perspective as follows:[31]

> In relation to the Saami people, the Church has neglected its task of showing *rights*, *justice*, *mercy*, and *charity*[32] in a shared responsibility for everyone's opportunity to work and live. Reconciliation is the expression of love as the strongest power. Without reconciliation, there is no future. As a church, we acknowledge that we are part of the *guilt* that stems from the past. We ask *forgiveness* for what we thought and did [that was] wrong and for what we neglected. The reconciliation we seek is that we can now jointly carry these difficult experiences and move on in mutual love, respect, and trust. (Engvall 2003, p. 9, italics added)

In the speech—considered an official acknowledgment on behalf of the Church (Ekström 2006, p. 160)—justice is tied to the political sphere of human life. More horizons emerged when Tyrberg began discussing reconciliation in relation to love, with love being the greatest power, and acknowledged that what is being asked for is not reconciliation, but forgiveness.

Love, guilt, and forgiveness are not exclusively Christian concepts, but their cluster is not typical of political reconciliation. When institutions acknowledge their corporate responsibility, the term "forgiveness" is rarely part of their vocabulary.[33] In the Christian setting, however, love, guilt, and forgiveness are an intrinsic part of the theology of reconciliation (de Gruchy 2002, p. 93; Norheim 2019, pp. 114–16); but in this case the conceptual parcel does not explicitly intercede with the primary expressions of reconciliation. The Church of Sweden links the Saami reconciliation process with concepts like "rights" and "justice" (Backlund et al. 2000; Ekström 2006, p. 13; Jackelén 2016, p. 12; Jackelén 2017, p. 8), whereas Tyrberg linked it with "mercy" and "charity", which all refer more to secular and political uses of reconciliation.

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30 Later similar reconciliation services were held elsewhere in the Luleå diocese and in Göteborg (Tyrberg 2016, p. 58).

31 Tyrberg's acknowledgment was originally in the form of a spoken speech. Although this article focuses on written material, I have included the speech in my analysis since it has been published in the reports by the Church of Sweden.

32 In Swedish: *rätt*, *rättfärdighet*, *barmhärtighet* och *nästankärlek*. The Swedish word "rättfärdighet" can be translated as both "justice" and "righteousness". In this passage, Tyrberg most likely means "justice", which he elaborated on in a conference speech a decade later (Tyrberg 2011, p. 52).

33 The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission employed a vocabulary of forgiveness, which is not typical of political reconciliation processes in general (de Gruchy 2002, pp. 171–80; Nordquist 2017, p. 85; Norheim 2019, p. 107).

3.2.2. Reopening Classical Debates on Relations between Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation

One reason that reconciliation is such an intriguing topic has to do with how it reopens classical ethical debates on who can apologize for whom, since the dead can no longer forgive or reconcile with anyone (de Gruchy 2002, p. 13; Norheim 2019, pp. 117–18). It has been suggested that truth may be the only justice the dead can receive (Schreiter 1998, p. 120). The issue becomes tangible when an institution apologizes for its past injustices. In the case of the Church-Saami reconciliation processes, many of the victims of colonial oppression are still alive, so the reconciling measures have a living audience at whom the Scandinavian churches are directing their efforts.

Hence, the Church of Sweden has taken an approach of being a surrogate acknowledger when acknowledging the past injustices perpetrated against generations who are no longer living. Bård Eirik Hallesby Norheim defines a surrogate apology as a "declaration or statement where leaders of organizations or companies apologize *vicariously*, on behalf of a larger body" (Norheim 2019, p. 107). Unlike Carola Nordbäck and Veli-Pekka Lehtola (Lehtola 2016, p. 1087; Nordbäck 2016, p. 135), I do not consider Tyrberg's speech or any other statement so far presented by the Church of Sweden to constitute an official apology.[34] Therefore, I call the Church's role that of a surrogate acknowledger.

In 2006, Sören Ekström—the author of the document on Saami questions—[35] stated that:

> Reconciliation—as noted in Norway—must comprise an acknowledgment of the injustices that have occurred—in principle and in concrete terms—point by point. If those who have committed the abuse cannot admit it themselves—the abuse can be generations back—then somebody must do it in public on their behalf. (Ekström 2006, p. 12)

Under the rubric "On the way to reconciliation?" Ekström points out another, political dimension of the reconciliation process that was initiated and commissioned by the General Synod in 2005 (Rantanen 2005). Namely, the General Synod commissioned the Church Council to attend to the repatriation of Saami skulls that were disinterred in the 19th and 20th centuries for eugenics studies (Church of Sweden General Synod 2005). Since the Church of Sweden assisted in these practices, Ekström suggests building a memorial so as not to forget the oppression of the Saami, with the remains being one of the many expressions of such oppression (Ekström 2006, pp. 106–8).[36]

The problem with the document on Saami questions is that it portrays the Saami reconciliation process as a symbolic and technical matter, whereas Archbishop Antje Jackelén—like Tyrberg and Hammar—gives reconciliation a human face. Jackelén speaks about the "dark chapter" of Sweden's history and the Church's participation in that history. She admits that the Church has been aware of the "colonial oppression" of the Saami, but that the Church ("we") have been unable to confront it. She further states that it hurts to know that the Church has contributed to oppression and in this way caused suffering. "A church that strives to follow Jesus Christ," she writes, "cannot neglect the wounds" (Jackelén 2016, pp. 11–12). In the foreword of the anthology on historical relations published in 2016, she takes a confessing leader's role as a surrogate acknowledger when using the language of what "we" have done:

> What is done cannot be undone, but it is possible to learn from the mistakes of earlier generations. By highlighting, clarifying, and processing memories, [memories] can take

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[34] The statements or responses (Jokkmokk report, General Synod formulations, Tyrberg's speech and Jackelén's forewords) lack many elements vital to public apologies, even though they bear some features that resemble public apologies. According to Gunlög Fur, "when it comes to content, a complete apology must be officially recorded, expressing specifically about the wrongs it apologizes for, takes responsibility for actions in the past, pronounces regret for these acts, and promise not to repeat them" (Fur 2016, p. 176).

[35] In 2005, the Church Council (*Kyrkostyrelsen*) decided to conduct an inquiry on Saami matters in the Church of Sweden. The report was published the following year by General Secretary Sören Ekström. In the preface, Ekström wrote that he worked closely with Marie Schött to produce the document. (Ekström 2006, p. 5).

[36] On 9 August 2019, the remains of 25 Saami persons were repatriated and reburied in Lycksele (Southern Saami: *Liksjoe*; Ume Saami: *Likssjuo*). In this project and ceremony, Church of Sweden representatives played a significant role (Aurelius 2019; Lindmark 2020).

> on different roles. Not by forgetting—but by illuminating—can the injustices be processed. —When we have abandoned the Saami, we have also abandoned ourselves and God. We are responsible for our part in the colonialism of Sweden and our difficulties in dealing with it and building new relations in order not to repeat the past wrongs and mistakes. (Jackelén 2016, pp. 11–12)

Jackelén argues that only by dredging up the past injustices is it possible to know what has happened and why. Without this process, making reparations and reconciling relations become impossible. She writes: "We need to build mutual, respectful, and just relations" (Jackelén 2016, p. 11; Jackelén 2017, pp. 7–8). Nevertheless, she does not bind such reconciliation to divine reconciliation (primary level expressions) other than to note that by abandoning the Saami, God is also being abandoned (Jackelén 2016, p. 11; Jackelén 2017, p. 7). This could be interpreted relationally so that horizontal (social) reconciliation is understood to be connected to vertical (divine) reconciliation—the Christian "grand narrative"—but this kind of conclusion would require more content than just one sentence on the matter.

What then can be said about the Church of Sweden's understanding of reconciliation in relation to the Saami? Theologically, not much can be said if one examines only the written materials. In the recommendations put forward in the Jokkmokk report, the word "reconciliation" does not appear, and in the 172-page document on Saami questions only four pages are dedicated to the theme.[37] Overall, both the concept and the idea of reconciliation are explained very little in the Church of Sweden's official documents on the Saami.[38] The same can be said about the concept of "justice", since it too is not defined or discussed in detail, though the word does pop up in the focal parts of the documents. It is possible that the Church of Sweden does not treat the Saami reconciliation process as a matter concerning the whole church, but more as a regional concern most affecting the Härnösand diocese.[39] Somewhat controversially, the Church-Saami dialogues are viewed elsewhere as an ongoing process concerning the whole church (Ekström 2006, p. 124; Jackelén 2016, p. 12). In the following paragraph, I briefly draw conclusions from the Church of Sweden's sources that further discuss reconciliation with the Saami.

The truth-seeking component of reconciliation plays a vital role in the way the Church of Sweden comprehends reconciliation overall (Church of Sweden Faith Committee Report 2000, sct. 14; Church of Sweden Worship Committee Report 2000, sct. 8; Ekström 2006, pp. 105–6; Jackelén 2016, pp. 11–12; Jackelén 2017, pp. 7–9). The search for truth in the reconciliation process is in the first instance about retrieving what has happened in the conflicted past. The kind of truth that is being sought is a coherence between claims regarding a complex past (Schreiter 1998, pp. 117–18). This has led to the conclusion and a public acknowledgment that the Church took part in the colonial practices of Sweden against the Saami. As for justice, it seems that the Church of Sweden is aiming at structural justice, where discriminatory structures are replaced with more just ones (Schreiter 1998, p. 122). Having said that, it seems that the structural goals remain unclear in the written material. Rather, I would describe the Church's approach to justice as "dialogical". By dialogical, I mean that the Church's reconciliation strategy includes exchanges: listening to the Saami, documenting the dialogues, and producing material for future conversations.[40]

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[37] The structure of the document on Saami questions is such that after each practical suggestion, a short reply from the Saami Church Council within the Church of Sweden is given. The section "Toward a Reconciliation?" (*På väg mot en försoning?*) covers two subthemes. First, it equates an understanding of reconciliation with examinations of the past and, second, with the repatriation of the Saami skulls (Ekström 2006, pp. 105–8).

[38] Notably, the idea of reconciliation can be explicated without mentioning the word "reconciliation", and in this study I have included such textual passages in the analysis as well. However, such passages are quite rare.

[39] In the document on Saami questions, Ekström mentions that in the symposium organized in 1998, it was noted that the Härnösand diocese has a special responsibility to enhance the Church-Saami reconciliation process (Ekström 2006, p. 59).

[40] This type of justice—as compassionate as it appears—may misdirect attention away from structures that would require attention unless structural changes were done in parallel. The Church of Sweden has engaged in structural changes to

Despite some Christian elements, the language and content are secular in the sense that they do not distinctively carry Christian meanings. The expressions are characterized by the secondary level of statements, which means that the claims of reconciliation are such that they do not require a Christian framework, albeit certain references to Christian ethics are made. The theology of reconciliation remains untouched. The remarks on the past and a joint future emphasize reconciliation as an open process, an invitation to a conversation to embrace the other as a response to the historical exclusion of the Saami. By employing a dialogical approach, truth-seeking, public acknowledgment, and the recognition of Saami identity, the Church is renegotiating relations in order to reshape its moral order. Nevertheless—and despite the numerous documents—the Church of Sweden has not as an institution engaged in independent theological reflection on reconciliation with the Saami.

3.3. Structuring Justice: The Church of Norway

3.3.1. Affirming Cultural Diversity through the Bible

As for the Church of Norway, its starting point in conducting both the Church-Saami reconciliation process and the way it conceptualizes reconciliation differ from the neighboring Church of Sweden. Namely, the Church of Norway has undertaken a reconciliation process among indigenous peoples both internationally[41] and locally[42] (Church of Norway 2019, p. 6). The Church states that its contacts with indigenous peoples globally have given an "important impetus" for developing a Saami-based theology (Church of Norway 2019, p. 46). The international experience becomes evident when scrutinizing documents in which the Church of Norway voices its reconciliation efforts concerning the Saami. Moreover, the voices are less scattered when the General Synod articulates its reasoning for seeking reconciliation and the strategy plans, without the names of specific authors being presented.[43] Hence, the Church of Norway's own uniform voice in this regard becomes clear: the Church of Norway aims to speak of reconciliation as an institution instead of a collection of individual voices.

The Church of Norway's approach to reconciliation utilizes Christian sources, especially the Bible, when shaping its renewed agenda with the Saami. The theological crux of the argumentation for reconciliation goes as follows: (1) since all human beings are created in the image of God, every person is equally valuable and discrimination has no theological grounds, which leads to the affirmation that indigenous peoples have suffered from violations of discrimination; (2) through incarnation God has sent Jesus Christ to reconcile the whole of creation, which addresses the significance of the worldly reality and its distinctive Christian worship expressions; (3) therefore, the Church must embrace cultural diversity and at the same time fight against the unjust political reality; (4) the Church should fight against injustices guided by the prophetic traditions of the Old and New Testaments, including Jesus's examples of giving a voice to the oppressed and Paul's conviction to dismantle the social wall between the Jewish Christians and the non-Jewish Christians. The Church further argues: "The Bible paints a picture of a God who is especially concerned with those who are oppressed and vulnerable. This motivates the church in its commitment in social issues" (Church of Norway 2011,

improve Saami church life and relations. Due to the narrow approach used in this research, however, the meanings of the structural changes with respect to reconciliation are not explained in the textual material (other than repatriation of the Saami skulls and the truth-seeking component). That is why it is difficult on a conceptual level to call the Church's understanding of justice "structural justice".

41 Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) has supported the indigenous San people in the Kalahari region of southern Africa. The San people won a court case in 2006 with the help of NCA to live in their traditional area of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (Church of Norway 2011, pp. 78–80).

42 Interestingly, the Church of Norway has carried out a local reconciliation and dialogue project in the Lule Saami area of North Salten (Hamarøy and Tysfjord 2005–2007). The first strategy plan states that the "project has provided the Church of Norway with valuable experiences that can be passed on to local and regional efforts at Sami-Norwegian reconciliation in other parts of the country," and the project has been "the most concrete result" of the General Synod resolution of 1997 (KM 13/97) regarding reconciliation and dialogue (Church of Norway 2011, pp. 12, 26, 66–67).

43 The foreword to the first *Strategic plan for Sami church life in the Church of Norway* was written by Jens-Petter Johnsen, director of the Church Council of the Church of Norway (Church of Norway 2011, p. 3).

pp. 38–39; Church of Norway 2019, pp. 7–9). With this logic, the Church of Norway binds together both the primary and secondary level of expressions on reconciliation. As a result, the nexus between the two levels is occurring through *creation theology*: since God created humans and the whole of creation, earthly injustices towards humans and creation cannot be ignored by a Christian church (Church of Norway 2019, pp. 6–9).

When positioning the Saami and their cultures in the Christian context, the argumentation follows biblical explanations: "*The Great Commission* 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19) shows that the gospel is given to all peoples, and that all peoples therefore have the right to a place in the church" (Church of Norway 2011, p. 38; Church of Norway 2019, p. 8). This leads to a conclusion by the Church of Norway that all native languages are part of the identity of the Church and the Holy Spirit, following a postcolonial interpretation of a relationship between Genesis 11 and Acts 2.[44] In Genesis 11, the linguistic confusion at Babel occurs, whereas an account of the Pentecost (Acts 2) functions as a "counternarrative" to reverse the events that took place at Babel, when people from every nation could hear God in their own language, and "Pentecost is therefore the Holy Spirit's affirmation of native languages". Also, the last book of the Bible, Revelation, is referred to when emphasizing the significance of native languages in the heavenly liturgy that peoples from all nations participate in using their own languages (Revelation 7:9). Hence, the Church of Norway states that the linguistic diversity of Christian churches is a characteristic that is often missed and adds that "the Bible, hymns, and liturgies in the vernacular are an important part of the Lutheran heritage," forming a confessional basis to which the Church of Norway is committed (Church of Norway 2011, pp. 22, 37–38, Church of Norway 2019, p. 8).

The Church of Norway is outspoken in its protection of the cultural diversity of the Saami and elaborates on an idea of genuine diversity with two key concepts: through inclusion and reconciliation (Church of Norway 2011, p. 31). "Inclusion is the basic principle in the policy for minorities that governs the Church of Norway's approach to Sami church life", whereas "reconciliation must be understood as the basic approach to the actions urged in the plan" (Church of Norway 2011, p. 9). The historical background for highlighting the two approaches is then explained: the Norwegianization of the Saami represented a form of integration policy in which "homogeneity and similarity" were "the norm for a community", which resulted in a "low tolerance of differences and diversity". Inclusion, in contrast, begins from the opposite perspective, acknowledging "differences and diversity as the norm for a community". The Saami are therefore given the possibility to participate in the life of the Church without having to relinquish their distinctive characteristics or differences. "Sami church life must be *included*, that is to say, given room to exist with its distinctiveness as a necessary and equal part of the [C]hurch of Norway" (Church of Norway 2011, pp. 35–36). Also, the Church warns against a false sense of inclusion, according to which indigenous peoples or other minorities are expected to enrich the majority without the majority needing to change its attitudes (Church of Norway 2019, p. 10).

The Church also warns against false reconciliation in the form of special "services of reconciliation", thinking that reconciliation in that way has been taken care of, only for it to constitute a "superficial" reconciliation (Church of Norway 2011, p. 66). In the literature, "cheap reconciliation" is referred to as a failure to "address systemic issues of injustice" (Shore 2009, p. 135). The Church of Norway is clearly aware of the risk by treating reconciliation comprehensively as the basic approach to the Saami people in general (Church of Norway 2011, p. 36; Church of Norway 2019, p. 10):

[44] For instance, for Miroslav Volf the story of the Pentecost is primarily about God's justice, which protects cultural diversity from the monocultural enterprise in the Babel narrative. The initiative of building a tower towards heaven is a colonial project by nature, one which God resisted by scattering the languages. During Pentecost, the reverse happens when the Holy Spirit pours energies into the margins so that peoples can speak the prophesy using their own languages. This—according to Volf—is not a story about the emergence of a metalanguage that everybody can understand, but instead comprises an important aspect of God's justice, in which the oppressed gain a voice and agency (Volf 1996, pp. 193–232).

> The Church of Norway's concern for dialogue and reconciliation cannot be reduced to isolated events, but must be seen as a comprehensive approach in which dialogue and reconciliation are applied to all aspects of the Church of Norway's consideration of issues related to the Sami people. (Church of Norway 2011, p. 37)

3.3.2. The Old Injustices as a Fresh Context for Revising Church Identity

The Church of Norway considers reconciliation an ongoing process where justice plays a vital role when ideals of reconciliation meet with practical reality and structures. This means that the concern for justice and reconciliation must eventually require sufficient resources and revised structures on a long-term basis in order to rectify injustices against the Saami (Church of Norway 2006; Church of Norway 2011, p. 37):

> The *Strategic plan for Sami church life in the Church of Norway* takes therefore a *structural approach* to the church's concern for dialogue and reconciliation, where the most important point is [to] create settings, relations and structures which can have a reconciling effect and can encourage equality in the church. Norwegianisation has made the Sami people invisible, and this will continue unless efforts are made to change the structures that caused it. To face this challenge, all parties must be aware of the historical background and must want to establish new structures that will secure a new future together. The Church of Norway has taken important steps in this direction, and it is expected that the process will continue. (Church of Norway 2011, p. 37)

In following this plan, the Church of Norway aims to reform the Church structures by applying its understanding of *structural justice* to address the social identities that contributed to division and exclusion. Structural justice—in the process of reconciliation—dismantles the social structures that created injustice and seeks to replace them with more just structures (Schreiter 2008, pp. 639–40). As a result, structural justice can be seen as a form of *restitutional justice*, which targets structures that initially caused a conflict and change them in an effort to rehumanize the dignity of the oppressed (Kuokkanen 2020; Schreiter 1998, pp. 121–23). John W. de Gruchy—who was engaged in the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa—argues that restoring justice in the context of reconciliation in the end comes down to a focus on social and economic justice (de Gruchy 2002, p. 205). As for the Church of Norway, it can be argued that in structuring justice it inevitably structures reconciliation, too, when it highlights the need for resources and the renewal of social structures in an effort to include Saaminess as a "viable and equal"[45] part of the Church. Instead of merely repeating the message of reconciliation, the Church of Norway explicates the "social meaning of reconciliation", which means that it is seeking both practical and theological meanings for reconciliation in the Christian context (Volf 1998).

The Church of Norway is also focusing on the connection between reconciliation and truth-telling. While not indulging overly much in the truth-telling part, in 1997 it stated briefly: "The General Synod acknowledges that the authorities' Norwegianization policy and the Church of Norway's role in it have led to injustice towards the Saami people. The General Synod will contribute to the cessation of this injustice" (Church of Norway 1997). The acknowledgment was repeated in 2003 when the Church of Norway took a stance on defending the Saami's right to use land in Finnmark, in the so-called Finnmark act:

> The work for new legislation concerning Finnmark is an opportunity to redress old injustices. The Church of Norway also acknowledges that it has helped to suppress the rights and

[45] The Church of Norway's first slogan for a renewed vision of Saami church life is "Dynamic and coequal—Sami church life in the Church of Norway," and the following slogan is "Saami church life—viable and equal" (Church of Norway 2011, p. 7; Church of Norway 2019, pp. 4–5; see also Church of Norway 1990, 113).

culture of the Saami people. Rights and justice are the basis for reconciliation. Reconciliation presupposes openness to experienced injustice on all sides and a desire for change. The Church wants to contribute to these processes. (Church of Norway 2003)

These words and the above-mentioned textual passages represent a public acknowledgement on behalf of the Church of Norway. The historical wrongs done to the Saami are identified, but the truth-telling emphasis does not comprise a dominating strain in the argument. It is as if the Church of Norway has moved on as an institution to examine both the practical and theological implications of reconciliation to the extent of developing contextual Saami theology[46] and strengthening Christian Saami traditions within the Church (Church of Norway 2006; Church of Norway 2011, pp. 30, 56–69, 81; Church of Norway 2019, pp. 15, 22, 31–32). In other words, the Church of Norway has shifted the negative and awkward starting point away from the Christian Church's collusion in the colonial oppression of marginalized peoples towards making a contribution to social reconciliation, which has not often been a strength of Christian churches (Baum 1997, p. 186; Tombs 2017, pp. 123–26, 138–42; Wells 1997, pp. 2, 6).[47] With respect to the Saami, the Church of Norway utilizes social reconciliation as a fresh context to contest its own ecclesiology and identity in a way that the doctrine of reconciliation eventually reflects the doctrine of the Church (Mostert 2010, p. 205).

4. Conclusions

In this article, I have analyzed the nature of reconciliation first in the Church of Sweden and then in the Church of Norway regarding church-Saami reconciliation processes during the years 1990–2020. From the Christian standpoint, ecclesiastical processes whereby the churches sort out the wrongs done to indigenous people are based on an underlying tension. The tension is historically created by conflicting roles in which the churches act on the one hand as a community or an intermediary facilitating reconciliation and yet on the other hand have contributed to colonial oppression in the past. This tension between past and present has elicited a political need for institutional reconciliation. Given the richness and complexity of the biblical notion of reconciliation, I have analyzed the theological argumentations that the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway use when reconciling with the Saami. It is a particularly relevant question since one could assume that Christian churches utilize their own resources in order to offer something insightful and distinctive to public dialogues on reconciliation (Tombs 2017, p. 145). Since both the Church of Sweden and the Church of Norway link reconciliation to the concept of justice, I have also analyzed justice as it is understood in the Church-Saami reconciliation documents.

According to my analysis, the theological strategies between the two Nordic churches differ greatly in terms of how they explicate reconciliation in the Saami context. The Church of Sweden is driven by a truth-telling emphasis and is somewhat unable to bind social reconciliation to the doctrine of reconciliation. This leads to the conclusion that its reflection on reconciliation is characterized by a secular usage of the term reconciliation. Theological resources refer to Christian social ethics rather than to the primary level of expressions of a God-given reality. Also, it is not clear how to make sense of the Church of Sweden's ecclesiastical voice on the matter: Is the Church of Sweden as an institution remaining silent on the matter, and is the reconciliation process being initiated and carried

[46] The Church of Norway defines Saami theology as an emerging "form of contextual theological reflection based on Sami perceptions of Christianity and existence and relevant themes from Sami history, culture, and community life" (Church of Norway 2011, pp. 22, 29, 75–76; Church of Norway 2019, pp. 20–23).

[47] According to David Tombs, the doctrinal and sacramental emphasis on atonement has limited horizons with respect to the political and social context when Christian churches have understood reconciliation as a spiritually inward and private engagement. This emphasis has led to a gap between thinking of atonement with God and thinking of reconciliation between people. This historical disconnection has made it challenging for churches to offer insightful contributions to social reconciliation discussions. Tombs refers to it as a paradox: despite the extensive attention paid to reconciliation in Christian theology, social reconciliation had not received much attention from Christian churches and Christian figures prior to the 1990s (Tombs 2017, pp. 123–26, 138–42).

out instead by individual church leaders who find the issue topical? Either way, the Church of Sweden has elaborated on the concept and meaning of reconciliation very little, and when it does mention reconciliation it does so in order to reconstruct its own memory and renegotiate relations with the Saami from its own perspective. Consequently, I have described the Church's approach to justice as dialogical, which means that the Church approaches reconciliation as an invitation for further conversations. Despite this fact, the Church of Sweden has not been able to offer any independent theological reflection on reconciliation with the Saami. This evokes a critical question regarding the Christian contribution of the Church of Sweden to social reconciliation, and particularly to institutional reconciliation.

The Church of Norway provides theological aspirations for why reconciliation with the Saami is needed: Since God has created humans and the whole of creation, any violations committed against humans and creation cannot be tolerated, and that is why the Church cannot stay silent in the face of human-rights abuses. Unlike the Church of Sweden, the Church of Norway utilizes Christian sources and binds together both vertical (divine) and horizontal (social) reconciliation arguments, and the nexus between the two is built through creation theology. This means that the understanding comprises both primary and secondary statements on reconciliation. Overall, reconciliation forms an integral part of the Church's policy towards Saami church life. The Church approaches reconciliation comprehensively and structurally so that on a practical level, reconciliation ultimately means a commitment to material resources and a readiness to revise structures, both of which bind reconciliation to structural justice. The truth-telling aspect does not dominate the Church's reconciliation narrative. The Church of Norway takes seriously its ecclesiastical challenge to contribute to the field of social reconciliation and treats it as a fresh context to revise its ecclesiology, its identity.

Despite the many similarities both churches share with each other regarding the Church-Saami reconciliation process (public acknowledgement, truth-telling, the Saami Church Councils), in the final analysis their *understanding* of reconciliation in the Saami context follows two differing paths. As for the Church of Sweden, the path points at the politics of reconciliation, while for the Church of Norway it adheres to the theology of reconciliation.[48]

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Article

'Sami Religion' in Sámi Curricula in RE in the Norwegian School System: An Analysis of the Importance of Terms

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Abstract: In this article, we map and analyse the changes in conceptualisation and ideas on Sámi and indigenous people in the Sámi (Religious Education) RE curricula for primary and secondary school in the period from 1997 to 2015. Through the analysis of five sets of curricula for RE in this period, we investigate how they introduce a new set of ideas and concepts concerning religion related to the Sámi as an indigenous people. 'Circumpolar indigenous people's religion' is a concept and a category that is primarily found within the Sámi curriculum of Norway's educational system. As such, we argue it is a way of religion making through the conceptualization of Sámi religion in particular, and indigenous religions in general.

Keywords: indigenous people; indigenous religion; Sámi; curriculum; religious education

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1. Introduction

Looking into Sámi religion as topic and concept in school curricula in Religious Education (RE) in Norway, there are a few tendencies that appear. The proximity of 'Indigenous peoples', 'nature' and 'religion' is one. In this article, we map and analyse the changes in conceptualization and ideas on Sámi and indigenous people in the Sámi RE curricula for primary and secondary school in the period from 1997, when the first Sámi national curriculum was launched, to 2015. Through the analysis of five set of curricula for RE in this period, we look into how they introduce a new set of ideas and concepts concerning religion related to the Sámi as an indigenous people. 'Circumpolar indigenous people's religion' is a concept and a category that, first and foremost, is found within the Sámi curriculum of Norway's educational system. We argue that there is a certain element of essentialism integral in this conceptualization and ask whether this essentialism is a strategic one in the making of Sámi religion as school religion. In our analysis, we limit our scope to curricular presentations primarily and textbook presentations secondarily. This means that we do not go into teaching and learning practices specifically, even though the analysis has clear implications also for these.

2. The Sámi and the Norwegian Educational System

The Sámi are the Indigenous people of northern Europe, more specifically Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia. The different states have answered differently to the Sámi claims for recognition. Norway has recognized the Sámi as indigenous both in national legislation and through international conventions. This has implications for the educational system, which in the times of colonization and explicit assimilation was a key arena for the state's oppressive policies. Norwegian schools have to provide education particularly directed to and adapted to Sámi students and to provide knowledge

from and about Sámi culture, history and language. Thus, the curricula, both the Core Curriculum and for each specific subject, need to include and integrate Sámi issues.

In order to provide education particularly directed towards and adapted to Sámi students, there has, since 1997, existed two sets of curricula: one for the national educational system and one for the Sámi administrative areas. The Sámi administrative area in Norway consists of 12 municipalities—all in the three northernmost counties of Norway—where Norwegian and Sámi languages have equal legal status. The two sets of curricula have the same structure and much of the same content. In the Sámi curricula there is an emphasis on topics about Sámi language, culture and history. The idea is that the Sámi curriculum should be more oriented towards and based on Sámi culture, community and language.

The background for the parallel sets of curricula in Norwegian school system is the Norwegian state's ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent countries (International Labour Organization (ILO) 1989). This convention acknowledges the rights of Indigenous and tribal people to self-determination and claims that states are not mandated to act against the wishes and interests of these people in matters of their concern. A separate part of ILO-169 concerns education and emphasizes the rights of Indigenous people to education and to take part in the making of educational programs. The ILO-169 is also a part of the context of the Sámi curricula—ensuring the rights of Indigenous people to have education about their own culture and in their own language. The Norwegian state has, therefore, decided that there should be a specially designed curriculum for the Sámi administrative areas, which, to a broader extent than the national curriculum, emphasizes Sámi language and culture. However, the Norwegian state's ratification of the ILO-169 also implies that perspectives on the Sámi as Norway's indigenous people should be included in every school subject also in the national curriculum. In order to be in accordance with this and other international conventions on indigenous people's rights, the Norwegian parliament decided that the Sámi administrative areas should have a separate curriculum focusing on Sámi language, culture and history. Norway has also proven its progressive policies regarding indigenous issues and rights in international fora. The Norwegian state supports the UN and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).

For centuries, the educational system has been an integral part of Norwegian policy towards the Sámi. The school was part of the colonization process as an arena for Christian mission in the 18th century and Norwegian language in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the educational context, the Sámi were almost invisible at the end of the assimilation period. It is not until the 1970s that this absence and invisibility is changed. With the national curriculum introduced for primary and secondary school in 1974, the Sámi are included in a much broader extent compared to earlier curricula, albeit in simplistic and stereotypical terms (Olsen and Andreassen 2018). With the coming of the first and second Sámi curriculum in 1997 and 2006 (the RE curriculum was published in 2005), the first expressions of what have been labelled 'indigenization' in the educational system are seen (Olsen 2017; Folkenborg 2008; Gjerpe 2017). In the recent and current curriculum, which applies from August 2020, the level of recognition has been raised again, putting the rights of the Sámi in the forefront of the national curriculum. In the 2020 curriculum reform, the RE subjects have been through a complete makeover. We have chosen to limit our analysis to the previous years, as these can be read as an active articulation of a particular Sámi religion making following the making and launch of the first Sámi national curriculum. However, at the end of the article we will point to the new curriculum in order to provide examples on how concepts as 'Sámi religion' is in constant negotiation in the educational context.

The religion or religions of the Sámi prior to colonization, assimilation, and the transition to Christianity was a diverse nature religion to which we have limited sources of knowledge cf. (Rydving 2010). It was not a unified tradition, but a set of practices and narratives that would vary from one area to another. It is hard to find a concise concept, which is mirrored in the empirical basis of the article. Some scholars use 'Sámi religion', which defines this as the religion of the Sámi as such, beyond

the boundaries of place and time cf. (Kristiansen 2005; Mebius 2003). Without further discussion, as exemplified by Mebius (2003), it is problematic to use the term in such way. Some scholars use 'Sámi pre-Christian religion', a concept which is defined from it not being Christianity and that there has been a shift in religion among the Sámi cf. (Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1985). Other terms, such as 'Sámi shamanism' (Ahlbäck and Bergman 1991) or even 'Lapp shamanism' (Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1978), which takes as a starting point that the religious practices at hand are indeed shamanism. *Noaidevuohta* is a North Sámi concept that roughly translates to "what is related to the noaidi". Using this concept implies the use of a Sámi concept that is more concise and carries less luggage than the aforementioned versions (Kaikkonen 2018). This is in line with current trends within Indigenous studies. However, *noaidevuohta* will exclude religious practices not related to the *noaidi*. In this article, we will use the term Sámi religion to describe religious practice among the Sámi but with additional clarifications when using the term in our analysis and discussion.

3. Sámi Curricula in RE

Religious Education in Norway is a compulsory, non-confessional subject for all students in primary and secondary school. It includes teaching about different religions, ethics and philosophy. In 1997, the Norwegian state introduced an integrative model for RE. After this change was made, the Norwegian state has put significant effort into designing an RE subject that is in accordance with basic human rights. This has led to a series of revisions of curricula for RE cf. (Andreassen 2013). This has primarily been structural revisions and not influenced the specific Sámi content in the Sámi curricula for RE. In the curriculum from 2015, the specific Sámi content in the Sámi curriculum for RE is identical to that from 2005.

Our focus in this article is on the Sámi curricula for RE in the period from 1997 to 2015. We have analysed five set of curricula dating from 1997, 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2015. More specifically, we focus on how the Sámi curriculum for RE relates the category 'religion' to indigenous and Sami identity, history and culture, and how this has resulted in a pragmatic implementation and use of contestable concepts and terms such as 'circumpolar indigenous people's religions'. Thus, we are interested in the intersection where religion, the Sámi/indigenous, and education meet, and in the role and potential meaning of such concepts and terms.

We will primarily focus on the 1997 and the 2005 curricula. Our argument for limiting our analysis and focusing mainly on these two documents is based on the introduction of a new set of ideas and concepts concerning religion related to the Sámi as an indigenous people in these two specific texts. The 1997 curriculum is important because it was the first Sámi curriculum in RE. In the 2002 curriculum, there were only minor adjustments, which did not affect the main content. The 2005 curriculum introduced radically new ideas and concepts which was also influenced by specific research traditions in the research on indigenous religion in the Arctic and sub-Arctic areas. The curricula from 2008 and 2015 maintained the same ideas and concepts as in the 2005 curriculum. Hence, and to limit our analysis, we find it expedient to focus on the 1997 and 2005 curricula, and on the new ideas and concepts here introduced.

4. RE Research Perspectives

While research in RE that focus on curricula development and change is exhaustive, the research in RE that includes students with an indigenous background or research on indigeneity in RE curricula and/or textbooks is rather small. In general, in the Nordic countries, there is a growing interest in research on Sámi in the educational system cf. (Gjerpe 2017; Gjerpe 2018; Spjut 2019). However, the more specific research that focus on Sámi in RE is still limited to a very few contributions. Andreassen and Olsen (2017) analyse how the Sámi are included in national curricula in RE and argue that there is an ambivalence in how the Sámi and their culture are presented, especially in how their culture is related to Christianity. Most of the research on indigenous peoples or religion published in RE journals takes different countries in the African continent as its contexts and is based on theological or inter-religious

perspectives cf. (Davies 2007). However, we sense a growing awareness of perspectives on Indigenous peoples and cultures in Western and non-religious Religious Education (cf. (Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng 2020)). Much of the research argues that the Western educational system is based on ideas that do not correspond to indigenous cultures. In a Māori context, criticism has been raised against a possible 'whitestreaming'; that is, despite the basis of the Māori community, the curriculum is still based on the premise of a white majority society (Ritchie and Skerrett 2014, p. 51).

This corresponds to what Leganger-Krogstad (2010, 2011) has argued in reference to the Sámi in the Norwegian educational system. She argues that that Sámi culture is transformed or reduced to a variation of Norwegian culture, and that Western ideas lie as self-evident and unspoken basis for the subjects in the Norwegian school. To come to this conclusion, Leganger-Krogstad (2011) did her fieldwork in Finnmark county in the 1990s, and she bases her analysis on the Norwegian school system and national curricula. She does not analyse the Sámi curricula that applied from 1997. Instead, she served as one of the experts that contributed to the development of a Sámi RE curriculum that applied from 2005, which we will return to in our discussion. In a research blog, she writes, "By acquiring knowledge about pre-Christian Sámi religion, I better understood the basis of the differences [between Norwegian and Sámi culture] and acknowledged the need the Sámi have to revitalize this tradition in order to preserve a minority culture. It also became clear that Laestadian Christianity was a Christianity adapted to the old Sámi faith" ((Leganger-Krogstad 2010), our translation). She also argues that Western ideas concerning human supremacy over nature is an idea that is embedded in the Norwegian curricula. This might help explain the changes in the 2005 curriculum that included the introduction of the concept 'circumpolar indigenous people's religions'. This concept clearly emphasizes the differences between the Indigenous peoples and the non-Indigenous people. Leganger-Krogstad's argument might also serve as an example of the tendency in research on 'Sámi religion' after the turn of the millennium for more research to discuss whether aspects of the 'Sámi pre-Christian religion' still exist and how traditional Sámi religious elements have been revitalized in New Age-oriented ideas (paganism) cf. (Rydving 2016, p. 172).

That students with an indigenous background might think in other ways than the (stereo)typical Westerner, though, was a finding in a Dutch research project that asked, "What do children do with 'God' when confronted with stories from different religious traditions?" (Avest 2009). In this project, they found that "Indigenous pupils more than children with a migrant and Islamic background, and girls more than boys, tend to explore new possible interpretations, e.g., the 'problem' of God's call to people" (Avest 2009, p. 256). This finding finds resonance in a recent discussion in England, concerning the 'Big Ideas for RE' project. In this discussion, attention is brought to the notion of 'religion' and that it is a Western construct (Asad 1993), and "the religious/nonreligious binary, as well as the fencing off of 'religion' from 'non-religious worldviews', are of an artificial nature" (Freathy and John 2019, p. 31). Consequently, Freathy and John (2019) question whether indigenous traditions/cultures/worldviews would fall into either or both categories. The question at stake is a discussion of the positionality of those, who drew up the 'Big Ideas for RE', and whether they can be seen as White, Western, Eurocentric, middle class or 'Academic'? (Freathy and John 2019, p. 31).

Here, the scholarly discussion about the concept of 'religion' lies close at hand. Asad's critique of the term religion and his claim that it is a Western construct belongs to a bigger tendency within the academic study of religion. Tomoko Masuzawa (2005), with the deconstruction of the concept 'World religion', Jonathan Z. Smith (2004), with the critical reflection of the use of 'religion' as a concept as such, Russell T. McCutcheon (2001), with the critique of the sui generis approach to religion, and David Chidester (2014), with the works on religion in African context, are all examples of a growing discourse wherein the critique of the Eurocentric and Christocentric background of the term. Further, Benson Saler's work on the conceptualization of religion (2009) is relevant here, for instance where he is critical to essentialist presentations. He instead argues for a more network-oriented approach to the understanding of religion, wherein a number of statements and predicates intertwine and overlap in

different ways. To some extent, this also finds resonance within Indigenous studies, especially when it comes to the decolonizing critique of Eurocentrism and dominant Western research practices.

In a Norwegian context, the separate Sami curricula for the Sami administrative area is a strategy to try to avoid either of these tendencies, and instead work for developing a curriculum that is based on Sámi culture and for the Sámi society. In addition, the Sami curricula intents to provide an approach to teaching that allows the students to use their cultural background. However, despite all these good intentions, it has not proved easy to concretize, as what constitutes 'Sami culture' and what is best for the Sami society is constantly under negotiation, which our analysis of the Sami curricula for RE will illustrate.

5. Analysing Curricula for Religious Education

An established approach to the study of curricula is that they are texts that express politically ratified ideals and claims for the educational system (Goodlad 1979, p. 61; Copley 2008, p. 207). As such, they reflect society's ideals and express politically ratified ideals, claiming and thus providing a mandate for the content for each subject. Hence, the content is important, introducing key terms, concepts, perspectives, and/or ideas. Introduced in a curriculum, ideas and concepts represent established knowledge.

We limit the reading to dealing with curricula as texts, i.e., a level referred to as the "formal curricula" by Goodlad (1979, p. 60). That means that we will not discuss other possible "levels" in the curricula, such as the "ideological curricula", "perceived curricula", "operational curricula" or "experiential curricula" as discussed by Goodlad (1979, pp. 60–64). The different levels emphasise that the "formal curriculum", the actual written text, is embedded in a number of levels that will emphasise its contents in different ways. Thus, the curriculum stretches from an overarching societal and institutional level, to a praxis level of implementation and experience. By limiting our reading to the "formal curriculum", we will not discuss implementation and experiences of students or teachers. However, the curriculum is an area wherein educational policy, reform, and struggles are articulated (Copley 2008, p. 207). Hence, they are important documents as they are a part of the legal framework. Curricula have the tendency to be top-down. We focus on this top-down communication of the curricula, and discuss how the concept of 'Circumpolar Indigenous people's religions' becomes a central part of the making of Sámi religion.

We will consider seeing indigenous people in the context of the subaltern. This may point to a critical perspective on representation and position. A critical question can be raised concerning the possibility for the subaltern to speak and be heard in these struggles (Buras and Apple 2006). Following this line of thought, indigenization may imply the speaking of the subaltern. This may also mean the transcending of boundaries between explicit politics and research.

We limit our reading to dealing with the Sami RE curricula as texts. In a Norwegian context, it is crucial to be aware that the curriculum is part of legislation mandating teaching and educational practices in school. Serving as regulations that outlines ideas and values from the Education Act (Norwegian, *Opplæringsloven*), the Norwegian curriculum has two levels. In the Core Curriculum, some general descriptions about the school's place in society and basic values are introduced together with more general aims for teaching. In addition, there are curricula for each school subject that contain main aims and specific goals for teaching. It is expected that teachers transform the content of the curriculum into something teachable.

When it comes to religion, curriculum analysis can detect how the idea of 'religion' is conceptualized and presented and how it is related to different concepts, functions and ideas. We set out to do a conceptual analysis, wherein we draw on Norman Fairclough (2003) discourse analysis that focus on how word-clusters and words (terms) constitute frames and ideas for thinking and talking about religion and how religion is related to indigenous religion and peoples. There is a synchronic dimension to this, as we have gone into each of the five curricula for RE separately looking for how Sámi religion or phenomena related to Sámi religion is articulated and presented. A key element in the analysis

is the conceptualization in itself; that is, which terms and words are used and how religion in Sámi context is given a term and concept. As the changing curricula remain versions of the same, there is also a diachronic dimension in the analysis; we look into how the conceptualization develops, changes and/or becomes fixated (Lindberg 2017, p. 95).

Within the academic study of religion/s, essentialism and the critique of essentialism has been an important concept over the last decades (Stausberg and Gardiner 2018, pp. 20, 22; Martin 2018, p. 538). Giving essentialist presentations of religion or religions is, mostly, seen as a problematic oversimplification. Within Indigenous studies, there is talk of *strategic* essentialism cf. (Chidester 2000, p. 434). Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses essentialism regarding the idea of the authentic. She argues that essentialism is problematic when used to express how Indigenous peoples as a group are essentially different to others. The symbolic appeal of an authentic identity, however, has been strategically important in political struggles (Smith 2010, p. 74). Political struggles, of course, have a key role in all indigenous discourse. For several good reasons, the antagonists in these struggles are the indigenous and the colonizers. What is less outspoken is how the symbolic appeal of an authentic identity related to indigenous politics can transfer to the world of research. As a political claim, it is not a problem to state that indigenous people are essentially different than from non-indigenous people. As a scholarly premise or—what we look into—as a basis for educational representations of Indigenous people, however, the picture is quite different. Further, it creates a dominant discourse that leaves less room for indigenous diversity. Strict dichotomies are at least problematic and cannot be seen as universal. The dichotomy between 'The West' and 'The Indigenous' can imply that internal variations and differences in both categories become blurry (Olsen 2016, pp. 31–32). In our analysis, we ask whether the concept 'Circumpolar Indigenous peoples' religion' used in the curricula can be seen as a strategic essentialist approach.

6. The 1997 Curriculum for RE: Introducing 'Circumpolar Indigenous People's Religions' and 'Sámi Pre-Christian Religion'

The Sámi curriculum for RE [KRL97-S] (Kirke-, Utdannings- og Forskningsdepartementet. (KUD) 1997) was implemented in 1997 as a part of a comprehensive educational reform in Norway. The Sámi curriculum follows the structure and also has much of the same content as the national curriculum for RE. Both curricula state in the introduction that the teaching in RE should put special emphasis on Christianity as "a deep current in our nation's history" (Kirke-, Utdannings- og Forskningsdepartementet. (KUD) 1997, p. 95). This is clearly an expression of (or from the time when) Christianity being an integral and unmistakable part of Norwegian community and schools. In the Sámi curriculum, Christianity is also related to the Sámi societies as a preserver of Sámi culture:

> The Sámi communities today are founded on a Christian-Humanist tradition, but have also undergone profound historical changes in terms of change in religion. The emergence and spread of different Christian denominations in Sámi communities have helped to preserve Sámi culture and identity in the most intense period of the Norwegianization policy. ((Kirke-, Utdannings- og Forskningsdepartementet. (KUD) 1997, p. 95), our translation)

Christianity is presented as a basis for Norwegian society at large, including the Sámi societies. The idea that Christianity was also important to preserve Sámi culture and identity in the most intense period of Norwegianization process of the Sámi is a statement that might be contested. Researchers have argued that the Sámi responses to Christian mission most likely resulted in resistance as well as sympathy with the Christian religion (Rydving 2004). However, the perspective stated in the curriculum primarily relies on a perspective related to a Christian revival movement—Laestadianism—that gained a majority of Sámi followers in Northern Norway, Sweden and Finland in the mid-1850s. In the Laestadian gatherings, the Sámi language was used, and Sámi customs were not under attack. Thus, scholars have argued that the Laestadian movement created a free space for the Sámi cf. (Minde 1998).

In contrast, the Christian mission among the Sámi conducted by the Norwegian church, was periodically intense and brutal cf. (Rydving 2004; 2010, p. 58). The Norwegian church was also a part of the Norwegianization policy towards the Sámi in the early 1900s.

Even if there was a special focus on Christianity, a supplementary relation between Sámi culture, religion and other Indigenous people's religions was introduced in the 1997 curriculum:

> The teaching should also include other Indigenous people's religions and Sámi pre-Christian religion in a cultural and historical perspective. ((Kirke-, Utdannings- og Forskningsdepartementet. (KUD) 1997, p. 96), our translation)

This was the first time that a Norwegian RE curriculum addressed issues that related Sámi people to other Indigenous people's religion. However, the term 'pre-Christian' is used consequently throughout the curriculum, communicating that 'Sámi pre-Christian religion'—as an established term for religion in Sápmi prior to colonization in the scholarly literature in the 1970s and to the 1990s (Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1985)—is something of its own but that belongs to the past. The 1997 curriculum thus communicates—what seems to be quite a paradox—that the Sámi and their culture primarily is 'Christian' but nevertheless also can be related to other Indigenous people's religion. However, this is done without offering any clarification about what 'other Indigenous people's religion' might be.

The 1997 curriculum is divided into five different main subject areas: (1) Knowledge about the Bible, (2) History of Christianity, (3) Christian faith today, (4) Other religions, and (5) Ethics/Philosophy. There are references to elements from Sámi tradition in all these main subject areas and for all levels. In primary school (1 to 7 grade), a teaching goal for first grade is about "old and new Sámi Christmas traditions at home and in church" (Kirke-, Utdannings- og Forskningsdepartementet. (KUD) 1997, p. 101), and in fifth grade there are teaching goals about the Kautokeino rebellion in 1852 and about Sámi translations of the Bible (Kirke-, Utdannings- og Forskningsdepartementet. (KUD) 1997, p. 106). These teaching goals are a part of the main subject area "History of Christianity".

In the main subject area labelled "Other religions", a sub-heading for tenth grade is "Religions in our time: Circumpolar religions and Sámi pre-Christian religion" (our translation). The description of this main subject area states:

> Pupils should gain knowledge of some key figures, themes, stories and conflicts within different circumpolar Indigenous people's religions and in Sámi pre-Christian religion. (Kirke-, Utdannings- og Forskningsdepartementet. (KUD) 1997, p. 110), our translation)

'Circumpolar Indigenous people's religions' and 'Sámi pre-Christian religion' appear as two distinct categories but also communicates that 'circumpolar indigenous peoples' and the Sámi share some religious traits. As the curriculum communicates that the Sámi in present society are Christians, the parallel between 'circumpolar indigenous people's religion' and 'pre-Christian religion' appear to primarily belong to the past.

The use of the term 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' is, however, not used consistently. The term 'circumpolar religions' also appears in the curriculum, in the description of the main subject area. It is not possible to say if this is deliberate and reflects a distinction of some kind, or if it is random inconsistency. Rather, we suggest that this reflects that the concepts are not clearly established and, therefore, used in slightly different ways.

In the aims for teaching, two out of three teaching goals relate 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' to nature. These are teaching goals about 'nature gods' and 'notions of helpers in the nature', that thus signal that nature is central in 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion'. 'Nature gods' most likely refer to the many known gods in Sámi mythology, such as 'the Ákkas' and the 'thunder god' (Rydving 2010). 'Helpers in the nature' in this context refers to the idea of spirits that can reveal themselves in different forms, most commonly in the shape of an animal. It does not mention any specific gods or helpers. Still, it is clear that we, in other terms, deal with some kind of animism.

The relation between the terms 'Sámi pre-Christian religion' and 'circumpolar (Indigenous people's) religion' is relevant. Even if the term 'Sámi pre-Christian religion' clearly indicates that it is something in the past, no longer existing, the same teaching goals apply for both categories. Therefore, it paves the way for an understanding of 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religions' as equivalent to 'Sámi pre-Christian religion'. In reference to Fairclough (2003), religious traits related to nature creates a word cluster, which permits an interpretation that knowledge about 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' might provide knowledge about 'Sámi pre-Christian religion'. A key element in both is nature.

In the 1997 Sámi RE curriculum, the general description of the importance of Christianity in Sámi areas does not fully coincide with the emphasis on 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' in the main subject area labelled 'Other religions'. It leaves it an open question if the Sámi can be both Christian and oriented towards a contemporary indigenous (nature) religion. A possible explanation why these terms operate together might be because the term 'Sami pre-Christian' was used in the national curriculum and further maintained in the Sámi RE curriculum. In the national curriculum, however, there is no mention of 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion'. This is exclusively for the Sámi curriculum. In the Sámi RE curriculum, the term 'Sami pre-Christian' is placed in a cluster of other terms that influences how it can be understood. Most importantly, the emphasis on Christianity and the use of the term 'Sámi pre-Christian' clearly signals that the latter belongs to the past.

7. The 2005 Curriculum for RE: Establishing 'Circumpolar Indigenous People's Religion'

In 2005, the RE curriculum was comprehensively revised, both the national and the Sámi curriculum. In both curricula, the Sámi content was made more visible. In the main subject area, 'Christianity' in the national curriculum, it reads that pupils should be able to 'describe the main features of pre-Christian Sámi beliefs, and the subsequent transition to Christianity' (Utdanningsdirektoratet (Udir) 2005a, p. 6).

In the 2005 Sámi RE curriculum, there is no mention of the Christianization of the Sámi and the transition from Sámi pre-Christian religion to Christianity. However, pupils should be able to 'Describe the relation between Sámi nature religion and Christianity in a historical perspective' (Utdanningsdirektoratet (Udir) 2005b, p. 6, our translation). Instead of a 'transition to Christianity', as it is formulated in the national curriculum, the Sámi curriculum mentions 'relation between Sámi nature religion and Christianity', thus presenting them as opposites. In other parts of the Sámi RE curriculum, there is an emphasis on the Norwegian Church in Sámi areas and on Sámi psalm tradition. Both curricula, however, consequently downplay that the historical relation between Christianity and 'Sami pre-Christian religion' was characterized by a high degree of conflict cf. (Rydving 2004). This is in line also with prominent textbooks' presentation of the change to Christianity (Olsen 2017).

In 2005, 'Circumpolar indigenous people's religion' was made a main subject area in the Sámi curriculum. In comparison, the national curriculum had three main subject areas (1. Christianity; 2. Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Philosophies of Life; and 3. Philosophy and Ethics). The Sámi curriculum now had four. The term 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' was thus maintained and even highlighted. In the curriculum, it was also made clear that about 10% of the teaching should be used on this main subject area. In addition, there was made a distinction between "Circumpolar indigenous people's religions' and 'other indigenous people's religions". The description of the main subject area applied for both primary and secondary states:

> The main subject area *Circumpolar indigenous people's religions* deal with the Sámi and other circumpolar indigenous people's nature religions and religious and ethical traditions. In secondary school, this main subject area should also provide insight in other indigenous people's religions. (Utdanningsdirektoratet (Udir) 2005b, pp. 2–3, our translation)

The 2005 Sámi RE curriculum thus maintain the use of much of the same concepts and ideas from the 1997 curriculum, but reconfigures the whole text and creates new word-clusters. The strong

emphasis on Christianity as 'a deep current in our nation's history' was replaced by more general descriptions of Christianity's role—i.e., the Church's role—in society and culture. The Sámi were no longer primarily defined as Christians. The term 'Sámi pre-Christian' is completely gone in the 2005 Sámi RE curriculum but maintained in the national curriculum. In the 2005 Sámi curriculum, the term 'Sámi nature religion' replaces 'Sámi pre-Christian' religion. The removal of the term 'pre-Christian', the historical reference, is gone. This creates a possible interpretation that 'Sámi nature religion' and 'indigenous religion' appear as living religious tradition in the present or that they are taken out of historical time and space. Both point towards a tendency of essentializing the religious practice of the Sámi in particular, and religion in Sápmi in general.

As 'circumpolar indigenous people's religions' now was a separate main subject area, the competence aims in the 2005 Sámi RE curriculum were more specific compared to the 1997 curriculum. However, nature still appeared as key element in both curricula, no matter if it was related to 'Sámi pre-Christian religion', 'Sámi nature religion' or 'circumpolar indigenous people's religion'. Specific elements such as gods and goddesses, helpers and guiding creatures, holy places—all related to nature—signal key features of indigenous religions.

In the Sámi 2005 RE curriculum, the term 'other Indigenous people's religions' is used. Attention is thus drawn to the global scene of indigenous traditions and religions. As a part of this development, the shaman and the drum are listed among competence aims. The use of the word 'shaman', instead of the Sámi word *noaidi*, paves the way for a clear comparative outline to other indigenous religions globally, and relates to a particular scholarly discourse. Again, new terminology in the 2005 Sámi RE curriculum creates a word cluster that relates Sámi culture, tradition and religion to a global indigenous discourse. Compared to the 1997 Sámi RE curriculum, where the Sámi were related to a national discourse where the Sámi culturally serve as a minority, and when it comes to religion, in relation to Christianity. The distinct 'Sámi religion' is in 1997 something 'pre-Christian' and belongs to the past. In 2005, 'Sámi nature religion' is something that the Sámi share with other indigenous peoples on the global scene, especially through its orientation to nature.

The terms and perspectives provide a vocabulary and interpretative framework for teachers (and pupils and their parents) and textbook authors. In reference to Norman Fairclough (2003), they can be described as 'word-clusters' that constitutes both frames and perspectives for interpreting 'religion' in Sámi culture and as something trans-national, removed from a Norwegian discourse that 'limits' the Sámi as a minority and where Sámi religious traditions primarily is related to Christianity and as something in the past.

We find in our analysis that, from the 1997 to 2005 Sámi RE curriculum, there is a development in which the terms and concepts that are used relate the Sámi to a discourse on 'indigenous religion' cf. (Tafjord 2016) and to an international discourse on 'indigenous education' cf. (Schimmel 2007). The different concepts can be related to a local/regional and a global level. One cannot say that the national level is completely gone, but in the 2005 curriculum the local and global level—especially the global—are highlighted. In addition, historical context is downplayed.

The concept 'Circumpolar Indigenous people's religions' as the name of a separate main subject area is clearly important. It consists of terms that in themselves are complex. Bearing in mind that one of the main purposes of the RE subject in school is to relate the teaching to Sámi students' identity and to strengthen their identity, it is interesting that this is done through a concept that refers to something 'trans-national', outside the Norwegian and Nordic context. Our argument is that the use of the concept 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' marks a distinct change in the Sami RE curricula when it is used as the name of a separate main subject. Even if it also appears as a teaching goal in the 1997 Sámi RE curriculum. In our analysis, therefore, we have tried to map the concept to find out where it comes from.

8. Mapping the Term 'Circumpolar Indigenous People's Religion'

In the 2005 Sámi RE curriculum, two concepts (or conceptualizations) are used that might signal different things. The name of the main subject area is, as mentioned above, 'Circumpolar Indigenous people's religion'. However, one of the competence aims reads 'other circumpolar indigenous religions'. Both terms create some difficulty in translation from Norwegian into English. The Norwegian equivalent to 'indigenous people' is 'urfolk'. This creates a dilemma in the translation of 'urfolksreligioner'. Literally, it means "indigenous people's religions". Still, there are some ambiguities to the content and meaning of this term. It can also be translated as 'indigenous religions'.

The concepts and idea of 'Sámi nature religion' and 'circumpolar indigenous people's religions' did not come from nowhere. The abovementioned RE expert, Heid Leganger-Krogstad, served as one of the experts that contributed to the development of the Sámi RE curriculum that applied from 2005. When she writes about pre-Christian Sámi religion, she most definitely emphasizes the particularity of all kinds of Sámi religion and the difference between Sámi religion and culture on one hand, and Norwegian or non-Sámi religion and culture on the other (Leganger-Krogstad 2010). She also argues that Western ideas concerning human supremacy over nature is an idea that is embedded in the Norwegian curricula, and that is in conflict with Sámi cultural conceptualization of nature. This might help explain the changes in the 2005 curriculum. As leader of the expert group writing the new curriculum, she turned to Roald E. Kristiansen, an expert on Sámi religion at the University of Tromsø, of an alternative to 'Sámi pre-Christian religion'. Kristiansen suggested 'circumpolar indigenous people's religions', based on ideas from Irimoto and Yamada's book (1994). Kristiansen was also the author of a school textbook that was used in RE following the Sámi curriculum. This book is interesting as context for the Sámi curriculum as there are few texts found that use the term. In the textbook, Kristiansen provides a more outspoken presentation of 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religions'; they are non-Christian, non-literate nature religions with a shamanistic cult form. Lastly, in the presentation of circumpolar Indigenous people's religions, they are ahistorical and taken out of social context (Andreassen and Olsen 2015).

As far as our investigation into terminology goes, the term 'circumpolar indigenous people's religion' is not commonly used in scholarly work on the religion of the Sámi.

In order to map its use, we have gone through a range of books on the subject and conducted an online search for it. Different search engines provide few links. Paradoxically, what we find that all results on our online search almost exclusively relates back to the Sámi RE curriculum. In other words, the Norwegian 'sirkumpolare urfolksreligioner' is a concept that is not commonly used. The English term, 'circumpolar indigenous people's religion', also provided no results. The closest was references to the already mentioned anthology *Circumpolar Religion and Ecology: An Anthropology of The North* (Irimoto and Yamada 1994). The curriculum itself does not say much about what 'circumpolar indigenous people's religion' is, what it includes and what it leaves out. It leaves an open frame for interpretation and what is included or excluded in the term. For our analysis, it is thus necessary to look for the term in texts (and contexts) outside the curriculum.

The concept 'circumpolar' is geographical and refers to the part of the globe that is north of the Arctic Circle. This means the northern parts of Canada, Greenland, Fenno-Scandinavia and Russia. In the scholarly literature, the northern parts of Japan are also treated as part of the circumpolar area cf. (Irimoto and Yamada 1994). In the latest decade, particularly in the Nordic context, concepts such as 'The High North', 'Northern', and 'The Arctic' have in varying extent been in use parallel with 'circumpolar'. Pentikäinen (1994, p. 377; 1996, p. 1) has commented that these concepts to a great extent are synonymous, although embedded in different cultural, political and academic discourses. In addition to refer to a geographical area north of the Polar circle, Pentikäinen (1996, p. 1) points to the fact that the term 'arctic' is both an ecological and a mythical concept. Derived from the Greek word *arktos* ('bear'), 'Arctic' areas was located beneath the star constellation of the Great Bear (Ursa Major), according to Pentikäinen. Describing the term 'Northern', Pentikäinen (1996, p. 2) argues that it includes more than the geographical meaning. He relates 'Northern' to the 'ethnic' aspect of

religion', and thus also relates it to indigenous peoples. Concerning the term 'circumpolar', Pentikäinen simply argues that it primarily has been used among archaeologist and anthropologists that 'wanted to interrelate the Circumpolar traditions historically' and a basis for 'cross-cultural' studies based on evolution and diffusion theories (Pentikäinen 1996, pp. 1–2). Pentikäinen thus relates the term 'circumpolar' to a research paradigm of the 1950s and 1960s.

For our purpose, it is interesting to see how the different concepts seem to overlap and roughly describe the same thing. Pentikäinen's explanation of 'circumpolar' as a concept used to facilitate a comparative perspective between cultures within the 'circumpolar area', might provide an insight in the usage of the term in the Sámi RE curriculum.

The historian of religion Åke Hultkrantz is one of the defining and hegemonic voices in the academic discourse of 'circumpolar religion'. Hultkrantz (1996, p. 31) states that 'Arctic' and 'circumpolar religion', respectively, can be seen as the same. Still, there are differences. Hultkrantz uses a highly generalizing approach, expressed through an ecological, and almost deterministic approach as he describes 'Arctic' and 'circumpolar' religion primarily as answers to the ecology and climate of the region. In Hultkrantz' work, the terms 'Arctic culture and religion' are used as descriptions of the whole circumpolar or Arctic geographical area. The term 'circumpolar religion' is, on the other hand, used in what he claims is an analytical and comparative way. The proximity to and dependence of nature is a key component (cf. Hultkrantz 1996. This is similar to the ideas of circumpolar indigenous people's religion in the RE curriculum.

Among the terms discussed by Pentikäinen (1994, 1996) and Hultkrantz (1996), and despite their critics, it is interesting to observe that the current scholarly discourse on religion more often uses 'Arctic' rather than 'circumpolar' and 'Northern' cf. (Znamenski 2007; Christofferson 2010). Thus, 'Arctic' is far more commonly used today. When the term appears in the current scholarly literature, it is primarily used as a term that signals a comparison between peoples and religions within the 'circumpolar' area. Nevertheless, leading researchers on indigenous Sámi religion, such as Rydving (2011), have argued for greater awareness of variations between local communities and regions in Northern Scandinavia. Concepts that are all-encompassing primarily lead to a generalisation which will downplay cultural variation and complexity. An illustration is Rydving's (2010, pp. 96–100) work on how the different regional names of the 'thunder god' (*Horagalles*) have resulted in different meaning and understandings of this god in the different Sámi areas.

The term 'Indigenous peoples' is also an important in this context. It points towards historical contexts in which a majority group (or groups) is distinguished from a minority seen to have special claims to and belonging to a particular land area. The concept 'Indigenous peoples' thus has political, scholarly, and linguistic consequences.

The two concepts together—circumpolar and indigenous—give us 'circumpolar indigenous people'. This means indigenous people living in the circumpolar area. Adding 'religion' does not provide a more comprehensive concept. A challenge occurs when it comes to whether 'circumpolar indigenous people's religions' are to be understood in plural properly as any religion found in the circumpolar area, or as a particular kind or type of religion.

Recent research in the study of religions has described how a contemporary globalizing discourse on religion of indigenous peoples draws on a presumption that indigenous peoples share religious traits independent of time and place (Tafjord 2016, p. 564). The Sámi RE curricula show examples of how such presumptions are maintained. This is clearly stated in the current curriculum, dating from 2015: "The circumpolar religious traditions amongst indigenous people of the northern hemisphere are part of a shared religious heritage" (Utdanningsdirektoratet (Udir) 2015, p. 2, our translation).

The presumption that indigenous peoples share religious traits, across different historical and social situations and contexts, is something that is highly contested within current research in the study of religions. Referring to the current critical discourse on the concepts of 'religion' and 'world religions' in themselves, such a claim of ahistoricity and unsituatedness seems inaccurate at best. It may seem like a movement towards the making of a category or phenomenon of 'Indigenous religion'. In reference to

religious tradition among the Sámi, Håkan Rydving (2011) has argued that the circumpolar area is a huge geographical area with many and different cultural and religious expressions. The circumpolar area is a culturally complex area. Rydving argues for the importance of dealing with complexity and diversity in texts on circumpolar indigenous people's religions, instead of making general assumptions about it.

The concept 'circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' clearly has its advantages. It fits well in a larger narrative of how the people of the north share something and can almost be seen as One. In this narrative, the Sámi and the other Indigenous peoples of the north are the quintessential Northern People. The indigeneity is important because it creates and emphasizes an opposition to the Western people of the north. In the narrative, the difference between the Indigenous and the Western is a key issue.

In this narrative, and to highlight the difference between the Indigenous and the West, the 'Circumpolar Indigenous peoples' must be seen as transcending diversity. This means that internal differences and diversity are downplayed. Nuances are downplayed. Social and historical dimensions are downplayed. We are left with a narrative of an almost mythical people inhabiting the North. The mythical dimension is, of course, further strengthened by the important part played by religion.

In international Indigenism, the spiritual side of Indigenous cultures is important. The triangle of indigeneity, religion/spirituality and nature is often seen (Valkonen and Valkonen 2014; Olsen 2014; Kraft 2009). The religion of the mythical Circumpolar Indigenous people seems to fit well. Again, it is the difference and ahistoricity that are the keys. The religion is different from Christianity, shamanistic, and does not have dogmas and sacred texts. Should there be internal diversity and variation, they are not presented.

It is fairly easy to put this into the classical essentialism folder. Going all the way back to Russell T. McCutcheon (2001) and his critique of dominant perspectives in the academic study of religion, 'Circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' ticks many of the boxes and can be seen as an extraordinary religion that needs to be retold as something ordinary. The context of the curriculum, with the texts that are written and circulated at the time of the curriculum, clearly points in this direction. There is an essentializing discourse at hand when talking about the religions of the north. Analysing this discourse now, the historicity of it becomes obvious. First off, it is the use of the term 'Circumpolar' that is telling. This term belongs to the public discourse of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Today, it has been replaced by different versions of the 'Arctic'.

Recognizing the essentialism, we ask or suggest that there may be some kind of strategy related to this. Within Indigenous politics and research, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith has argued, essentialism is problematic on one hand. However, on the other, as a strategy it has been important on order to defend and stand up for the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples. Highlighting difference and Otherness has been a way of speaking from the Subaltern. The development in the RE curricula also finds resonance in what David Chidester (2000, p. 434) has characterised as the 'invention of structures'. Chidhester further raises the question, seemingly in line with Smith, that such an invention, although based on an 'strategic essentialism', might be necessary in decolonising processes for marginalised or oppressed peoples. Following Saler (2009), we clearly see the curricular discourse on Sámi and indigenous religion as a kind of religion making through a particular conceptualization. Combining the two perspectives, we find that the curricula at hand represents a strategic conceptualization—'Circumpolar indigenous people's religion' is built and given meaning as a concept through what appears to be a strategy wherein the distinction between the Western/Christian and the Indigenous is a key. Related to this is the description of this kind of religion as something extraordinary.

The curricular use of an essentializing discourse, together with its surrounding context, may also have been coming from a strategic choice. Parallels to this is seen in the emerging Sámi pedagogy of the same time, the 1990s and the early 2000s. Here, Sámi pedagogy, upbringing, and culture was presented as essentially different from Norwegian and Western pedagogy, upbringing, and culture. This was

important to create the space for Sámi voices to speak about these issues. Today, it has faced criticism also from other Sámi scholars of the field (Gjerpe 2018). That the scholars, textbook authors and makers of curricula (to a great extent some of the same individuals) chose to write religions in Sápmi and other parts of the Arctic/Circumpolar region into a similar kind of greater narrative, is understandable. It can be seen as creating a space to talk about Sámi religion as an independent unit.

The question arises, is this the voice of the subaltern that speaks? This is clearly an expression of indigenization highlighting indigenous experience and perspectives. At the same time, the making of 'Sámi pedagogy' or 'Sámi religion' or 'Circumpolar indigenous people's religion' can be an expression of a new hegemony, if it is based on a conceptualization coming from and derived of a limited part of the community at hand. We would rather see such claims as examples of different articulations of indigenous pedagogy or religion. Following James Clifford (2013, p. 60), we see these expressions as articulated traditions coming through some kind of collective voices but belonging to a particular and contingent situation. This means that they can be put under critical and analytical scrutiny, but that there is no goal of negating them.

In this sense, being critical towards the use of the term 'Circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' also means that it necessary to see and recognize the historicity. Still, it is interesting to see how the making of a new religion, a curricular and textbook religion, called 'Circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' was done and put into a national curriculum and made policy. Was this religion making coming from subaltern voices? Apparently not. Even though there were Sámi representatives in the committee that wrote the curriculum, it cannot be seen as an indigenous voice as such. An important challenge with the curricular religion of the circumpolar indigenous peoples is the potential gap between text and policy on one hand, and learning and teaching practices on the other. A further study of this could include the experiences of teachers in Sámi schools in trying to implement or put into action 'Circumpolar indigenous people's religion' in a classroom of Sámi students.

In the 2020 RE curriculum, which will be implemented in different levels in the period 2020 to 2022 (and therefore premature to include in this analysis), 'Circumpolar Indigenous people's religion' is no longer a part. Instead, in the Sámi RE curriculum, other terms are used. Now, there is talk of different expressions of Sámi 'traditional knowledge', of religions and worldviews in Sápmi, and other Indigenous peoples' religious and worldview traditions (Utdanningsdirektoratet (Udir) 2020). A new paradigm is seen and used—one with its own historicity. An important tendency in the new curriculum is the use of plurals and the claim to put local connections into use.

9. Conclusions

The Sámi RE curricula's description of 'circumpolar indigenous people's religions' carries a set of dilemmas and ambiguities. The ambiguity of the concept in itself is not dealt with, leaving it open to interpretation. Drawing mainly on an old research paradigm that generalise both the circumpolar area and indigenous culture and religion, the terms used in the curricula maintain assumptions about the 'circumpolar area' and 'indigenous religion'. In addition, a new tendency in the research on 'Sámi religion', concerning whether traditional Sámi religious elements have been revitalized cf. (Rydving 2016, p. 172), has been integrated in the RE curriculum.

The use of these terms in the curricula since 2005 makes it possible to describe the Sámi and their culture into a larger international community of indigenous peoples. This also illustrates how the curriculum can be seen as an important political tool. The concepts in the curriculum creates a word cluster that situates the Sámi in a global indigenous discourse, in which nature is a core element, i.e., beyond a national discourse, in which the Sámi is a minority struggling for their rights.

The curricula come from positions that are not explicitly indigenous. At the same time, the conceptualization of religion found in the curricula does take part in writing the Sámi into an international narrative and discourse of indigenous peoples. Still, this strategic conceptualization seems also to be slightly remote from Sámi (and other indigenous communities), as 'Circumpolar

indigenous people's religion' is taken and presented in form that is detached from time and space, existing primarily in written words rather than in real life.

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religions

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Spiritual Activism. Saving Mother Earth in Sápmi

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Abstract: Arctic Shaman Circle was founded in Oslo in November 2018. This article discusses what the Circle's founding document refers to as "spiritual activism", and how this was translated into action over the year that followed. I will follow one case in particular, which concerns plans for a power plant at the base of the mountain Aahkansnjurhtjie in the South Sámi area. Aahkansnjurhtjie is a sacred Sámi mountain, the shamans claim, and should be protected accordingly. My focus is on the learning processes that have emerged as the shamans have explored and argued the case, locally and nationally. I examine the negotiations that have happened along the way, in a political climate that has so far been hostile to religious arguments of any sorts, and in this example, involves a group that is contested among the Sámi. Finally, I look at the role of "indigeneity" in regard to claims, performances and responses to these particular concerns, as these have played out in different parts of the Sámi geography.

Keywords: Sápmi; Sámi shamanism; spiritual activism; indigenous religion(s)

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1. Introduction

> Indigenous people have a spiritual relationship to nature, which commits them to live in balance with Mother Earth. Shamanism is the designation of indigenous peoples' spirituality. The Arctic Shaman Circle promotes this perception of nature and society (Myrhaug et al. 2019)[1]

Arctic Shaman Circle[2] is the most recent addition to shaman milieus in Norway.[3] It is also the most explicitly *indigenous* shaman organization to have been established in Norway and Sápmi more broadly and the first that has foregrounded spiritual activism, and positioned societal development over personal development. Let me quote its objectives in full, up front:

(1) To help all Sami and other indigenous people in the north get back and develop their spiritual cultural heritage, according to U.N.'s human rights.
(2) To increase knowledge of the connection between nature and cultural landscapes, work and indigenous people's spirituality.

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1 No.: *Urfolk har et åndelig forhold til det naturen, noe som forplikter å leve i balanse med Moder Jord. Sjamanisme er betegnelsen for urfolks åndelighet. Arktisk Sjamansirkel fremmer denne natur samfunnsforståelsen*. The quote is from a letter to the editor in the Sámi newspaper *Ságat*, by the council of Arctic Shaman Circle (Eirik Myrhaug, Erena Rhöse, Nadia Fenina and Hege Dalen), under the title "Aahkansnjurhtjie /Kjerringtind ett hellig fjell". See https://www.sagat.no/mening/aahkansnjurhtjie-kjerringtind-ett-hellig-fjell/19.19440

2 Arktisk Sjamansirkel (Arctic Shaman Circle) was founded by Eirik Myrhaug, Erena Rhöse, Nadia Fenina and Hege Dalen and is currently led by a council (no.: *råd*) comprised by these same people. Myrhaug is a Sámi *noaidi* and elder (from Sápmi on the Norwegian side), Rhöse is a Maori water shaman (living in Sápmi on the Swedish side), Fenina is a Sámi *noaidi* (living in Sápmi on the Russian side), and Hege Dalen is from Hattfjelldal, and works as coordinator for the Circle. Myrhaug is head of the council.

3 A distinctively Sami shaman milieu emerged in Norway from the late 1990s. Having so far worked within the frames of Michael Harner's "Core Shamanism", Sámi shamans increasingly turned to the religion of their ancestors. This development has been explored elsewhere, most extensively by Trude Fonneland (2010, 2017). See also (Fonneland and Kraft 2013; Kraft 2009).

(3) To make visible Sámi and other indigenous people's spiritual knowledge traditions.
(4) Make ethical rules for shamanistic practice accessible and accepted in society.
(5) The Arctic Shaman Circle shall create an environment in which the circle is the force.
(6) The Arctic Shaman Circle shall be a unifying network for all shamanistic workers.
(7) Develop a circle that includes Sápmi and other countries with indigenous peoples from Arctic regions: Russia, Japan, Alaska, Greenland, Island, Faroe Islands, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway.
(8) Make shamanistic practice accepted as a profession.
(9) Help implement spiritual activism: actions for the support and development of indigenous people's spiritual connection to nature.[4]

In an attempt to shed light on unfolding developments at the intersection of religion, activism and indigeneity, this article deals with the first year and a half of Arctic Shaman Circle (2018–2020). I have been interested in the processes of indigenizing and religionizing, as the shamans have entered novel grounds, and negotiated a position for themselves vis-à-vis the complicated geographies of "Sámi religion" on the one hand and the largely secular spaces of Sámi (and Norwegian) activism on the other. My main case is the protection of Aahkansnjurhtjie, a mountain in the South Sámi area, referred to in the first annual report of the Arctic Shaman Circle as its "pilot case" (Arktisk Sjamansirkel 2019). I have followed the life of this case as it has been translated into action, in different contexts, on different scales and for different audiences, including a community meeting at the Sámi center in Hattfjelldal, a church in Oslo, news-media and online locations. The Facebook groups "Arktisk sjamansirkel" (Arctic Shaman Circle) and "Aahkansnjurhttjie: Kjerringtinden–beskytt hellige fjell" (protect sacred mountains) have enabled access to activities and communication along the way, for me and for the people involved, most of whom live spread across Norway and Sápmi.[5]

My methodological approach has been explorative and inductive, based on presence at the events discussed and long-term fieldwork in Sámi areas. The following themes have struck me as significant and will constitute my focus here. First is learning, as the shamans have explored the case, argued the cause and performed their claims, and with implications not only for religion-making on shaman terms but for the revitalization of traditions in Sápmi more broadly. Second is negotiations and diplomacy. The shamans are well aware of the challenges facing them, including the secular premises of activism, and the contested position of shamanism (particularly in the Sámi settlement areas).

Third is the role of "indigeneity" in regard to claims, performances and responses. My approach to this dimension has been shaped by a multi-year comparative project on indigenous religion(s), centered on the relationship between a globalizing discourse and local formations (Kraft et al. 2020; Johnson and Kraft 2017; Alles and Tafjord 2018). By "indigenous religion" I mean a flexible, but fairly standardized, vocabulary of assumed similarities: harmony with nature, healing and holism, antiquity and spirituality, shamanism and animism, along with material and practice-based registers (Kraft et al. 2020). Among my concerns are the ways- and means by which persons, acts and settings become recognizable as *indigenous* and *religious*, and the extent to which indigenous religion has become a resource (e.g., politically and in regard to religion-making). Attention to scales and translations is basic to this perspective, along with a focus on performance and display. My concern is not with truths, faults and authenticity. I am interested in what indigenous religion

[4] The objectives were handed out and discussed at the founding meeting of the Arctic Shaman Circle in Oslo on 17 November 2018, and was later published on its Facebook group (also titled Arctic Shaman Circle). They have been translated by me from Norwegian.

[5] I am not myself Sámi and do not speak Sámi languages, but have lived and worked in an area that is both Sámi and Norwegian since 2000 (in Tromsø, Northern Norway) and have conducted interviews and fieldwork in different parts of Sápmi on the Norwegian side over the past decade. The material gathered for this article is part of a larger project on contemporary religion and spirituality in Sápmi on the Norwegian side. Interviews have been based on the confirmed consent of the people in concern. Some of them have read and commented on drafts of this article.

enables, makes possible, and brings into existence, who uses and opposes these registers, and why and with which results.

2. Saving Aahkansnjurhtjie

Hattfjelldal is a large, and sparsely populated municipality[6] in the South Sámi area, bordering Sápmi on the Swedish side in the east. Just under 600 people live in the village by the same name. On 22 November 2018, approximately fifty of them—including shamans, local reindeer herders and representatives of the municipality board—gathered at Sijti Jarnge, the Sámi culture and develop-ment center. The Facebook invitation introduced the meeting as follows:

> We invite to a dialogue on plans for development of a power plant in Stikkelvika, Hattfjelldal, with great consequences for Sámi nature, work and culture. Both the reindeer herders, Nordland county council, the Sámi Parliament and Friends of the Earth Norway have strongly opposed the plans, based on the consequences it will have. Only the muni-cipality is positive to the plans. [. . . Aahkansnjurhtjie][7] is a landmark, an identity symbol for all of us who live around Røssvatn. It is also a sacred (no.: *hellig*) mountain, a mountain one turns to, to seek advice, knowledge and protection. Sacred mountains are among the most important tradition bearers in Sámi culture. U.N. human rights give indigenous people's sacred places a particular protection. Development on Tromsdalstinden[8] was stopped during plans for Olympic Games in Tromsø for this reason. Come to Sijti Jarnge and meet representatives of Friends of the Earth Norway, reindeer herding and Sámi culture workers.[9]

Asked by me whether people in Deatnu (his homeland in Finnmark) would be ready for a meeting like this, the Sámi politician and activist Beaska Niillas answered yes, but that he had never attended anything along these lines anywhere in Sápmi. The organizers referred to the event as historic. This was unusual in at least three ways. First, sacred places have rarely been talked about publicly, due partly to what is commonly referred to as a Sámi culture of silence (concerning matters positioned outside of Lutheran orthodoxy) and a loss of knowledge about sacred landscapes in the past. Second, shamans and politicians have rarely gathered for discussions of any sort, and third, "the sacred" has so far been kept out of land-claims and legal contexts (Årsheim 2018).

The program was introduced by the two local women in charge of the initiative: Hege Dalen and Cecilia Persson. I knew Dalen from before as a board member of the Arctic Shaman Circle, and as the producer and coordinator of The Shaman Council of the Isogaisa festival, in Troms county.[10] Persson is an actress, originally from Sápmi on the Swedish side, currently head of Åarjelhsaemien Teatere (South Sámi Theatre), and the partner of Ole Henrik Kappfjell, a reindeer herder in the Jillen Jnaarke district. The program comprised ten presentations, lasted four hours, and ended with a drum

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[6] A total of 1414 people were registered as living in Hattfjelldal municipality in 2018 (Aarborten tjïelte, in South Sámi). For information about the village and the municipality, see http://www.hattfjelldal-kommune.no. Hattfjelldal municipality has since 2017, and as one of 11 municipalities, been a part of the management area (no.: *forvaltningsområde*) for Sámi languages. Inhabitants in these areas have the right to be served in Sámi when dealing with public offices, and they have increased rights to Sámi language training. The South Sámi language is on UNESCO's red list of seriously endangered languages. On the South Sámi, see also (Berg-Nordlie 2018).

[7] A brief note on language usage. I will refer to names in Sámi for the settlement areas in inner Finnmark and for the mountain in Hattfjelldal, as well as for certain terms that are commonly used by members of Arctic Shaman Circle (whether the people in concern are Sámi and speak Sámi languages or not). For the Sámi name of the sacred mountain in Hattfjelldal (called Kjerringtind in Norwegian), I follow the spelling used by Norsk Kartverk (2020) (the Norwegian Mapping Authority): Aahkansnjurhtjie. The Facebook group "Aahkansnjurhttjie: Kjerringtinden—beskytt hellige fjell" was set up with a different spelling, and will be referred to by me as such. Its organizers (Hege Dalen and Eirik Myrhaug) has later used "Aahkansnjurhtjie" primarily, but the name of the Facebook group has remained the same.

[8] On the case concerning Tromsdalstinden, see (Kraft 2004, 2010).

[9] Norwegian and Swedish were the languages used during the meeting, along with occasional usage of Sámi; mostly in the form of an opening sentence by speakers when presenting themselves, and through usage of select terms. All translations are from Norwegian or Swedish, and translated by me.

[10] On the shaman festival Isogaisa, see (Fonneland 2017).

ceremony by a group of local shamans.[11] Erena Rhöse contributed in the form of three ceremonies: at the beginning, after a coffee-break and along with local shamans at the end.

Let me start with the two extremes of an otherwise mixed encounter, thereby to bring some of the complexities into relief. Starting out, the mayor (Harald Lie) expressed sympathy for local concerns. Having grown up on a goat farm in the south of Norway, he could relate to the strong reactions to the plans. Shifting from the informal style of fellow citizen to the formal register of political leadership, he then turned to a prepared manuscript that he read out loud. We learnt (at length) about energy needs, impact assessments, careful considerations, extensive information flow, and the board's decision as the inevitable conclusion to all of this. Their current task was to negotiate with the developer the mayor ended, thereby to secure maximum yield for people in Hattfjelldal.

Rhöse entered the circle in a Maori dress, with feathers in her hair, facial tattoos marking her identity and origin, and carrying two plastic containers with water and a small bundle of herbs. Dalen later told me that the water had been collected from Aahkansnjurhtjie, thereby to secure the mountain's presence during the meeting, as a "person" and main plaintiff. Rhöse was introduced as a traditional Maori, descending from a royal family. She presented herself through a Haka style ceremonial reply, addressed directly to the mayor, and one that shifted between soft appeals and strict demands. "I give you this", she started gently, offering the water and the herbs to the mayor: "is it ok? I don't want to scare you." Then, facing the audience, she told us to stand up for our human rights. As we failed to react, she repeated the command, now shouting: "Get up"! We did, including the mayor, now holding the bottle and the herbs. He looked uncomfortable, but performed the task assigned to him as Rhöse continued her speech, moving swiftly between appeals and demands, human rights language and mythological references. "I have done my assessment analysis" she concluded facing the mayor:

> And I think 20 generations ahead. Will you pay your share? [...] what will you do when there is no longer water to drink?
>
> Then, switching to a more threatening register:
>
> With Mother Earth waking up—you can stop a volcano. [...] And this consequence has been experienced when one has tried to build on sacred places in New Zealand. It was a terrible situation, until they came and spoke to the local population. I don't want to scare you, but we are threatened by the world's climate. It's you and me now—twenty generations.

Finally, Rhöse thanked us and performed a last haka. A few of the Sámi hummed along. The mayor looked relieved.

This was a performance-based representation of the case, the cause and solutions. Rhöse performed her refusal of the mayor's arguments, and the regime that he spoke through and on behalf of; its facts, methods, morals and priorities. Contrasting bureaucratic procedures and anonymized decision making, was a personal encounter between herself and the mayor. Contrasting the destructive and shortsighted ways of Western capitalism was the strength, needs and wisdom of Mother Earth. The performance came forth as "indigenous" through Rhöse's design, presence and appearance (tattoos, feathers, herbs, haka movements), and as "indigenous religion" through invocations of Mother Earth, holism, animism, and the sacred. As her on-stage collaborators, the shamans moved towards the indigenous and the traditional domain that they identify with, and away from the "new" and "neo" with which they

[11] A first session on "Consequences for reindeer herding" was cancelled, as the timing collided with the gathering of reindeer, a process that only the reindeer control. Next Persson spoke under the title "To live with sacred mountains," followed by Mayor Harald Lie on "Stikkelvika power plant–status." Beaska Niillas had been asked to describe "The landscape from a Sámi perspective," Thorbjørn Børgefjell shared "Experiences from the Aahka-mountains," Tom Kappfjell presented plans for a World Heritage application, Sigrid Stångberg from Vadtejen Saemiej Sijte spoke about "Atoklimpen culture reservation—a sacred cultural environment," and, finally, two talks by Erik Norberg (from Saemien Sijte) on the "protection of sacred landscapes," and Frode Solbakken (from Friends of the Earth Norway) on "Nature values around Kjerringtinden."

have often been associated. Meanwhile, Rhöse's position as Maori avoided explicit references to local traditions (and tensions), yet linked them to a shared category of indigeneity. Her message moved between Maori and upscaled vocabularies of indigenous religion, and between concrete matters (this bottle of water) and existential concerns (water in general). Resemblance with the "Water is life-" slogan of the Standing Rock movement (2016–2017) must have been apparent to many among the audience. Standing Rock was covered extensively in Sámi and Norwegian news media; Beaska Niillas was one of the most profiled voices of solidarity actions in Sápmi and for Sámi actions at Standing Rock (Kraft 2020; Johnson and Kraft 2018). Here, like for Standing Rock, a local case was upscaled to the level of global concern. The mayor was held personally responsible for not only Aahkansnjurhtjie, but for the future of Mother Earth. This was a refusal in the sense suggested by the Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2014), and through the sacred as a language for ultimate claims.

Locals were divided on the proposed plan. This meeting gathered opponents mainly, with only the mayor and two other persons from the municipality board representing the supporters. "We are gathered here to try to understand a landscape used through thousands of years", Dalen said during her welcome. Parts of Sámi cosmology have never been talked about publicly, she added. She accordingly felt humbled by the steps taken by locals. Persson was first out. She started with her upbringing in a Christian family in Sápmi on the Swedish side. Her father had taught her how to behave respectfully in nature. During university studies, she had learnt more about these practices and what they mean. Among the things she learnt is that Sámi religion "is animistic;" that "nature is alive [. . .] with its own soul." The plans for development constitute an assault from this perspective she concluded, and one that she feels responsible for confronting.

"The Sámi silence" is a complex term, denoting matters that are not talked about, or in private contexts only. It refers to collective rather than individual matters, and to inherited wounds from the past, as a result of missionary and forced assimilation,[12] and the stigmatizing and even demonizing of Sámi traditions that they brought about. Silence has for religious matters been related to believes and practices from the pre-Christian past, existing outside of or intertwined with Lutheran Protestantism. I have heard it talked about in different ways, ranging from silence as loss (for instance with practices that have been passed on, but whose "meaning" is no longer known), to silence as secrecy (in the sense of consciously hidden from certain peoples or contexts). Persson invoked both forms. She talked about her own loss of knowledge, and about the strategic secrecy of others: "Sacred places become destroyed when they become known. People come there and litter, tag, disturb the place." Now, in the face of a larger threat, "it's time to act and speak up, and thus give other people a chance to understand," take action while there is still time. "I have taught myself to respect the Christian tradition", Persson ended: "I think such respect should be mutual."

The mayor steered clear of religious (and indigenous) registers, and said little during the discussion that followed. He was followed by Beaska Niillas, who had been invited to talk about "the landscape based on a Sámi perception of reality." Starting out, Niillas noted that there are many Sámi perceptions of nature. This would be his, based on his relationship to his landscapes, "up there" in Deatnu. Niillas spoke along lines that are basic to Sámi discourses on human–nature relationships: acting respectfully, asking for permission and striving not to leave traces. He talked in low-key ways about everyday life, but of duties and responsibilities of an ultimate kind, related to the protection of the land, and the life it enables. Colonialism was invoked through "agreements that mean zero" and through the ignorance of visitors from outside, presented as attacks on the *we* of his story, "my people" and the place itself. There were no explicit references to religion (or indigeneity) in his talk, but descriptions of relationships and responsibilities—to the land, and to ancestors—came close to notions of animism, holism and sacred claims. Niillas has used sacred claims elsewhere (Kraft 2020). They are commonplace among many of his indigenous allies (e.g., connected to the Standing Rock

[12] The politics of forced assimilation is for Sápmi on the Norwegian side known as the "politics of Norwegianization".

protests) as ways of articulating indigeneity and solidarity (Kraft 2020). "I travel constantly", he told me during our six hour bus-ride to Trondheim on the following day. As a full time politician and activist, Niillas belongs to an expanding group of indigenous cosmopolitans, many of whom are connected to each other and to international networks. Land conflicts are complicated. Locals face Kafka-ish bureaucracies, impenetrable legal systems, and dedicated lawyers. People such as Niillas know the system and how to maneuver it, and can accordingly offer advice, bridge scales, and release resources.[13]

The remaining speakers *did* use religious registers, in the titles of their talks and during presentations. Three of them referred to a recent lecture by the Sámi anthropologist Marit Myrvoll, centered on sacred mountains around the world. They had all learnt a lot, but mainly about the north Sámi area, which has been Myrvoll's primary concern.[14] None of them knew much about Aahkansnjurhtjie. Nor did they know much about legal potential for protecting the sacred. The Friends of the Earth representative (Frode Solbakken) noted, based on Myrvoll's lecture, that he had kept thinking:

> Why don't I know about this? Why doesn't the government know? Indigenous peoples are protected by a whole lot of laws. Politicians and NVE [The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate] should be pushed on these matters. Documentation should be provided, that this here is actually a sacred landscape. There may be cultural memories. Without critical attention, the process will move on.

Himself an outsider to Sámi traditions, Solbakken clearly assumed that a lack of information was connected to strategic secrecy on the part of locals. Like Persson, he found the causes of secrecy to be sensible, but no longer sustainable: "the only way to get at this [...] is to document, to dare to say it. That's what I have to say. Now I look forward to collaboration."

I kept wondering whether the mostly silent audience agreed with the culture of silence claims. Such a culture was implied by many of the speakers, while speaking up—even screaming—was proposed, as in Rhöse's haka style call for a war on environmental destruction and the capitalist system responsible for it. The local shamans proceeded more carefully. Although obviously familiar with religious registers, the shamans have for the most part been silent in public contexts in the settlement areas. Places like Guovdageaidnu and Kárášjohka have not featured organized shaman activities at all, nor do any of the professional Sámi shamans live or offer their services there. Hattfjelldal does have a shaman milieu,[15] but one that has for the most part stayed away from public settings. To come forth in this setting was a threshold. It was crossed carefully, with a drum session at the end as the most explicit statement. The shamans wore ordinary clothes, carried no ritual artefacts other than the drums (which were displayed and used during the last part only), and consistently resigned from framing the stage and claiming the topics. Being in charge of the meeting (with Persson), Dalen could have, but did not, include a shaman on the list of speakers, nor were specifically shaman issues raised. I cannot recall (or find in my notes) the word "shaman" used at all. Rhöse was introduced as a traditional Maori elder. Her performance was introduced as "ceremony", (no.: *seremoni*) a word used in both shaman and indigenous contexts and accordingly not marked clearly as one or the other. The shamans left the stage for others to come forth, and for local traditions to be prioritized. The rest of the audience kept their opinions about the shamans to themselves (if they had any), and did not problematize their presence.

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[13] On indigenous forms of cosmopolitanism, see (Forte 2010).

[14] Some of them also referred to publications on these matters by Myrvoll. See Myrvoll (2017, 2018)

[15] sked about the shaman milieu in Hattfjelldal and the surrounding area, Dalen answered that she used to meet regularly with a group of approximately 8 shamans in Hattfjelldal and Mosjøen. There are also shaman milieus at Dønna, at Drevja outside of Mosjøen, and in Korgen. None of them have entered Arctic Shaman Circle. Dalen says that they work with self-development; meditation, drum journeys, etc., "but do not want to get into the public" (no.: *vil ikke inn i det offentlige*).

3. Documenting Sacredness, Building the Case

Dalen co-organized the meeting at Sijti Jarnge, and spearheaded much of the work that followed. An open Facebook group was established ("Aahkansnjurhttjie: Kjerringtinden–protect sacred mountains"), followed by a (closed) work group comprising 11 members, myself included.[16] A press release resulted in a full page interview with Dalen in the left-wing, Oslo-based newspaper *Klassekampen* (on 03.12. 2018). The local newspaper *Helgelendingen* printed short pieces related to the opposition, including a letter to the editor by a Sámi Parliament representative, but nothing about the meeting at Sijti Jarnge and the still small-scale protest. NRK Sápmi[17] remained silent.

For legal action, a double approach was chosen, with two sets of complaints to NVE by Friends of the Earth Norway[18] and locals, respectively, and with the latter aiming for the Cultural Heritage Act from 1978. A paragraph on Sámi cultural heritage is included in this act,[19] covering "Sámi cultural heritage [. . .] from 1917 and before", and including "cult places" (no.: *kultsteder*) and "other sites which archeological findings, tradition, faith, legend or custom are connected to."[20]

Dalen kept the Facebook site alive through regular postings, comments and updates, ranging from relevant academic articles and newspaper clips to legal documents, mainly from Sápmi, increasingly from elsewhere in the indigenous world, and to a large extent focusing on protests, conflicts over land, environmental claims and climate change issues. Summaries from speeches at the November meeting have also been posted, along with comments on the planned complaint. A search for physical traces in the landscape was, for this complaint, ruled out, since the area is covered by snow during the winter, but Dalen interviewed some of the local reindeer herders and encouraged people to share stories through the Facebook group. Some did. Others volunteered to make maps, explore place names and look for symbolic and mythological references. The results were shared with locals in the form of a series of short articles in *Helgelendingen*, centered on the talks at the November meeting. During the fall of 2019, a short film was produced and circulated online,[21] along with the petition "No to the development of Stikkelvika Powerplant and the regulation of Kjerringvatnet in Hattfjelldal Municipality, Nordland. Norway needs better protection against the development and destruction of sacred places in nature."[22]

Dalen summarized their findings so far in a Facebook post on 13 August 2019:

> Based on the rights stated in The law on cultural memories, the regulation plan of the municipality, The European Landscape convention, the ILO Convention 169, article 5, it is clear that development in sacred landscapes, such as the sacred mountains around Røssvatn and Kjerringtinden, is not a correct path forward. Several characteristics indicate that Aahkansnjurhtjie should be seen as a sacred mountain:
>
> Language: "aahka, which means woman, the elder, grandmother. Aahka can also refer to the goddesses Saaraahka, Uksaahka and Juhksaahka.[23]
>
> The mountain can be seen over the entire area of Røssvatn and is a landmark for people in inner Helgeland.

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[16] I have occasionally posted articles of relevance to the group, but have not participated in discussions.
[17] NRK Sápmi is the Sámi Branch of the Norwegian Broadcasting system, located in Kárášjohka.
[18] No.: Naturvernforbundet (Norway's largest environmental organization).
[19] https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1978-06-09-50
[20] No.: *Tingsteder, kultplasser, varp, brønner, kilder og andre steder som arkeologiske funn, tradisjon, tro, sagn eller skikk knytter seg til*.
[21] The film was made by Jessica Ullevålseter, Tinna Björk Ólafsdóttir and Molly Morberg. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XknwQvkf79k&t=228s.
[22] No.: *Nei til utviklingen av Stikkelvika kraftverk og regulering av Kjerringvatnet i Hattfjelldal kommune, i Nordland. Norge trenger bedre beskyttelse mot utvikling og ødeleggelse av hellige steder i naturen*.
[23] No.: *aahka, betyr kvinne, elder, bestemor. Aahka kan også vise til guddinnene Saaraahka, Uksaahka and Juhksaahka*. See also Myrvoll (2018).

> From the mountain you directly face other sacred mountains such as Hatten, Okstindan, Atoklimpen, Hatten and De syv søstre.
>
> Aahkansnjurhtjie—Kjerringtinden has a special form.
>
> A special sacrificial grave (no.: *offergrav*) has been found near the mountain summit.
>
> For reindeer herding, the landscapes in which the reindeer dance is sacred.
>
> This is the very heart of the Jillen Njaarke reindeer grazing area.
>
> There is a particular respect for this mountain. For its power (no.: *kraft*), for the peace it invokes.

Galina Lindquist (1997) has noted of urban shamanism in Sweden that a few persons have been running much of the show. This has also been the case for the Arctic Shaman Circle.[24] The majority of activities have been organized by Myrhaug and Dalen; Myrhaug for most of the events in Oslo, and Dalen for most of the work in Hattfjelldal (concerning Aahkansnjurhtjie) and for digital spaces (the Facebook groups). Myrhaug has activist experience from the Alta-protests during the late 1970s and early 1980s. As the front figure of shaman activism, he has combined information spread (through texts and interviews in news media) with participation in enviro-activist events, often in the form of four direction ceremonies. The annual report for 2019 refers to 11 public ceremonies conducted by Myrhaug, including the Climate festival in Oslo on January 5th (as an invited part of the program), and with mayor Marianne Borgen as a part of the ceremony. The report also covered Sámi national day celebrations in Oslo (6 February) in order to make shamanism "visible in the public space", a demonstration against a copper mine in Repparfjord (Oslo, 16 February), short speeches in front of the Norwegian Parliament during a demonstrations against windmill plants (Oslo, 8 September), and an art performance in Sagene Church (to be dealt with in more detail below).

Dalen has written complaints and newspaper appeals, talked with politicians and activists, and related to the bewildering world of legal rights and municipality bureaucracy. Initiatives on the national level include the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (established in 2018).[25] She has met with the committee to call attention to the case in Hattfjelldal, and to push its members on the need for religion to be included among the themes of reconciliation. Continued silence speaks of continued trauma as she sees it, and thus the articulation of such experiences should, in accordance with her views, be encouraged.

This has been a process of learning for Dalen and Myrhaug, active members of the Arctic Shaman Circle and locals in Hattfjelldal. Among their key objects of exploration is the mountain itself and the traditions connected to it, as recorded in sources from the distant past, and narrated by locals at their initiative. Among the results is an increasing body of knowledge, assembled for a specific cause (that of saving a threatened landscape), but available for other means, such as the further anchoring of shamanism in ancestral traditions, and the revitalization of local practices (as described by Persson at Sijti Jarnge).

The culture of silence has been challenged through this process. The mountain has been religionized, in the sense of *talked about* in religious registers. And it has been indigenized in a

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[24] The Arctic Shaman Circle had 65 (paying) members in 2019. Small groups of active members have gathered for other events, including for online group meditation through a spin-off group on Facebook (179 members on 13 May) devoted to this particular concern (*Arktisk Sjamansirkels Fellesmeditasjon*), and centered on the strengthening of Mother Earth, or specific sites. The Facebook groups "Aahkansnjurhttjie: Kjerringtinden-beskytt hellige fjell" (protect sacred mountains) and "Arkstisk Sjamansirkel" (Arctic Shaman Circle) had 451 and 1097 members, respectively, in May 2020.

[25] The committee will deliver a report in 2022. Its mandate is to examine the Norwegianization politics and wrongs inflicted upon Sámis, through a historical mapping of the Norwegian government's politics and consequences thereof, including continued implications, and to suggest measures that may contribute to reconciliation. Dalen met with the committee in October 2019, partly to "announce Aahkansnjurthjie as a sacred mountain as a case" (Arktisk Sjamansirkel 2019). During the meeting, the committee expressed an interest in being invited to meetings and to being kept updated.

scalar[26] sense of the term, as a specifically Sámi sacred mountain (on the local scale), and as an indigenous mountain (on the scale of indigenous religion). The former includes an exploration of the appeal and power of the sacred, an approach that has to a little extent been explored by activists in Sápmi on the Norwegian side. Exceptions include *indigenizing from outside,* through encounters and collaboration with indigenous people elsewhere. This was to some extent the case for the Alta-protests and to a considerable extent for the Standing Rock protests fifty years later (Kraft 2020). It has also been the case for Aahkansnjurttjie; through the presence of Rhöse; through invocations of sacred (indigenous) mountains elsewhere, through usage of the registers of indigenous religion (holism, animism, shamanism etc.) and through legal rights pertaining to indigenous peoples and sacred places. The reindeer herders are still silent, but have been exposed to these same processes. As a result, they—and people in Hattfjelldal more generally—know more about sacred traditions connected to Aahkansnjurhtjie, about sacred mountains in Sápmi, and about sacred mountains as typical of indigenous peoples. Some of them, and some of the active members of the Arctic Shaman Circle elsewhere, also know more about politics and activism, about building a case, and about the difficulties involved in documenting sacredness and realizing rights.

4. Mother Earth as *Lávvu*—Aahkansnjurhtjie in Oslo

On All Saints Day 2019, the installation *Sacrum labellum* (sacred certificates) was set up at Sagene Church in Oslo. The idea was to extend what has traditionally been a day of mourning the dead to encompass Mother Earth and "the nature that we keep destroying."[27] Mother Earth was materialized in the form of a Sami *lávvu* (tent), with a pile of reindeer antlers on top. The artist Jessica Ullevålseter was in charge of the design. Members of the Arctic Shaman Circle contributed to the planning, and in the form of wooden sticks and reindeer antlers from Aahkansnjurhtjie.[28] By bringing parts of the mountain to Oslo, they hoped to add attention to the case, along with features and tangibility to Mother Earth. In a comment to a draft I had sent to her, Dalen added that "Kjerringstinden- Aahkansnjurhtjie is a threatened sacred mountain, a symbol for all the sacred places in the world which are now threatened." The point of the event was "to mourn the nature that is gone and protect the nature that still is, each and all from their own perspectives."[29]

As they entered the church, the visitors received a one-page program, centered on Mother Earth and on indigenous peoples "who have a long tradition for living in harmony with nature." In the meantime, some forty people had gathered back stage in the sacristy for last minute directives: shamans (some of them visibly Sámi through *gákti* (Sámi traditional clothing), representatives of environmental groups, a small group of transsexuals, and a few members of Cosmological Life-Faith and the Sufi group Inayati. All but Ullevålseter were equipped with wooden, handmade sticks, many of which were decorated. Two of the Sámi shamans carried drums: Myrhaug and Nadia Fenina. The rest of the drums had been left behind. To have several shamans using drums would make this seem like a ceremony, the priest had reasoned in a conversation with Myrhaug that same morning.[30]

The performance started with a scream-like song by a woman on the upper floor, representing Mother Earth perhaps. Next, the participants entered, one after the other, for a solemn walk around the nave. The sound of the steadfast knocking of sticks on the church floor merged with their echoes and with cries from above. As they reached the front of the church, the sticks were carefully immersed in the *lávvu* construct, one by one, thus allowing for its gradual completion and increased solidity.

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[26] On scales, scaling, and scalability, see (Kraft et al. 2020).

[27] From https://www.facebook.com/events/1272953992877487/

[28] More than 70 antlers were collected by Vivi Røreng and Stig Langfjell from Jillen-Njaarke reindeer district, Byrije reindeer district, and Tor Enok Larsen and Lifjell reindeer district (Arktisk Sjamansirkel 2019).

[29] Messenger communication with Hege Dalen, 11 January 2020.

[30] There has occasionally been yoik and (more rarely drums) in churches in Oslo over the past decade, but only in the context of Sámi Christian services. Both practices have been completely kept out of church spaces in the Sámi settlement areas.

The loudest and most colorful task was assigned to Rhöse, dressed in black, with a large headdress made by capercaillie feathers from Hattfjelldal, and a three-meter-long cape in Maori colors. As she reached the aisle, a powerful chant filled the room; even the clearly bored children behind me turned quiet and paid attention. Having reached the *lávvu*, Rhöse draped her cape around its lower parts, and sang Ave Maria (again very loud), thereby (Dalen later told me) inviting Mother Earth to enter the space and join the event.

The next session was centered on Ullevålseter and the *lávvu.* Ullevålseter was barefoot, dressed in black, with a hair-like veil covering half of her face, and holding a step-ladder. It was time for the completion of the *lávvu,* which consisted in the careful placement of the reindeer antlers between the connected sticks at the top. A woman in *gákti* handed them to her, one by one. Ullevålseter piled them slowly, for each and one uttering quietly "keep your name holy, mother ... earth."

Finally, there were short speeches by Myrhaug, Fenina, Rhöse and representatives of some of the other groups. Rhöse used animist registers, based on nature as family: "I am daughter of a river. And that makes me related to my river, just as the mountain Aahkansnjurhtjie is a part of the people."[31] Myrhaug ended his speech with a recently written manifest, devoted to peaceful co-existence with Mother Earth, and again with Aahkansnjurhtjie as the focal case and symbol. Its first seven verses talk of Mother Earth. The final refers to Aahkansnjurhtjie. Collectively, they allow for a scalar translation from *this mountain* (our mother, on the level of Sámis), to Mother Earth (*nature in general*, and all of life's relations):

> The mountain Aahkansnjurhtjie is sacred, for she is *aahka*, our dear mother. We will live in peace with Mother Earth. I/we will work to fulfill the Aahkansnjurhtjie-manifesto.[24]

The manifesto was left in the hall for people to sign, later circulated on Facebook, and was put on print in the left-wing newspaper *Klassekampen* during the following week.

I asked a few people what they had made of the event. Some of the shamans were deeply touched, both by the event, by what they interpreted as the priest's courage and openness, and by the historic sense of it all. Some perceived it as an opening in the closure between Christianity and shamanism. Others found moves towards reconciliation between the people involved and their respective pasts: Sámi ancestors and the non-Sámi ancestors of missionaries and state-governments. The priest said he was relieved that it was over. He particularly liked a storytelling event by a woman representing Extinction Rebellion, since it stated clearly what this was about as he saw it, climate change and environmental concerns. The shamans had been Ullevålseter's idea, which he in the end had agreed to, but clearly had concerns about.

This was many things at once and different things for different people: art, politics, activism, reconciliation and interfaith dialogue; deeply spiritual, devil worship (according to the conservative Christian newspaper *Dagen,* a few days later), and inspiring but absolutely not a ceremony (the priest). The priest and the shamans agreed on the position of drums as markers of religion and instigators of ceremony; the priest by forbidding it, the shamans by respecting the ban. Rhöse's haka-style chants were allowed. Although ceremonial in their Maori contexts, these sounds and moves are simply foreign from Norwegian church grounds. It is the *near other* that concern us, Jonathan Z. Smith has noted, that we worry about, compare ourselves to, and distance ourselves from (Smith 2004). The Maori are *distant others* from the perspective of Norwegian Church life and thinking, historically and geographically, and are accordingly less problematic. The Sámi have historically been near and distant, friends and foes, mission field and fellow Christians.

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[31] All speeches and textual material were in Norwegian.

[24] The Arctic Shaman Circle had 65 (paying) members in 2019. Small groups of active members have gathered for other events, including for online group meditation through a spin-off group on Facebook (179 members on 13 May) devoted to this particular concern (*Arktisk Sjamansirkels Fellesmeditasjon*), and centered on the strengthening of Mother Earth, or specific sites. The Facebook groups "Aahkansnjurhttjie: Kjerringtinden-beskytt hellige fjell" (protect sacred mountains) and "Arkstisk Sjamansirkel" (Arctic Shaman Circle) had 451 and 1097 members, respectively, in May 2020.

I kept thinking of the meeting in Hattfjelldal as compared to this happening in Oslo, as Aahkansnjurhtjie had moved geographically, from a secular to a religious space, and from the transparent setting of village life to the more anonymous setting of a big city. Sámi-ness was the dominant frame at Sijti Jarnge. Indigeneity was invoked through Rhöse's performance and through references to indigenous people and cases elsewhere. Religion was low key (again with the exception of Rhöse). The sacred was talked about, but carefully and tentatively. Emphasis was on the past and on the reindeer herders, not on the shamans and their religion. In Oslo, the sacred was foregrounded. The shamans led the action as the voices of Mother Earth, and for an audience of strangers. Shamanism and indigeneity came forth as the same and indistinguishable. The audience had no means of demarcating between who were indigenous and who were not. Indigeneity was foregrounded upfront (through the invitation and the information sheet on arrival) and was displayed and performed then and there, during the events.[33]

5. Reactions and Responses

I have so far focused on activism from the perspective of the activists. Let me shift focus to reactions and responses, and let me do so by way of two examples, involving Sámi critics and non-Sámi supporters, respectively, and positioned as *distant selves* and *near others*. My first example is from *Ekko*, a daily current affairs program on NRK radio.[34] On 25 November 2019, it was announced as follows: "The Sámi view on nature—our solution to saving the climate? Can the sacred mountains of the Sámi be the tool we need to preserve nature?"[35] Four experts had been invited to shed light on this matter: a theologian (with expertise on sacred mountains), two lawyers (with expertise on the legal rights of nature), and Myrhaug, introduced as Sámi *noaidi*, a board member of the Arctic Shaman Circle and treated as a representative of indigenous peoples and knowledge systems. For the introduction, the host had chosen the fictitious scenario of drilling through the walls of Nidarosdomen, Norway's most venerable church. "Why not", he added; "We are already drilling in the sacred mountains of the Sámi." Myrhaug agreed with the comparison, then moved on to Aahkansnjurhtjie and Arctic Shaman Circle's struggles to protect it. Asked whether "the Sámi view of nature is the future", Adele Matheson Mestad, lawyer and director of Norway's Institution for Human rights,[36] noted as interesting how eco-centric legislation in parts of the world is entering mainstream law "after dialogue and pressure from indigenous peoples." Lawyer Odd Harald Eidmo responded that it is "at least a very interesting idea, how this can contribute to change our views on nature."

My second example is from a discussion on the Facebook page of the Sami scholar and activist Mikkel Berg-Nordlie. It was initiated by Berg-Nordlie himself on 17 February 2019, in the wake of a demonstration in Oslo against a mining project in Repparfjord (Finnmark), which the Arctic Shaman Circle was involved in. Having been denied a request to be a part of the program, the shamans had nevertheless entered during the last part of it Berg-Nordlie wrote. Their ceremony thereby came forth as a planned part of the protest, and thus—as he saw it—challenged the unity of a diverse crowd:

> a religious ceremony is not something the participants in a broad protest against dump-wasting in fjords can gather around. On the contrary, it divides them, and is accordingly a terribly bad way of ending a direct action. (Berg-Nordlie)

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[33] Similar foregrounding of indigeneity characterized media coverage in the aftermath of the event. For instance, in the liberal Christian newspaper *Vårt Land* later that week, Ullevålseter noted that having been invited to create an installation to mourn nature on All Saints day, she had decided to "invite in indigenous people to my work, since they still listen to and communicate with nature"" (Ullevålseter 2019).

[34] "Ekko" is a daily current affairs program on NRK P2. NRK is an acronym for Norsk Rikskringkasting (Norwegian broadcasting).

[35] No.: *Samenes natursyn–vår klimaredning?–kan samenes hellige fjell være verktøyet vi trenger for å verne naturen?*

[36] No.: Norges institusjon for menneskerettigheter.

Eighty-one comments had been added by the following day. Some of them defended the shamans, but the majority agreed. The risk of media profiling of "misleading images" was referred to by several of the contributors. Among the spin-off topics was an event during a direct action in Tromsø that same week, described by one of the participants as "similar." The comparison was disputed by a person who had been there and interpreted it as an artistic performance: "This was a theater group, no home mission."[37]

Mikkel Berg-Nordlie grew up in the north, with Sámi traditions, and currently lives in Oslo. He is thus a diaspora-Sámi, but not a member of the growing community of "new Sámi"—individuals' who did not grow up with Sámi culture and traditions but have chosen an identity that their parents or grandparents rejected. His critique echo concerns that I have heard repeatedly in the north, concerning contemporary shamanism as a New Age or a new religious movement (and thus dismissed from the category of "Sámi religion"). They also echo a widespread preference for secularism as the premise of politics and activism. Most noticeable for my concerns was the complete lack of indigenous registers, and the explicit rejection of religion as a resource. The shaman presence was deemed destructive in regard to the unity of protesters on the one hand, and in regard to messages to outside audiences on the other. To be represented in the media as "shaman-related" was not on the list of preferences for this group and was clearly perceived as damaging.

Contrasting the dismissal and avoidance of religion and indigeneity in this context, was their position as a premise for the Ekko-episode. Both the radio host and the guests took for granted the position of the Arctic Shaman Circle as (1) a Sámi movement, and (thus) (2) an indigenous religion, and (3) not only closely connected to nature and to Mother Earth, but her stewardess and potential saver. Taken together, they exemplify what Bjørn Ola Tafjord (2018) has referred to as "indigenizing in a romantic mode", in this case from outside, by (relatively) near others, and confirmed by an insider from the north (Myrhaug), living in diaspora in the south.

News media coverage can be related to a similar divide as that of my two examples. News media in the south has covered Arctic Shaman Circle on a regular basis, and usually in positive terms. News media in the north have tended to classify it as "new" or "neo" (Fonneland and Kraft 2013). NRK Sápmi has not covered the Arctic Shaman Circle at all. *Ságat*—the main newspaper in Guovdageaidnu and Kárášjohka—has featured one article, in the form of a letter to the editor by leading members of the Shaman Arctic Circle themselves.[38]

The chances for shamanism to be accepted as an "indigenous religion" seem overall to depend on the distance from what is commonly referred to as the "core Sámi areas" (in inner Finnmark); the greater the distance, the better the chances, higher in Oslo than in Hattfjelldal, and at the lowest in Guovdageaidnu and Kárášjohka. Shamanism has re-emerged as "cultural heritage" in these areas, and in Sápmi more broadly (Kraft 2016), but is more or less absent in the format of "religion." Asked about this situation, the shamans I have spoken to have referred to a continued fear of shamanic powers, based on continued trauma from missionizing and a continued culture of silence. Friends and colleagues of mine in Guovdageaidnu relate the silence to a lack of interest. People are silent because they do not care, not because of fear.

Oslo is the main area of activities for Sámi shamanism, and an area with a substantial and increasing population of Sámi.[39] Many among these are "new Sámi." All of them are diaspora Sámi,

[37] No.: *dette var en teatergruppe, ingen indremisjon*. None of the shamans contributed to the debate. Myrhaug later told me his version, which was for the most part in agreement with Berg-Nordlie's outline, but with a positive take. Having been denied access they had decided to go ahead, claim a spot and challenge the tendency for spirituality to be ruled out.

[38] The text is signed Myrhaug, Fenina, Rhöse and Dalen, and is titled "Sacred mountains are the spiritual cultural heritage of our ancestors, which we are here to manage in the best ways possible for future generations." It was printed in *Sagat* 14.11.2019 (no.: "*Hellige fjell er våre forfedres åndelige kulturarv som vi er her for å forvalte på best mulig måte for framtidige generasjoner*").

[39] NRK Sápmi on 21 October 2019 referred to a "Sameboom" in the cities. By 2019, Tromsø has become the largest Sámi municipality (with 1551 listed voters), above Guovdageaidnu (1520), Alta (1441), Kárášjohka (1351) and Oslo (949) (Idivuoma

living lives at a distance from Sámi homelands, and from Sámi traditions in the form of place-based community lives. Contrasting the culture of silence in the north is a culture of loss and distance in these contexts, in the form of access to the traditional territories, and (for the "new Sámi" in particular) to tradition-based knowledge.

For parts of these milieus, what Graham and Penny has referred to as the established order of identity may have shifted. Indigeneity is no one's primary identity, they claim in the introduction to *Performing Indigeneity: Global Histories and Contemporary Experiences* (Graham and Penny 2014). I agree for the Sámi settlement areas, but not necessarily for the "new Sámi" in diaspora-settings. The process of "becoming" Sámi and indigenous are in such contexts likely to take place simultaneously, or even in the reverse order, with indigeneity as the model through which Sámi-ness is approached and reclaimed,[40] and shamanism as one of the resources for doing so.

6. End Reflections

"Tradition is constituted in and through moments of struggle", Greg Johnson has argued; traditions are defined by "the commitments they demand, the learning and speaking they inspire, and the shared resources they contest and draw upon" (Johnson 2008, pp. 247, 255). I have followed "moments" in this sense of the term, along the trajectories of a particular case and a particular group of Sámi. Now at the conclusion of this article, the following points strike me as significant. First is activism as a space in which to negotiate the position of shamanism vis-à-vis the category of indigenous religion on the one hand, and new religious movements on the other. "New" is rarely good and mostly bad in the context of religion. Old can be bad, but is mostly good, and then is indigenous religion, as a particular form of old. More than any other category of religion, this formation is currently linked to environmental concerns and the saving of Mother Earth, not only in religious milieus, but by institutions such as the U.N. In the words of Chandler and Reid: "Indigeneity has become a marker for imagining new modes of living and governing in our contemporary condition of climate crises and economic uncertainty" (Chandler and Reid 2019, p. 1). Shamanism has been and is still contested in regard to the categorizations of new–old, indigenous–western. The chances for it to be included in these new modes of environmental imaginings are still higher in the south and in city contexts than in the north and in settlement contexts, but they would seem to have increased for the latter, at least in certain contexts and for this particular case.

A second point involves activism as a space for learning. Saving Aahkansnjurhtjie came with incentives for exploring Sámi traditions, for locals to break the silence and share their knowledge, and thus for processes of revitalization and religion-making. It came with stages for new and old traditions to be performed and tested, and for new audiences, many of whom would be unfamiliar with indigenous vocabularies (as for the meeting in Hattfjelldal) or Sámi traditions (as for the happening in Sagene Church).

Indigenous religion has offered resources in the form of scripts for activism, in the form of recognizable registers and authoritative designs, and as a translational device for the up-scaling of Sámi traditions. The goddess Máttaráhkká would have made little sense to audiences at Sagene Church. She made sense as Mother Earth, and in ways that matter to contemporary audiences. Máttaráhkká was the mother of specific daughters (the goddesses Sáráhkká, Juoksáhkká and Uksáhkká) and was related to pregnancy and birth. Mother Earth speaks of global connections, of the world as such, and of premises for life. Máttaráhkká lived prior to environmental concerns and global imaginaries. Máttaráhkká as Mother Earth speaks of threats on this global scale and of how to solve them.

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and Paulsen 2019). For studies of city Sámi and "new Sámi" (no.: nysamer), and the issue of how to be Sámi in the contemporary world, see Pedersen and Nyseth (2013), and Niittyvuopio (2020).

[40] Rakel-Maria Niittyvuopio (2020) in her master-thesis explores one such example, through the Sámi artist Katarina Skår Lisa.

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Article

The Importance of the Sun Symbol in the Restoration of Sámi Spiritual Traditions and Healing Practice

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Abstract: Today, artefacts of the past have immense value for Sámi shamans, artists, and custodians of culture who are reengaging with their spiritual traditions. A cultural revival is taking place through various applications and approaches. Henceforth, there is an ongoing process of creating a restorative framework mainly based on the work of individuals, through which, drum making and decoration, joiking, sacrificial acts, and forms of divination consisting of various sorts of practices are emerging. One of the central symbols that features prominently amongst the Sámi in relation to their prehistoric cosmology and reuse of symbolism in different contexts with regard to spiritual traditions that helps link past with the present is the Sun. Therefore, the purpose of the descriptive analysis in this research paper examines the application of the Sun symbol to new types of drums made by Peter Armstrand who is a Sámi person, for healing and identity building and some of the contexts they appear within. As a method to elaborate on how the past is utilized in the present, the research material constitutes one short case study involving Armstrand who is a Sámi drum maker and likewise, a healer. To help broaden the fieldwork materials collected, I also refer to an old photograph of a drum and its cosmological landscape.

Keywords: Sámi shamanism; drums; cosmological landscapes; healing; cultural heritage; art; spirits; sun

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1. Introduction

The emphasis of the study focuses on a contemporary practitioner of shamanism within Sámi culture and the value he relates to the Sun symbol as a mythical figure that is a source of inspiration within a modern practice in connection with healing, ceremony, and ritual. This is analyzed through the art and work of Peter Armstrand who is a Swedish Sámi, from Kiruna, and is the "Vice Chairman of the Kiruna Sámi Association" Joy (2020, p. 1). The material collected in Kiruna, was gathered between 2014 and 2019, from Armstrand, with regard to in what ways the symbol of the Sun is constructed, utilized, and applied in healing and ritualistic practices through a variety of contexts. Correspondence with Armstrand was also established in 2020 for further clarification of data, relating to prior correspondence.

The collection of the material and its analysis have much value with reference to encountering some of the structures related to Sámi religion in contemporary society. Hence, a study of the reuse and application of ancient drum symbolism is a particular area that is currently emerging within Sámi culture. This is in relation to the representation and implementation of cultural heritage with regard to the construction and subsequent decoration and use of contemporary Sámi shaman drums in various contexts by Sámi persons. Drum use is pronounced from Armstrand as an individual Sámi healer in association with healing practices and rituals that point towards a single contribution regarding the restoration of various spiritual traditions and practices and the transmission of culture.

In contemporary society today, study of the long-term perspective of traditional or pre-Christian Sámi religion pertaining to the broad spectrum of practices that are part of it, such as drum use,

seems obscure and thus hard to grasp, as do the practices of divination, ecstatic trance-shamanism, and sacrifice, which are all interrelated. This is because, and as stated by Sámi historian Lehtola (2002, p. 28), "the traditions and history of Sámi religious culture are difficult to trace. The religious culture underwent violent changes in connection with Christian missionizing in the 1600s and 1700s. [. . .] It is difficult to reconstruct completely the old world-view from sources written by outsiders".

At the same time, it is also important to learn and understand from what has survived with regard to attributes and features of different elements from within traditional Sámi religion. According to Sámi scholar Helander-Renvall (2016, p. 84), "certain aspects of shamanism can be located that are particularly important when talking about relationships. One aspect is to be found among the symbols drawn on traditional Sámi drums. The Sámi shaman drum (*goavddis*) is an expression of the Sámi cosmological, cultural, and spiritual world picture".

It is helpful therefore, at this juncture, to emphasize that approaching the long-term perspectives on Sámi traditional or pre-Christian religion, is an arduous task as a field of study and not without its problems. Difficulties not only include its many manifestations as well as regional variations, but also, in order to fully comprehend what exactly constitutes Sámi religion both past and present, one requires an intimate knowledge of the language and culture from the inside. Thus, for outsiders, or those who do not live within Sámi culture or speak the Sámi language, studying Sámi religion is a monumental task, but not an impossible one.

Despite the cultural fragmentation inflicted upon Sámi society because of colonialism, a combination of the abundance of literature written on Sámi religion by both insiders as well as outsiders, as well as inquiries into the works and practices of Sámi elders, artists, and religious specialists, *noaidi*, who are open to sharing their knowledge, reveal the following. "[. . .] There still exists views and practices amongst the Sámi people that show an unbroken series of links with the past, portrayed through landscapes, animals and art" Helander-Renvall (2016, p. 85). Today, these sources and fragments of the past have immense value for Sámi shamans, artists, and custodians of culture who are reengaging with their spiritual traditions.

A cultural revival is taking place through an assortment of approaches and applications of artistic symbolism and figures within various contexts. Henceforth, there is an ongoing process of creating a restorative framework mainly based on the work of individuals, through which, drum making and decoration, *joiking*, sacrificial acts, and forms of divination consisting of various sorts of practices are emerging from within Sámi culture. These provide some insight and understanding into each of the aforementioned spiritual traditions (drum making, sacrifice, *joiking*) and thus, do orient towards the practice of Sámi religion in a contemporary setting through numerous relationships to culture and heritage. Norwegian scholar Trude Fonneland has written about this in a much broader sense regarding neoshamanism at the Sámi shaman festival of Isogaisa, Norway, in her scholarly work: The Festival of Isogaisa: Neoshamanism in New Arenas (Fonneland 2015). In a similar fashion, another Norwegian scholar, Siv Ellen Kraft, has likewise made a valuable contribution on the subject matter noted above, through her scholarly work: Sami Indigenous Spirituality: Religion and Nation Building in Norwegian *Sápmi* (Kraft 2009).

I have chosen an interview with a Sámi person for this research paper firstly, because I myself have been involved in the practice of shamanism for over twenty years and have worked with Peter Armstrand who has made a valuable contribution to this study. In this sense, there was an element of trust regarding Armstrand deciding to share important information, some of which was of a personal nature. The second reason I chose to interview Armstrand is because there is an emerging network concerning the practice of shamanism from within Sámi culture and therefore, this interaction can be seen as both collaboration and participation within this community for the purposes of research development with regard to knowledge sharing and documentation.

As a method for creating a basis and setting for the presentation of Armstrand's contribution to this study, I initially chose to place the focus of this research on the value, visibility, roles, and functions of

the Sun as a celestial deity. The foundation of which is presented within various contexts predominantly within Sámi scholarship in order to comprehend its mythical and cultural influence, both past and present, from inside the culture. The reason for doing this is because the history of the Sámi people is an important factor in relation to how myths have been interpreted within various contexts by Sámi *noaidi*. Henceforth, some of these are depicted through art on the ancient drum presented below, as well as scholarly sources and through the contemporary work of Armstrand, all of which are connected to the past. Conversely, I explore how both Sámi history and the Sun as a mythical figure and historical resource, have been drawn upon as a source of inspiration in literature and shamanic practice. In turn, these provide a deeper understanding and examples of the ways in which certain manifestations of the Sun play a central component within the research in connection with healing, ritual, art, and myths (cosmology), in order to demonstrate the Sun's importance in relation to its purpose as a symbol of communication and unity within Sámi religion, spiritual practices, and literature.

2. A Focus on Fieldwork and the Interview

It should likewise be noted that I have accompanied Peter Armstrand to the Sámi shaman festival, Isogaisa, which is an annual event in Lavangen, Tromso, Norway, in 2015, 2016, and 2017. The festival is where people from different parts of *Sápmi*—the Sámi homelands areas, as well as areas outside of *Sápmi*, come together and share their beliefs and practices with each other in relation to ceremony, singing, rituals, and healing, which are different applications related to traditional Sámi religion. The festival is a place where Armstrand sells the drums he makes to other Sámi persons as well as non-Sámi. There are also handicrafts that are sold at the event as well as drum building courses that are held occasionally. The ceremonies and practices that take place at the festival are tied to expressions of Sámi pre-Christian religion within a contemporary setting. These can be seen in terms of veneration for, and engagements with, sacred stones, reverence of Sámi spirits and ancestors, drum use, drum circles and journeys, rituals, ceremonies, and healing practices using the drum and *joiking* a form of Sámi singing. Observation of these applications and associations demonstrate how there appears to be "inter-connected features and links, which show an unbroken link with the past" (Helander-Renvall 2016, p. 85) that are visible within a range of relationships, enactments, and procedures at the event.

As a method to elaborate on how the past is utilized in the present, the research material presented below constitutes a short case study involving Peter Armstrand as an artist, drum maker, and healer. The early photographic material was received from Armstrand at his home between August 2014 and November 2019. I then did another interview in March 2020 by Skype in order to expand on earlier correspondence. I wanted to obtain some background information about how he became involved in the practice of shamanism and this is what Joy (2014, pp. 1–2), responded with.

> "I am 49-year-old healer and artist living in Kiruna, Swedish *Sápmi* with my wife Eva and I am a forest Sámi.
>
> My healing abilities started one day when my son's mother complained of pain in her back. I pulled the pain out of her with my hands. During my childhood days, I spent every weekend at my grandparents' home in Lainio; where I experienced them doing healing work on occasions. From this period, the experiences encountered during time at their home led me to undertake training as a healer, in order to become a professional person in my adult life.
>
> The type of spiritual healing I was trained in was Reiki healing for which I became a Master Practitioner. In addition, I have also trained in Inca Tradition from South America in Munai-Ki which means: I Love You, in terms of energy.

> With regard to my family background, one of the stories, which have survived about my great grandfather who was called Vaakina-Pekka (1859–1952), and his abilities was published in a book titled: 'Lainio –Our Home Village', on the 650th centenary of the village of Lainio in 1984. The story describes extraordinary events where Vaakina-Pekka reportedly walked over a swollen river without being swept away. Vaakina-Pekka was known for his humility and fear because of his magical knowledge. In the village he was one of the most famous *noids*. The tools he used for his healing work included a snake skin and a stone which was kept in a special box that had never seen the light of day".

As a reflection of what is noted above, Armstrand's explanation of use of New Age healing practices are illustrative of how a Sámi healer has flexibly utilized and combined such practices with traditional Sámi healing practices by merging them together to give Sámi shamanism global recognition, as both Reiki healing and Munai-Ki are universal healing systems, but the Sámi one is concerned with the local, which he emphasized and which his work is grounded in. However, it should be noted that there is an area of ambiguity by contrast to traditional practice of *noaidivuohta* and the use of New Age spiritual practices among some Sámi shamans, as noted at the Sámi shaman festival Isogaisa.

The aim of the research is to document the proposed case study to the extent that it demonstrates the number of ways that Peter Armstrand, as a Sámi person, uses art, healing, and ritual as methods to bring traditional Sámi practices related to spiritual traditions and Sámi religion into a contemporary setting. This is presented through research of Armstrand's work regarding how he uses drum building, decoration, and a series of practices that not only help with rebuilding Sámi culture, but also transmit cultural heritage, cosmology, shamanism, and myths for the purposes of building and maintaining identity and preserving cultural memory through the processes of remembering.

One of the most important contexts outlined within these applications is the collection of data from Armstrand, which conveys how and why cosmological landscapes are painted onto the drums he makes for therapeutic purposes with regard to communicating with Sámi spirits. The research thus aims to elaborate on how these spiritual powers are called upon in order to receive help when administering various forms of spiritual healing. Within these descriptions, I have attempted to demonstrate links with Sámi pre-Christian religion as a method for illustrating connections between the past and present in order to articulate aspects of continuity of tradition and practices; this has not been easy because of the cross-over with New Age practices.

To help broaden the aforementioned aims, I am including three other painted drums made by Armstrand (four in total), which he provides information about concerning the transmission of culture through painted landscapes depicting the Sun as well as Sámi deities. This is for the purposes of providing additional examples of how the symbols of both the Sun and deities are intricately linked to Sámi language, and in what manner they function as systems of communication and in what ways these can vary in their respective landscape settings. Henceforth, his explanations are aimed at communicating religious beliefs that are part of a social institution, which are an intrinsic part of the very fabric of Sámi society.

To further support the contemporary art and drum landscapes made by Armstrand, an illustration of ancient Sámi drums taken from Ernst Manker's esteemed works: *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel: Eine Ethnologische Monographie. 1, Die Trommel als Denkmal Materieller Kultur. [The Lappish Drum: as an Ethnological Monograph, volumes 1 and 2*, (1938 and 1950) is incorporated. This is included because it helps validate the thinking in the mind of the Sámi *noaidi* who painted the cosmological landscapes on the drum in the seventeenth century. In this sense the drum depicts how using ancient art as a system of communication within Sámi society is linked to religious practices and inter-species communication, which are important as expressions of both culture and identity as well as connection to traditions and cultural memory. By the term 'communication' I am referring to prayer, out-of-body travel, and sacrifice directed towards other spiritual dimensions of reality.

I implemented two approaches to the research. The first concerns the application of empathy in the relational approach to the study concerning communication and cooperation with Armstrand, which made the focus meaningful. What this means is that I extensively studied how throughout the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Sámi history has been predominantly written by priests and missionaries who were scholars, in relation to religious practices. As a consequence, this led to their misrepresentation in order to bring the Sámi under the control of the Christian Churches, which can be seen as a method to destroy indigenous practices and traditions. In addition, information collected from Sámi persons at that time in connection with their religious practices was used against them in court cases in connections with accusations of sorcery; in fact, some Sámi in Norway, Finland, and Sweden were given death-sentences for using the drum. Therefore, it is important to understand the history of the indigenous Sámi and their culture, traditions, and practices[1].

Henceforth, the approach to the study supports building a foundation as a way of minimizing research practices that are prejudiced by giving Armstrand a voice in the research. Presenting photographs of his drums and using reliable sources written from within Sámi scholarship, validate and affirm their contributions to the study and also help demonstrate in what ways tradition as cultural inheritance can be seen as a flexible and constantly changing concept in relation to the transmission of both material and spiritual culture and practices. My reasons for bringing these elements together as someone who practices shamanism is for the purposes of outlining how in doing so "[...] [my] quest is to be able to hear, feel, understand, and value the stories of [...] [the research participant] and to convey that felt empathy and understanding back to the client/storyteller/participant. [Furthermore, and] when relevant, the quest also includes conveying that felt understanding to a broader audience" Gair (2011, p. 134). The collection of data helps with understanding how Sámi sacred drums as artifacts, connected to material culture, play a central role and function in the development and formulation of identity in relation to Armstrand's sense of self[2].

I have chosen Vilma Hänninen's narrative approach as a framework for application of the research method regarding the analysis of the materials. In this case, it has value through its implementation, given that it works rather well when combining both scholarly and artistic material together. For instance, we see its "[...] ability to bring together various disciplines, as well as bridge the gap between science and art" (Hänninen 2004, p. 69). This helps give the Sámi participant a voice and equal representation that is supported with textual data. In essence, the stories and material collected are deeply embedded in both personal and collective narratives and therefore, the narrative approach "[...] is a primary way of organizing and giving coherence to [...] experience" (Hänninen 2004, p. 71).

The inner and outer experiences of Armstrand presented below reflect past and present and are therefore indicative of how cosmology, myths, and shamanism function in connection with various types of religious experiences through multiple relationships and reuse of cultural heritage. Therefore, the implementation of the narrative method provides a framework where "the inner narrative can be seen to serve several functions: it makes sense of the past, provides a vision of the future, defines the individual's narrative identity, [and] articulates values [...]" (Hänninen 2004, p. 74).[3]

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[1] More about this history can be found in the paper (Joy 2018): The Disappearance of the Sacred Swedish Sámi Drum and the Protection of Sámi Cultural Heritage (2018), by Francis Joy.

[2] In addition, I was given permission to undertake the interviews by Armstrand, and I sought permission to take photographs of the drums he made and uses for healing and ritual work, as well as the photographs of drums he sent to me.

[3] It is likewise necessary to inform the reader that because of different Sámi dialects and languages, there are various spellings of Sámi terms in relation to spirits, the Sun, and landscapes. Examples of these are expressed in quotes by Sámi scholars especially in relation to the data regarding the roles and functions of the Sun within the Sámi culture in Finland and Norway, for instance.

3. Examples of Some of the Roles and Functions of the Sun as a Celestial Deity in Sámi Cosmology from within Academic Sources

From observations of early literature written about Sámi cosmology, oral traditions, and myths, the symbol of the Sun is typically portrayed as a positive healing force that brings warmth and makes the grass grow to feed the reindeer. Sacrifices were made to the Sun, as it was worshipped as a major deity who played a central role in fertility rites and healing because of its power and warmth (see for example, Fragments of Lappish Mythology, Lars-Levi Laestadius [1838–1845] (Laestadius 2002, p. 8); also, the work of Johannes Schefferus, The History of Lapland (Schefferus [1674] 1971)). In terms of portraits of the Sun on a *noaidi* drum in the works of Laestadius (p. 8) and its position and status within Sámi cosmology, editor Juha Pentikäinen notes how

> "The celestial being is seen as a female deity of the sky and the second class of gods or deities of the sky include *Beiwe* and *Ailekis Olmak*. *Beiwe*, the Sun is represented by a quadrangle, figure number 4 on the drum. From each angle of the quadrangle runs a line called *Beiwe labtje* (the Sun's reins, i.e., rays). There were four of these reins and they signify the Sun's power of affecting all four directions of the wind". (Jessen 1767) (Pentikäinen 2002, p. 77)

Furthermore, Sámi professor Helander-Renvall (2005, p. 5) writes about in what ways,

> "Older written accounts describe the Sun as the mother of all life and living animals. The Sun is always important to the Sámi. [. . .] The Sámi ask the Sun to shine: *Beaivváš* would provide light to wanderers in the mountains, to farers at sea, and to herders searching for lost reindeer. The Sun daughter's many names indicate that in most Sami areas the Sun appeared most often in female form".

Another source from Sámi scholar Anna Westman (1997, p. 31) reflects in what way,

> "In almost all circumpolar societies, there exists/existed the concept of female goddesses or 'mothers' who regulate fertility and protect family, especially women during pregnancy and children. (. . .) *Biejvve* is also part of this complex. She is the burning fire in the sky, the annually recurring force, which in springtime makes the hillsides turn green and ensures there is food for the reindeer. She protects the reindeer calves during spring and sees to it that women get milk from the animals during summer".

Perhaps one of the most interesting and descriptive stories about the mythology concerning the Sun with regard to its value and position on the Sámi drum and reindeer is found in stories related by Sámi scholar of religion Jelena Sergejeva about Sámi folklore tales from amongst the Eastern Sámi on the Kola Peninsula, north-west Russia. Sergejeva (2000, pp. 235–36) contribution reminds us of how the knowledge of the environment has been important for understanding relationships between the Sámi and the relativity of both truth and values attached to it, which can be seen through Armstrand's work today, as well as what is written by the other Sámi scholars presented below.

> "The symbol of the Sun is usually thought to be represented on the Sami shaman's drum as a circle (in the north) or as a rhombus, from each corner of which there is a line (common in the south). These four lines, which are like sunbeams, signify the power of the Sun (Kharuzin 1890; Harva 1915, p. 61; Pentikäinen 1995, p. 120). According to many researchers—for instance Kharuzin, who in turn quotes A. Erman-these lines mean the spreading of power in four directions over the earth. A direct translation of the name of these lines, which are known in research literature as *nealja* because *labikje* (old orthography), is four reins of the sun (Kharuzin 1890, p. 143). [. . .] It is no mere chance that there is an analogy between the sunbeam, the lines of the sun's power and reins, because, on the one hand, it is natural from the point of view of an ancient reindeer-breeder. On the other hand, this analogy seems to have deeper significance. In the Sami mythology, the sun was connected with fertility.

> Reproduction of the reindeer/earlier wild deer and other animals was thought to be closely connected to the warmth and power of the sun. The ancestors of the Kola Sami illustrated the idea of a relationship between the Sun and fertility in ancient cave paintings."

Sámi archaeologist from the Swedish side of *Sápmi*, Inga-Maria Mulk has, likewise, made an interesting contribution to discussions concerning the Sun and its roles and functions on both drums and in rock art. For example, Mulk (2004, p. 50) notes how on some of the south Sámi drums "the cosmic power is represented as the image of the Sun in the drum's center; as *Tjoarvveahkka*, the deity with horns, in the upper world; as *Mattarahkka*'s three daughters in the everyday (middle) world; and as *Jabmeahkka*, deity of the dead, in the underworld" (Manker 1938, 1950; Mulk 1985, 1994).

A further contribution by Mulk accounts the roles, functions, and manifestations of the Sun as documented in early sources described below by Sámi student Nicolaus Lundius and Jacob Fellman, for example, who refers to the following regarding its value, roles, and functions in Sámi myths and cosmology.

> "The Sun belongs to the upper world and is another aspect of the Earth Mother figure. In the Sami worldview, the Sun (*Biejvve*) is feminine and, as Mother *Áhkká*, her role is the creation of life. For example, Nicolaus Lundius in the 1670s recorded that for the Sami the Sun is "Mother of all living creatures" (Lundius 1905; Westman 1997). Almost all drums have an image of the sun placed in a center among the heavenly gods and goddesses, of whom *Mattarahkka* is the most important.
>
> *Mattarahkka* belongs to all spheres but was primarily associated with aspects of the upper world—the south, warmth, the source of life. As the primordial, original or first mother, *Mattarahkka* was a deity with multiple qualities (Fellman 1906; Rank 1949, 1955; Bäckman 1982). Together *Mattarahkka* and *Biejvve* were seen as the cosmic force that created life and ended it. These two deities represented the forefathers and foremothers of the Sami people, as well as symbolizing their belief in reincarnation.
>
> Some of *Mattarahkka's* different aspects were represented in the earthly sphere by her three daughters *Sarahkka*, *Juoksahkka* and *Uksahkka*, who are depicted on Sami drums usually standing together in a line [...]. *Juoksahkka's* symbol is a bow while *Sarahkka* and *Uksahkka* hold staffs with cleft sticks. *Mattarahkka* might also be found in the underworld as *Jabmeahkka*, the goddess of death. Together these deities symbolized the cosmic force that created life and ended it". (Mulk 2004, pp. 54–55)

It seems almost certain the Sun and its solar power as a deity has been a focal point for reverence and worship and expression in its many forms by the Sámi because of its warmth and healing powers, turning darkness to light and cold into warmth. In addition, and according to the edited works of Ralph et al. (1997, p. 6), in their writing about Finnish Sámi poet and artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, it is mentioned how "according to one myth, the Sami are the children of the Sun, and the poet honors that myth". This belief is in Valkeapää's written works titled *The Sun my Father—Beaivi*, *Áhcázan* (1988).

These literature sources are included because they help us to become familiar with interpretations and scholarly-produced learning about Sami knowledge systems, and in a broader sense communicate how Armstrand uses the traditional knowledge he has to reflect Sámi myths, deities, and cosmological landscapes for the purposes of portraying practices and beliefs today that coherently reproduce aspects of Sámi culture in various contemporary settings.

Regarding a further emphasis and explanation of the importance of the Sun as a healing force amongst the Sámi, the focus now turns to use of a healing drum with the Sun at its center belonging to Peter Armstrand, which is pictured below (Figures 1 and 2). The sacred vessel is decorated with *Áhkká* goddesses, namely, *Mádderáhkká, Sáráhkká, Uksáhkká*, and *Jouksáhkká,* and their significance as co-creators regarding the existence of the Sámi people. When asked to explain the significance of both the Sun symbol and *Áhkká* goddesses painted on the drum landscape and use of the instrument, Armstrand answered in the following way.

> "The drum I use for healing is a bowl type drum I made myself, five years ago, from birch burl, and it has a reindeer skin sewn onto it.
>
> It is painted with acrylic paints on the skin, and inside the drum are Sámi symbols, which have been burned on to it. I also continue to search for old Sámi symbols. When the Sámi spirits give me symbols, I can use them as well for healing and to put inside the drum.
>
> The Sámi spirits play a very important role in the healing work I do. I call upon them to help provide knowledge, insight and guidance when helping other persons, and also in my development as a healer. During ceremonies, I call in all the *Áhkká* Goddesses who help protect me and the circle and I use *joiking* when I feel the need to.
>
> The use of the drum is important because the vibrations from the drum go deep into the body and help to release pain, which many people who come for healing, have. For some people, I cannot use the drum because it is too powerful for them, and the healing power raises issues, which they might not be strong enough or willing to face". (Joy 2014, p. 3)

> "The pictures came to my mind about how to decorate this drum head. My guides gave them to me. The Sun is the source or wellspring of life for us Sámi people and it can help restore life to people who are sick. The Sun is the most powerful deity. A strong combination of earth energy from the female *Áhkká* goddesses incorporated with the masculine power of the Sun (water and fire) are a powerful combination used for healing". (Joy 2019, p. 1)

In reflecting on Armstrand's perspective, as stated above, it is important to understand how this makes a significant contribution to better understanding Sámi healing practices, cosmological orientation, and application of traditional knowledge, and how sharing is one of the ways he is helping to maintain, preserve, and sustain this knowledge.

Figure 1. The painted Sun symbol on Peter Armstrand's drum, which is divided into four sections that contain illustrations and symbols depicting the Áhkká goddesses. "The Sun's rays are also painted around the outside of the circle as a way to illustrate its healing power" (Joy 2014, p. 8). Photograph and copyright Francis Joy 2014.

Figure 2. A slightly faded illustration of the four female Sámi deities of the Áhkká group are pictures in the Sun symbol, which is divided into the four quarters of north, east, south, and west."*Mádderáhkká*, the Mother Goddess of the Earth is pictured in the top left section. In the top right section is *Uksáhkká*. The bottom left section is *Jouksáhkká*, and *Sáráhkká* is pictured in the bottom right section of the drum" (Joy 2014, p. 10). Photograph and copyright Francis Joy 2014.

4. Peter Armstrand's Healing Drum and Interpretations of the Sun Symbol

Observations of the work of Armstrand undertaken during fieldwork helped to understand a number of ways that his behavior as both a drum maker and healer appeared as being contributory in reshaping and rebuilding both individual and collective identity and traditions: linking both past and present together into a unified whole within Armstrand's own personal practices. The purpose of

approaching the subject matter in this manner is firstly because, through this individual case study, evidence was presented on how cultural practices are rebuilt and culture revived and transmitted through art and spiritual practice; where cultural landscapes act as a bridge not only between culture and nature, but past and present as well. Moreover, by formulating the data as it is presented above, this method aims to demonstrate what is presented below in terms of how firstly, tradition is a flexible and constantly changing concept; and secondly, what role the old Sámi cosmological landscapes painted on drums play as elements of material culture, as well as oral traditions and stories in relation to these changes that take place on both social and spiritual levels. Henceforth, linking the past with the present through heritage practices, beliefs, and ancestral memory that are demonstrative of a holistic worldview that has many dimensions to it. Through feedback from Armstrand, in terms of both the healing work administered by him as well as drum making and decoration, it is possible to comprehend in what ways, in connection with his spiritual needs, there is a working relationship and interdependence on transcendent spiritual beings for everyday matters as well as those concerning the development and transmission of culture and tradition.

The *Áhkká* goddesses inside the Sun appear to have two recognizable paradigms to them. The first concerns how Armstrand does not live as a reindeer herder. Armstrand lives in a remote area of a town in northern Sweden and works in a school. Therefore, Armstrand's own cosmology seems very much concerned with the domestic sphere of people and family life. The *Áhkká* goddesses are very much affiliated with the earthly life of family, childbirth, baptism, and human affairs as well as protection of family members and the dwelling place. This might indicate as to why the four goddesses depicted in the drumhead are at the center of his own personal cosmology. In addition to what Armstrand has stated above, I had further personal correspondence with the drum maker on 14 December 2019, concerning the revival of Sámi religion, the important role and function of the Sun as a deity, and why it was important he attended Isogaisa Sámi shaman festival. Armstrand then responded in the following way.

> "For every drum I make and every drum other Sámi drum maker's make, they are bringing back Sámi religion. When I go out into nature and play the drum, I believe the old spirits of nature wake up and want to work with us again. It is slow but the seeds are being sown that will grow again if they are cared for.
>
> The Sun was one of the highest deities because it made things grow through its light. When the Sun returned after the Polar Nights, people began to celebrate again as it brought new energy. Therefore, the *Áhkká* goddesses on my drum inside the Sun are a symbol of how they and the Sun help the human world with their powers.
>
> Isogaisa has been a place where we can meet with other people who work in a similar capacity. People from other countries, which has created a unifying experience". (Joy 2019, p. 1)

In relation to Figure 3, the artwork on the drum depicts both old and new symbolism, consisting of a Sámi *noaidi* at the bottom of the drum, holding a drum and hammer and the four *Áhkká* goddesses positioned at each of the quarters of north, east, south, and west.

> "The role and function of *Mádderáhkká*, as the mother goddess of creation stands out because the image of her is larger than the ones of her three daughters. The old Sámi Sun symbol with the new Sámi flag represents the Sámi people and *Sápmi*, the homeland areas. The new image helps illustrate how the Sun still plays a central role and function in cosmology for the Sámi people, giving energy and power to us as well as the whole of Sápmi". (Joy 2014, p. 1)

Figure 3. A cultural landscape painted on a modern-day Sámi drum also made by Armstrand. Photograph and copyright Peter Joy (2014).

When I later asked Armstrand for a further elaboration of the importance of the Sámi flag inside the Sun symbol, depicted below through figure three, the response was as follows.

> "This drum and its content are a representation of Sámi religion. This is because the shaman at the bottom of the drum is drumming for the Sámi people, the Sun and all the Gods. The old symbols and figures are important as they are a source of inspiration for my work. When I make the drums, it is important to make them in a new way but equally as important to keep the old knowledge because it is essential to remember and to reflect on the old customs and traditions.
>
> When I reflect on old drums before making a new one, it is really important to honour and remember the old Sámi *noaidi* who gave their lives for the Christian world. Therefore, in this way, contemporary drum making combines past and present so the cultural memory lives on, as do the religious practices". (Joy 2020, p. 1)

The aforementioned quote by Armstrand is necessary to acknowledge in terms of how the individual reflects on the painful past regarding persecution of *noaidi*, which is how the demise of Sámi pre-Christian religion began. Although, he does not clearly say so, his words give the impression that the events of the past might play a critical function regarding the determination he has for reanimating Sámi traditions and rebuilding culture in a contemporary setting.

With regard to Figure 4, the drums origins are documented as being from "Lule Lappmark" (Manker 1938, p. 791). In the center is a Sun symbol (number 10). What makes this interesting is it is the only Sun symbol on the surviving drums which has a cross inside of it. Therefore, it is possible to understand how Armstrand has sought inspiration from drum number 65 in Manker's book, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel: Eine Ethnologische Monographie. 2, Die Trommel als Urkunde Geistigen Lebens The Lappish Drum: An Ethnological Monograph. 2. The Drum as a Record of Spiritual Life* (Manker 1950). The Sun symbol in this drum is what motivated Armstrand in his decoration of different drums, the photographs of which the drum maker sent to me, describing the following. "This is a beautiful symbol; small but really powerful. This Sun on the old drum is what inspired me to reuse it on the drums I build" (Joy 2020, p. 1). Examples of these are featured below (Figures 3, 5 and 6).

When I asked Armstrand if it was possible to reflect a little more comprehensively about the shape and design of the Sun symbol on drum number 65 (Figure 4), the drum maker said "after the polar nights are ended in January, there appears an old natural optical phenomenon in the sky when the Sun begins to shine again and there are lots of ice crystals in the atmosphere. The Sun shows himself to us again and quite often through a phenomenon called a Sundog, which is like a large halo around the Sun. The symbol of the Sun on drum number 65 is a good example of this in my mind, and it why I have used it a lot on the drums I make" (Joy 2014, p. 1).

Being able to comprehend this explanation enabled me to further understand the links between the old drum in Figure 4 and in particular, all the contemporary drums made by Armstrand and thus, get a better understanding of the drum makers knowledge, as well as his interpretation of the Sun symbol on Manker's illustration of the drum and its significance.

"[Regarding Figure 5] The drum was made in the winter season and therefore, the image reflects the spirit of this time. The fox is also a representation of freedom and curiosity. The Sun is portrayed with the Sundog phenomena present in its position, partly below the horizon because it only reaches this height during the winter months" (Joy 2014, p. 1). Photograph and copyright Peter Joy (2014). The Sundog phenomena is captured beautifully through Figure 7.

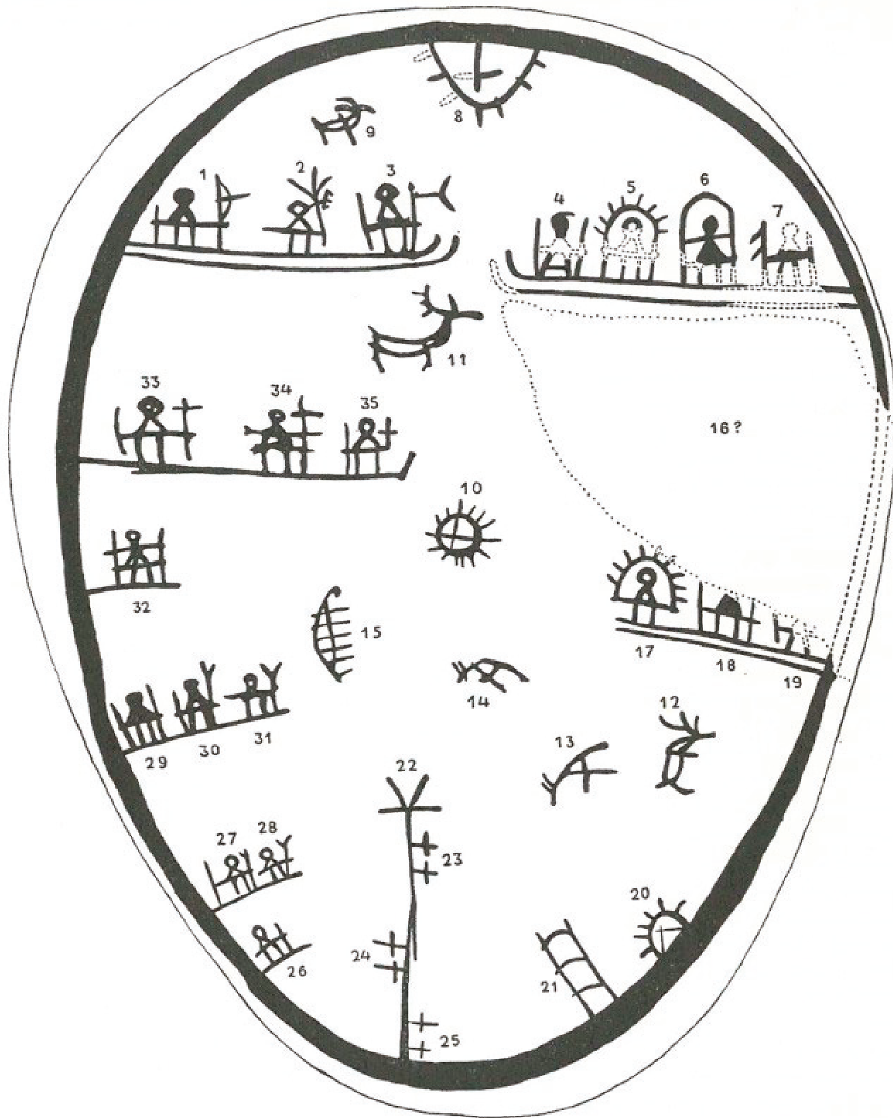

Figure 4. A Sámi drum pictured as number 65 in Ernst Manker's inventory (Manker 1950, p. 417).

Figure 5. An illustration of the spirit of the Arctic Fox. In the background is the Winter Sun and mountains (Joy 2014, p. 1).

Figure 6. Pictured here is a fourth drum made by Armstrand.

"[In relation to Figure 6] the cosmological landscape depicts "*Mádderáhkká*, the Mother Goddess of the earth who is pictured in the top of the drum. In the center of the drum is the Sun and its four rays stretching out in the winter landscape. On the top of the northern ray is a phenomenon that also appears as part of the Sundog or Sun parhelion phenomenon during Winter (as seen on Figure 7). At either side of the Sun rays are the Gods of the wind *Bieggolmái,* and thunder, *Horágálles.* I have characterized human manifestations of the Sámi deities because they are always with us in the human world. In the top right section is the bottom left section is *Jouksáhkká*, *Sáráhkká and Uksáhkká*" (Joy 2020, p. 1).

Figure 7. An example of the optical phenomena seen here in this photograph. Peter Armstrand wondered whether or not the shape of the Sun at this time of the year was the inspiration for the oval construction of the Sámi drum since time immemorial and thus, one of the reasons why the oval construction was unique to the Sámi people. Photograph taken by Peter Gossas (2018): https://www.svt.se/vader/fragor_och_svar/vad-ar-halo.

5. New Perspectives on Sámi Symbolism and Cultural Practices

In terms of trying to establish links between Sámi religion from the past through the contemporary practices documented in the aforementioned with regard to the work of Armstrand, it could be argued how, as part of the processes involved in the construction of identity formulation as well as the transmission of culture and heritage, through drum building and decoration, each of these examples above brings into focus the following points: They provide a broader understanding concerning the important role and function art plays in relation to cultural memory, the creation and preservation of cosmological landscapes on drums, as well as the healing activities drums are used for.

Furthermore, combining art, beliefs, and drum use in relation to their functions as part of the socio-cultural system that underlies Sámi religion, these practices illustrate what Sámi scholar Helander-Renvall (2009, p. 44) refers to as "the inter-subjective character of human and non-human relationships", which are a central component in "Sámi perspectives on the nature of reality" Helander-Renvall (2009, p. 44).

Bringing the stories behind the creation and decoration of new types of drums and their landscapes together, in addition to the literature sources, presents important examples in connection with how the migration and influence of symbolism from the seventeenth century to modern life have taken place through transmission of culture. In this sense, we are able to better understand in what ways the reuse of cultural heritage has a sacred function in creating new knowledge systems that empower Armstrand and the wider Sámi community, thus, adding value and meaning to their implementation and use. The contexts in which beliefs are applied and executed through drum making and decoration, healing practices, and ritual, benefits Sámi culture and reflects Sámi traditional religion because of how Sámi beliefs give "credit [to] natural phenomena [said to be imbued] with spirit and soul, and attributes life to such phenomena as trees, thunder or celestial bodies" (Bird-David [1999] 2002, p. 74).

The explanation of the creation, value, and application of the Sun symbol containing illustrations of the representations of the *Áhkká* goddesses on Armstrand's drums likewise suggests the drums have their own souls and that Armstrand, as the healer, uses the painted drums for establishing

communication with spiritual beings within Sámi cosmology, through prayers and reverence. In this sense, it seems evident he is undertaking the role and function of *noaidi* or shaman as the mediator between the different worlds that comprise the cosmology of the Sámi people as seen manifested through their traditional religion and practices, which are in this case still a living part of daily life.

If we can understand how building and decoration of drums, engaging in healing practices as well as *joiking*, ceremonies and rituals of various kinds are all art forms, then there is a better understanding of the following: The important role and function art plays in the restoration, development, and maintenance of identity and tradition in relation to creating structures and frameworks for drum users, such as Armstrand, to operate within; moreover, where beliefs and perceptions about religion are transmitted. Understanding this helps us see how the past influences the present in connection with transmission of both culture and memory.

Comprehension of Armstrand's work is demonstrative of how both the value and power of ancient symbolism works in relation to healing. Not only because of the Sun symbol and *Áhkká* goddesses depicted on the drum heads, but also the fact that there are ancient symbols inside the drum itself he uses for healing which is evidential of the ways the drum both embeds and embodies the language of the symbols as systems of communication. Henceforth, the language and authority of the *noaidi* is conveyed through drum use and relationships. Moreover, the processes involved in application and use of the drum is symbolic of how Sámi culture is based on symbolism that has been used for a very long time for transmission of culture, identity building, interaction, and interdependency with other life forms from the invisible worlds.

Armstrand's work provides one example of how Sámi knowledge is returning to the world from within the shadows of the past; this is visible to some extent through combining his own life story and that of his ancestors with history and mythology. I would conclude that through Armstrand's approaches to his work, which emphasize systems of communication, the path of healing, and restoration of culture and heritage practices, the interviews and photographic materials presented in this work help to establish, in a number of ways, the means by which Sámi religion plays a central role and function within such processes.

Finally, epic tales and stories perform a critical function in Sámi religion in the way they contain expressions of *Noaidivuohta*, just like stories take up a central position in other religions. The *noaidi* as tradition bearer is one of the key figures responsible for the transmission of experience, expressions, culture, and heritage, through ways of knowing, which takes place when oral memories and myths are transformed into art. Symbolism as such include ecological landscapes, sacred sites, spirits, and departed ancestors; thus, exhibiting the unusual qualities of the *noaidi* as someone who communicates between worlds and remembers.

Inside the middle of the octagon is a central fire representing the Sun. The four lavvus could be viewed as manifestations of the Sun's rays reaching out into the directions of north, east, south, and west because each of the four lavvus' has a fire inside of it.

The symbol of the Sámi flag on the *lavvu* (seen in Figure 8) is also present at the festival each year. According to Kåven and Svonni (2018, p. 1) "the Sami flag represents the Sámi people and *Sápmi* and it carries the Sámi colours red, blue, green and yellow. These colours are most common traditional colours to use on Sámi clothing. It has a circle that symbolizes the Sun in red, and the Moon in blue. The yellow and the green are symbols of nature and the animals".

From observations through attendance at the Isogaisa festival, there is always a fire-keeper present whose responsibility is to keep the fire burning for the duration of the event. Fire, as is seen in Figure 9, plays a central role in Sámi religion in terms of it being a gateway into the spiritual realms for noaidi. Photograph and copyright Francis Joy 2015.

Figure 8. As a way of demonstrating further interlocking features and structures associated with Sámi religion and cosmological landscapes, the layout of the ritual landscape at the Sámi shaman festival, Isogaisa, which shows three of the four lavvus connected with the octagon area in-between them, suggests a ritualized landscape. Photograph and copyright Francis Joy 2015.

Figure 9. Inside the octagon area at the Isogaisa festival where the central fire can be seen here as Sámi shaman Eirik Myrhaug lights it during the opening ceremony in 2015.

6. Concluding Remarks

The short case study presented above demonstrates the need for further discussion in relation to formulating a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between tradition and modernity as a method to help better grasp more broadly what constitutes Sámi religion in contemporary society. Henceforth, a wider understanding is needed regarding how in terms of art, the reuse of ancient symbolism combined with healing practices and ritual act as a bridge between culture and nature that is characterized by relationships. One of the main ways these relationships are portrayed is through painted landscapes, which are applied to the membrane of the Sámi drums which acts as a template for recording religious experiences, reverence, prayer, and remembering. In this sense, the decoration of drums helps create a bridge between the human world and the divine powers in nature and cosmos. Moreover, and in the contexts presented above, how the decoration of the drum is used to form a bridge between the ancient culture of the Sámi and the culture of today.

The construction, decoration, and use of the drums in relation to Peter Armstrand and his work characterizes how for this Sámi person, art and ritual reflects aspects of Sámi culture, religion, and spiritual traditions and practices that emerge from within different contexts, as depicted through the contrasting drum landscapes. This is a way of expressing individual beliefs, thoughts, and feelings, which not only bring healing and empowerment to those seeking help, but likewise, for the participant himself whose determination carries him forward with a sense of pride for being Sámi. Since it has not been possible to draw an in-depth, comprehension of Sámi religion through this one individual case study, Peter Armstrand's contribution to this discussion highlights the need for further dialogue on the subject matter and a much broader study of these ancient traditions and practices, that predate Christianity by thousands of years. This is in order to better understand how traditions are continuously changing within the Sámi worldview and culture is transmitted across generations.

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Article

Sacred Nature. Diverging Use and Understanding of Old Sámi Offering Sites in Alta, Northern Norway

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Abstract: This study focuses on the contemporary use of two well-known Sámi offering sites in Alta, Finnmark, Norway. Today, these are hiking destinations and sightseeing points for both the Sámi and the non-Sámi local population, as well as a few non-local visitors. Many of these visitors leave objects at the sites, such as parts of recently slaughtered reindeer, clothing, coins, toys, sweet wrappers and toilet paper. This indicates that visitors have different levels of knowledge about and reverence for the traditional significance of these places. Through repeated surveys over several years, we also observed a certain development and change in the number and character of these depositions, as well as a variation in depositions between different sites. A series of interviews with various users and key stakeholders were performed to clarify the reasons for these changing practices, as well as what individuals and groups visit these sites, their motivation for doing so and for leaving specific objects, and what potential conflict of interest there is between different users. Furthermore, we surveyed what information has been available to the public about these sites and their significance in Sámi religion and cultural history over time. The results show that a diverse group of individuals visit the sites for a variety of reasons, and that there are contrasting views on their use, even among different Sámi stakeholders. While it is difficult to limit the knowledge and use of these places because they are already well known, more information about old Sámi ritual practices and appropriate behaviour at such sites may mediate latent conflicts and promote a better understanding of the importance of offering sites in both past and present Sámi societies.

Keywords: Sámi religion; sieidi; offering site; contemporary offerings; tourism

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1. Introduction

There have been many ways of relating to old Sámi offering sites, and there have been many ways of safeguarding them. In Norway, cultural heritage sites are generally recorded and mapped for land planning purposes and preservation. However, there are Sámi traditions for secrecy around certain offering sites, and a traumatic history of irreverence towards Sámi ritual sites and practices has contributed further to secrecy about old graves and offering sites. To some extent, Sámi cultural heritage authorities in Norway have maintained that offering sites that are automatically protected by law should be recorded only in password-protected databases (Fossum and Norberg 2012, pp. 19–23). The need to protect them in this way relates both to their general status as cultural heritage and their more specific and transcendent symbolic value as markers of the ethnic religion of the Sámi indigenous population in northern Fennoscandia. The latter has socio-political significance today because Sámi religion and rituals were systematically eradicated by missionary activity and other assimilation policies, at least from the 17th century onwards. The cultural and human consequences still affect Sámi communities and individuals today.

Some Sámi offering sites, however, are too well known locally and regionally to be protected by lack of mention in databases or cultural heritage guides. They represent the old Sámi sacred landscape but also the local landscape, as this is used and conceptualised by a variety of people. The past significance of the offering sites may ring through into various modern contexts, although in part as a rather diffuse idea about their meaning.

Instead of a profound spiritual meaning, the sites sometimes end up as focal points for what might be considered another general form of "spirituality" in an increasingly secularist Norway—the fascination with hiking. Hiking and skiing and, more generally, "being in nature" became national symbols of Norwegian identity during the late 19th and 20th century (Hesjedal 2004; Ween and Abram 2012). Hikes are often undertaken to reach a destination, whether a mountain peak, a cabin or some useful activity like fishing or berry and mushroom picking. The hikes may also aim for a landmark, and conspicuous Sámi offering stones are among such destinations.

The variation in knowledge among people using Sámi offering sites as hiking destinations about their significance in Sámi culture is given a material expression in a variety of depositions. What is left at the sites includes objects close to traditional Sámi offerings as well as things more similar to rubbish, at least at first glance. This is problematic both from the viewpoint of some Sámi individuals and groups and in terms of the Norwegian cultural heritage legislation. The law forbids destruction and vandalism but also "undue disfigurement", which can cover the littering of heritage sites (Cultural Heritage Act §3-1). Sámi sites with place-specific traditions or archaeological remains from 1917 or older are automatically protected (§4-2).

In this article, we look into the latent conflicts related to the varied contemporary use of two old Sámi offering sites in Alta, Áhkku ("the Old Woman") by the sea close to the town, and Fállegeađgi ("the Falcon Stone") on the inland plains (Figure 1). The study is important to understand the interaction with these sites and what consequences diverging use and understanding of their sacredness may have for the dynamics of the multicultural community in Alta today. Through field observations and semi-structured interviews, we explore who exactly visits the sites and leaves the different things found there, what knowledge various groups have about the original Sámi use of the sites, their own attitude to these today, and how any conflicting use can be mediated at these well-known and easily accessible sacred sites.

Figure 1. Satellite photo of Alta, Finnmark, northern Norway, with the sites mentioned in the text. Ill.: Marte Spangen. Photo: norgeskart.no.

2. Sámi Offering Sites and Rituals

Sámi offering and sacred sites, called *sieidi* (plural *sieddit*) in North Sámi, come in many shapes, but large blocks, sometimes split by ice or lightning, or other rock formations that stand out in the landscape are frequent among known sites. Contemporary overviews of sites in use were gathered by priests and missionaries in Sámi areas in the 17th and 18th centuries, with the main purpose of revealing and destroying them (e.g., Niurenius [1640] 1905; Olsen [1715] 1934). This knowledge has later been complemented with ethnographic and archaeological surveys and investigations, listing numerous offering sites (e.g., Qvigstad 1926; Hallström 1932; Manker 1957; Äikäs 2015).

The sources also describe rituals related to Sámi offerings, which were performed as a naturally integrated part of everyday life, life transitions and the general worldview. This included, but were not limited to, offerings of various animals; by families near the living areas, as part of hunting or fishing practices, and at particular offering sites as ceremonies for larger parts of the communities (e.g., Olsen [1715] 1934; Randulf [1723] 1903; Mebius 1968, 1972; Äikäs et al. 2009). Unfortunately, many of the early historical sources tend to copy each other without clarifying whether the described rituals are in fact performed in the local area where the author resided. This is a relevant source-critical issue, since the geographical area of Sámi settlement, Sápmi, covers large areas of Fennoscandia and incorporates a multiplicity of Sámi cultural expressions, subsistence strategies, and languages. More recent scholarship emphasises the importance of only using information specific to the time and place of any given historical study of religion (Rydving 1995a).

While the conspicuous offerings of animals at Sámi offering sites were heavily reduced by the intensified activity by Christian missionaries in the 17th and 18th century, they did not stop entirely (Qvigstad 1926; Äikäs 2015; Salmi et al. 2015, 2018). Furthermore, other types of offerings, like foodstuff, alcohol, tobacco, coins and small pieces of jewellery continued at many sites into the 20th century, and in some places until the present day. Notably, offering sites have also had different biographies, being established and falling into disuse at different points in time (Serning 1956; Mebius 1972; Äikäs and Salmi 2013; Äikäs and Spangen 2016). Thus, it is important to understand Sámi offering sites not only as a uniform element of Sámi pre-Christian ritual but as singular entities featuring diverse traditions depending on the history and context of the specific site (Mathisen 2010).

3. Áhkku—Grandma/The Old Lady/Woman

Áhkku is a distinct rock formation by the sea on the Komsa promontory in Alta (Figure 2). The Komsa name derives from a Norwegian name previously used for the small mountain at the promontory, "Kongshavnfjell". The rock formation of Áhkku is known to have been a Sámi site of reverence, a *sieidi*.

Geologist and mountain climber Baltazar Mathias Keilhau travelled through Finnmark in 1827. He comments on several interesting places, among them the two *sieiddit* discussed in this article. About Áhkku, he says that they sailed close by this rock of a vague human resemblance. The Sámi had worshipped it and brought it offerings in the past, so that reindeer antlers and fish bones were still visible in front of the rock (Keilhau 1831, p. 181). Linguist and ethnographer Just K. Qvigstad, who worked extensively with issues of Sámi culture, described the site in the early 20th century. He notes that the Sámi would try to trick those travelling past in boats into greeting the rock (Qvigstad 1926, p. 341). As late as in the mid-20th century, people were still respectful towards the site, and especially a cave behind the rock that was thought to be where offerings were placed. A man who dared to enter the cave was said to have become paralysed from the waist down (Sveen 2003, p. 52).

Figure 2. The rock formation constituting the *sieidi* Áhkku (Photo: T. Äikäs).

The name Áhkku can be understood in several ways and has associations to the present use as "grandmother", but also "old woman" and "goddess", in the sense that it is frequently used as a name for holy sites. Female denominations are also part of the names of historically recorded pre-Christian Sámi goddesses such as Máderáhkká, Sáráhkká, Juksáhkká, and Uksáhkká, although áhkka refers to "wife" rather than "grandmother". Knowledge of the latter goddesses is only recorded in areas further south, and they were not known in Finnmark in the 18th century (Randulf [1723] 1903; Kildal [1730] 1945; Högström [1747] 1980; Leem [1767] 1975, p. 421; cf. Rydving 1995b, pp. 62, 70). However, it is likely that other female deities were well known even here, considering the use of such terms for known offering sites.

The Norwegian name of the site is "Seidekjerringa", where *seide* is a Norwegianisation of the North Sámi word *sieidi*. The Norwegian word *kjerringa* can mean both "hag" and "woman", but in the local dialect is more likely to refer to "woman" (Olsen 2017a, footnote 1). The name may still convey a certain derogative connotation, especially considering persistent ideas about the Sámi as untrustworthy sorcerers (Spangen 2016, pp. 226–27).

The rock is situated close to a residential area on Amtmannsnes near Alta town centre and less than a 1-km walk from the nearest car park on a path starting on a small beach often used by the local population. The rock is currently a relatively popular destination for small hikes, as it does not take too long and is manageable even for young children, despite going through somewhat rocky terrain.

The *sieidi* itself consists of a 7–8-metre-high rock formation with cracks and platforms. Today it is surrounded by birch trees so has limited visibility. The area of interaction with the *sieidi* also seems to be restricted close to the stone due to the vegetation and the rocky terrain by the shoreline.

4. Fállegeađgi—The Falcon Stone

The Fállegeađgi rock formation is situated on the northern side of the River Falkelva on a plateau where it can be seen from a long distance. It is relatively accessible by a 9-km walk from the closest road, but, in summertime, the crossing of bogs and small rivers make the hike more demanding than that to Áhkku. In winter, it can be reached on skis. The *sieidi* consists of three large boulders, one of which is in an upright position (Figure 3). One of the stones has split in two with a narrow crevice between the halves. It is situated on an ancient migration route for reindeer, initially followed by wild reindeer until they became extinct in the 18th-19th century, and subsequently used for reindeer herds by several Sámi *siidas* (communities).

Figure 3. The boulders constituting the *sieidi* Fállegeađgi. (Photo: T. Äikäs).

Keilhau (1831, p. 189) (see above) travelled past the Falcon Stone, but he only briefly describes its natural shape and mentions no offerings or rituals related to this stone in particular. Qvigstad, however, reports findings of recent offerings by the stone in the early 20th century: a boy passed it in October 1904 and noted many bones and antlers in the cracks of and below the rocks, as well as the backs and sides of two reindeer calves, their flesh still fresh. Furthermore, a student reported a large amount of old reindeer antlers and a recently slaughtered reindeer calf in the crack in the rock in July 1924. He had been told by locals that some of the Mountain Sámi still made offerings to the stone (Qvigstad 1926, p. 342).

Qvigstad (1926, p. 342) also recounts several local legends relating to this *sieidi*. A Sámi called Stuora-Piera (Big Peter) used to sacrifice to the *sieidi* as he passed by with his reindeer herd in the early 20th century. One year, he failed to do so, and many of the reindeer broke out of the herd and ran south into a swamp on a nearby headland where they died.

Another tale of caution concerned the Sámi man Garra-Rastus, who once, in the mid-19th century, took a reindeer antler from the *sieidi* and made a spoon from it. When he reached the nearby mountain station, Joatkajávri, and let go of his draft reindeer, they ran away as if pursued by wolves, although

there were no dangers to be seen. Only with great difficulty did he manage to get them back. This was considered a punishment for taking the antler (Qvigstad 1926, pp. 342, 347).

Also in the 19th century, some mountain Sámi travelling to Djupvik in the Altafjord stopped at the *sieidi* for their reindeer to graze. One of the travellers addressed the *sieidi* mockingly: "I would like to know if you have gnawed any reindeer bones this year." When they left, the best draft animal was found to be gone. They searched near and far without finding it. Later that autumn, they travelled back past the same place and found the bones of the lost reindeer right next to the stone. The *sieidi* would not stand for any insults (Qvigstad 1926, p. 342). Observations in recent years testify to a continued tradition of (parts of) reindeer being deposited at the site.

5. Observations at the Offering Sites

The authors of this article have visited the offering sites in question once and twice respectively, in 2017 and 2019. We have also benefitted from observations made by Prof. Kjell Olsen from UiT—the Arctic University of Norway, Alta campus, concerning the amount and complexity of the traces people have left when visiting Áhkku, as he visited the site every year from 2000 to 2015. For practical and ethical reasons, the archaeological investigations for this study have been limited to observations of the objects left on the site, with no excavations for older material or removal of deposited material. On our visit in 2017, we photographed all the finds that were visible at Áhkku and Fállegeađgi, which we deemed to be an ethically sound way of gathering evidence for this study without interfering with the practice or the objects as such. Only photos of generic objects with little to identify any particular individual visitor are published here (see below). Based on the photographic documentation, we have divided the finds into different operational categories, which seem to represent different interactions with the sites.

The finds at Áhkku can be divided into the following categories: children's toys, natural objects, hunting- and fishing-related objects, food or drink, and 'pocket holdings' or accessories. Children's visits are testified to by small plastic toys, a toy car, a small soft toy, a Pez sweet dispenser, a toy brush, a trading card, a toy ball and two children's bracelets. Not all these objects necessarily indicate visits by children as they could have been left by adults too. The next category, natural objects, includes shells, an amethyst, small stones, a reindeer antler, a rose and altogether four bundles of flowers and other plants. Hunting- and fishing-related objects consisted of a fishing rod, a lure, a small net and ammunition shells. There are relatively few finds related to consuming food or drink. In 2017, only three bottles and cans were found and no food items. However, food was observed here in earlier years, including smoked fish, crispbread with spread and a tomato (Olsen 2020). The last group is somewhat hard to define but covers such objects that could easily be carried around and end up as a random offering. We have named this group of finds 'pocket holdings', and it comprises accessories that people might have worn while visiting the *sieidi*. The pocket holdings include small coins, a lipstick, a pen, a colour pencil, a small clothespin, a reflector, a pair of bracelets, a lighter, a headband and a hair bobble, as well as accessories such as a sock, sunglasses, an advertising cap and a fleece jacket.

The finds at Fállegeađgi seem to indicate a somewhat different kind of interaction with the *sieidi*. Children's toys are missing apart from two marbles, whereas antlers are more numerous here. Most of the finds at Fállegeađgi are situated in a crevice between two big stones. The crevice is almost filled with antlers (Figure 4), three of them with engravings personalising them. Together with the antlers, however, fishing gear and pieces of clothing have also been thrown or placed in the crevice. In addition to antlers, there are also vertebral bones in the crevice and a selection of other bones on the ground.

Figure 4. Reindeer skull and other objects deposited in the crevice of the Fállegeađgi *sieidi* stone. (Photo: T. Äikäs).

The finds by the bigger stone are fewer and more heterogenous. Some of them seem to be random leftovers from a hiking trip, like a Coke can on the ground and more deliberately positioned sweets, a matchbox, biscuit wrappers, a biscuit and coins in the cracks of the stone (Figure 5).

Observations at Áhkku over 15 years clearly indicate some changes in the type and amount of depositions at the sites. Notably, there was a distinct increase in depositions in 2013 (Olsen 2019a). On the other hand, a distinct decrease in depositions was noted here in 2019 compared to 2017, suggesting that someone found it necessary to clear away some of the objects previously present. One informant also noted this reduction in depositions in 2018 (Sara 2019). It has not been possible to establish who this might have been, when the clearing happened, and whether or not it has been a recurring phenomenon.

Figure 5. Small objects shoved into a crack in the Fállegeađgi *sieidi* stone.

6. Users of the Offering Sites Today

To investigate who visits the offering sites today and for what purpose, as well as various opinions on their use and the consequent material assemblages, we contacted various people in Alta with these questions. We eventually encountered eight individuals whom we considered to represent key stakeholders or to be prime sources of information about the use of and knowledge about the offering sites. This was based on our preliminary understanding of who visits the sites and has an opinion on their use. Semi-structured interviews were performed in person or over the phone with a Sámi reindeer herder who has designated pastures close to the Fállegeađgi *sieidi* (Aslak J. Eira); a member of the Alta-based coastal Sámi interest group *Gula* (Dagrun Sarak Sara); the head of tourist information in Alta (Marianne Knutsen); an experienced tourist guide and bus driver based in Alta (Jonathan Matte); two school teachers who have brought schoolchildren to the sites (Martin Nordby and Trond A. Olsen); a long-time employee at Alta Museum (Hans Christian Søborg), and the author of the hiking guide book *Altaturer* (Ottem 2012). All the interviewees gave their consent to participate in the study with their full names and all were given the chance to check their quotes.

We also investigated possible online and other sources of information about the sites that could tell different groups of people about their existence, history and how to behave when visiting.

6.1. Touristic Interest

Sámi offering sites and suggested Sámi offering sites with no historical background are used as tourist attractions in Finland (Ruotsala 2008; Äikäs 2015; Valtonen 2019), which led us to hypothesise that this could be the case for the well-known offering sites in Alta too, whether in an organised fashion

or with individual tourists visiting the sites on their own. However, the tourist information office has no printed information about the offering sites in the area, and staff report that tourists never ask for information about Sámi offering sites there. Instead, they ask more generally for things to do in a day or an afternoon, and they often decide to go for a tour of the Alta Canyon, which is the largest in northern Europe and a place of beauty (Knutsen 2019). An experienced bus driver/tourist guide working for North Adventure in Alta confirmed this impression, as he could only remember one occasion when a party from abroad had asked specifically to go to Áhkku. This was a crew from Disney visiting around 2016 who were looking for inspiration from Sámi culture (Matte 2019).

The main museum in the area is Alta Museum, which focuses on preserving and conveying the extensive World Heritage rock art sites found there. However, their exhibitions also include a section on Sámi pre-Christian religion, featuring photos of the sacred mountain Háldi and a small offering stone situated on the island Årøya in the Alta fjord as examples of the Sámi sacred and mythical sites in the landscape. There seems to be a general interest in this aspect of local history among foreign tourists or local groups visiting the museum alike (Søborg 2020). This is the reason why the first publication from the museum in 1994 was a pamphlet on pre-Christian Sámi beliefs (Hætta 1994). Some years ago, the museum website included a recommendation to go for a walk to Seideodden, the location of Áhkku (Olsen 2020). However, in the 30 years that our informant has been guiding people at Alta Museum, there have never been questions about how to get to visit a nearby Sámi offering stone (Søborg 2020).

Thus, the local tourist information centre and main museum do not actively guide visitors in the direction of the Sámi offering sites today. They do sell copies of the book *Altaturer* ("Alta hikes"), which was First published 2012 and contains descriptions of 88 hiking routes in the area, including hikes to Áhkku and Fállegeađgi. This is written in Norwegian and primarily aimed at the local audience. We will return to the book and its effect on the visiting rate below.

Quantifying touristic interest is somewhat difficult because many tourists in Finnmark never contact a tourist information office but find their own way to the interesting sites they want to see (Olsen 2017b). For instance, every year, more than 3000 people visit the northernmost point on the European mainland, Knivskjellodden on Magerøya, and, to our knowledge, there are no organised trips there (Olsen 2020).

Part of the reason is that tourists today get much of their information online. Consequently, we performed Google searches for "Seidekjerringa" and "Áhkku" in combination with relevant search terms[1] and equivalent searches for "Fállegeađgi" or "Falkesteinen" to map the available information. The result shows that the official online visitor guide for the area, visitalta.no, does not mention Áhkku and Fállegeađgi. It does promote the distinct mountain Háldde as a sight worth seeing, but focuses on the late 19th-century northern light observatory built on it and how this serves as a suitable hiking destination, rather than on the fact that this is also a Sámi sacred mountain. This is of course an object of interest concerning how Sámi cultural heritage in the area is conveyed to tourists, and one informant for this study specifically pointed out that it would be preferable if people visiting this site were made aware of the significance of the mountain to Sámi tradition too (Sara 2019). The site is not further included in the discussion here, as it does not have the same focal depositary points as Áhkku and Fállegeađgi.

However, the sites in question here are promoted in both Norwegian and English by the privately run website travel-finnmark.no, which posts information about sights and travel routes in the county under different topical labels, including "Mythical places". In both cases, the locations of the sites are marked on a digital map. The information about Áhkku, published in 2015, also includes a description of how to get there, and a brief note on old Sámi religion and offering tradition, as well as the meaning of the place name. The information about Fállegeađgi, published on the website in 2016, focuses on

[1] Search terms used in combination with the site names: Alta, visit, tourist, information.

stories about the misfortune of those who failed to make offerings or took things from the offering site (referring to Sveen 2003). There is no description of the hike necessary to get there.

The hike to Fállegeađgi is described in English on the website geocaching.com, as a geocache was placed at the site in 2016, containing a logbook, pencil, and some trading items. The website gives a brief description of the meaning of offerings in Sámi tradition. It also notes the presence of animal remains and other objects testifying to the continued offerings at this site, illustrated with photos: "Once you get here, you'll see that people are bringing gifts to the Falcon rock in our times as well." Similarly, a geocache placed at Áhkku, called "Seidekjerringa", in 2018, is described in the website through a short text about the Sámi animistic worldview and mentions that the *sieidi* is still receiving offerings.

This testifies to a certain availability for non-local visitors, but the physical remains at the sites and the interviews indicate that non-local tourists account for a very limited number of the visitors to these particular sites. This may be partly because they are not promoted by the local tourist guides, but also because most tourists look for activities that do not last too long or demand too much effort. This is not necessarily the case everywhere; studies of coins recently left at known Sámi offering sites rather suggest that people from a variety of countries visit and interact with some such sites (Äikäs and Salmi 2013; Äikäs 2015). This difference emphasises the individuality of sites within this category, where use depends on the local cultural context, centrality, accessibility, topography and the reception history of the place (Mathisen 2010; Spangen 2013, 2016; Äikäs and Spangen 2016).

6.2. Local Visitors

As noted above, the information available about the sites seems to circulate mainly in the local community, and to a lesser extent in a wider circle of potential visitors. The majority of online references to these sites, on for instance blogs or social media, are made by local visitors who take photos and record their hikes as adventures or workouts.

The term "local visitors" may seem a convenient category of investigation, but it should be kept in mind that the local communities nearby the offering sites are highly diverse. Alta is the largest town in Finnmark, with 20,446 inhabitants in 2017. These inhabitants identify as Norwegian, Sámi, Kvaens and/or other ethnic or national groups including groups of immigrants. Furthermore, the term "Finnmarking", i.e., "a person from Finnmark", is quite usual and can include attachment to several cultural traditions, not giving any of them preference (Olsen 2020). Making the matter more complex, the Sámi in Alta may further identify as coastal Sámi, mountain or reindeer-herding Sámi. These groups have varied histories, traditional subsistence strategies, cultural expressions, dialects and indeed different experiences with the Norwegian assimilation policies from the 19th century onwards (e.g., Minde 2003).

Thus, a variety of local groups may interact with the Sámi offering sites in question. Our interviews suggest that these may be divided into three main groups, partly based on ethnic identity but also on certain interests and activities: schools, Sámi groups and individual hikers. All three categories include people of different sexes, ages and/or ethnic backgrounds, resulting in varied knowledge about and use of the sites, within as well as between the groups. Consequently, they may all have several and multi-layered motives for depositing objects at the sites.

6.3. Use of the Sites by Schools

The use of Sámi offering sites as excursion destinations for schools is known from other northern Norwegian contexts. The main aim is usually to convey Sámi culture and ethnic religion to the schoolchildren, while also exploring the geography, botany and geology of these areas. For some offering sites, this is done in a systematic form with regular visits (Antonsen and Brustrøm 2002; Spangen 2016, p. 220). Pupils from the Alta Secondary School (Alta ungdomsskole) regularly visit Fállegeađgi as an autumn outing, mostly as a hiking destination. The school has several classes at each stage. One class has Sámi as the main learning language and includes at least some pupils for

whom Sámi is their mother tongue. These classes usually start the school year in the autumn by going on an excursion to a site within cycling distance. Áhkku was recently included as one such destination. Few of the students know about the offering site beforehand, even if they know about other offering sites nearby, including Fállegeađgi. The interviewed teacher, who is from Alta, also said he had not learned about the site before joining the teacher's college in 2007–2008. On a visit to Áhkku during August 2019, this teacher spoke to the students about how it is a sacred site for some people, how offerings were made for several reasons, such as fishing and hunting luck, or a prosperous and happy life, and how today it could be compared to the offerings made at wishing wells. Pupils were encouraged to make offerings, which at least some did. The place was treated with respect; for instance, nothing was moved or taken away from it. During the visit, another group arrived carrying fishing and hiking gear, presumably an upper secondary school class specialising in nature studies and outdoor activities (Olsen 2019b).

The nearby primary school, Komsa skole, also uses Áhkku as an excursion destination and to convey knowledge about Sámi history and culture to students. Like the secondary school, some of the classes have Sámi as the main teaching language. Every three years, all these pupils visit Áhkku, so they have all been there at least once when moving on to the secondary school. Few pupils seem to know the site beforehand, and the teacher interviewed, who is originally from the neighbouring municipality of Karasjok but has lived in Alta for a long time, had not heard about it until quite recently (Nordby 2019).

On the latest visit, the teacher told pupils about Sámi beliefs and traditions, as well as aspects of natural science, such as how different elements make rock formations. The children did leave things according to the traditions they had heard about, but this had not been prepared, so they placed whatever they had at hand by or on the rock, including pretty pebbles, bead strings, coins, twigs and heather tied together into a small bouquet (Nordby 2019). Thus, schools use the sites both for hiking and exploring nature and for conveying knowledge about Sámi history and religion. The latter may include depositing things.

6.4. Sámi Use of the Sites

For understandable reasons, considering the historical persecution and oppression of the Sámi religion, there has been a general reluctance among Sámi people to admit to any sort of continuous offering tradition. It is more often acknowledged that people leave coins or felled reindeer antlers at the sites in respect of their ancestors and beliefs. The parts of slaughtered reindeer at Fállegeađgi may be an example of this, as it is unlikely that other visitors would be able to obtain these to deposit at the site. However, who placed the animal parts here has yet to be confirmed.

The reindeer-herding Sámi interviewed for this study said he had no knowledge of any Sámi use of Fállegeađgi, so that if Sámi people left reindeer meat there, this must have been done in secret. He noted, however, that his family uses the area around Fállegeađgi in spring and autumn, when the ground is snow-covered, which also hides a good part of the depositions at the site (Eira 2019). There are other reindeer herders using the area at other times of the year, whom unfortunately we were unable to reach for an interview.

The tradition of collecting felled reindeer antlers and placing them around known offering stones is particularly common in reindeer-herding contexts. The coastal Sámi in Norway based their subsistence on fishing and husbandry farming, and offering sites along the coast are often related to fisheries, though reindeer, sheep and farming products such as cheese and butter have been offered here too (Qvigstad 1926, pp. 320, 324, 340). Another discrepancy between the mountain and coastal Sámi groups is the form and severance of the assimilation measures they suffered while this was Norwegian official government policy. The more sedentary coastal Sámi were generally in closer contact with Norwegians, and many communities suffered a near or full annihilation of Sámi language and culture (Bjørklund 1985; Minde 2003). This is not to say that the mountain Sámi did not suffer from these "Norwegianisation" efforts, but rather that the measures and effects of these varied, as did the more or

less subversive Sámi responses. To some extent, these historical differences are reflected in different attitudes among these Sámi groups to questions about the exposure and use of Sámi cultural heritage sites today.

In Alta, the local coastal Sámi association *Gula* have organised excursions to Áhkku for both children and grown-ups, partly together with the Alta Sámi language centre, to highlight the coastal Sámi culture of the area. At least some participants knew about the site in advance but apparently not all of them. This could, however, have to do with Alta being a dispersed community where people living in the western part of the town area have not necessarily been familiar with the eastern area where Áhkku is situated, regardless of their ethnic identification (Olsen 2020). As explained by the second leader of *Gula,* the visitors have left things as a symbolic act to reflect on the use of the site, but she would encourage those who visit to leave perishable objects rather than plastic items or coins (Sara 2019). Thus, the Sámi interaction with the sites includes both *not* interacting with them directly and interacting with them as an educational and memorial pursuit, partly through leaving objects.

6.5. The Use of the Sites as Hiking Destinations

Going hiking has been a very strong tradition in Norway since the introduction of mountain climbing and hiking as a leisure activity for tourists in the 19th century, if not as widespread a tradition as the national self-image might claim. Over the last decade, it has become increasingly popular to do shorter walks from home to local mountain tops or other goals in the afternoon or at weekends, often as part of a "ten peaks" challenge or in order to ensure more everyday exercise and better health, which is also actively encouraged by the authorities. While hiking was usual even before this, the increased focus on walking or trekking as being important to public health has led to more frequent local outings and use of local destinations.

The Sámi offering sites of Áhkku and Fállegeađgi have obviously been known by at least some locals since they initially came into use. The depositions observed during a visit to Áhkku in 2000, of coins, rocks and a letter, reflect a certain local knowledge. The recent local deposition practice was also mentioned in the signpost put up by Alta municipality a few years later (Olsen 2017a, p. 121). The signposting was related to a project about the Komsa mountain area run by Finnmark County (2004). In another effort to improve the knowledge about and accessibility of the site, the path was also marked in blue paint and with wood markers hung from trees with the municipality coat of arms, of which there were still remains in 2012 (Ottem 2020). The present authors did not see these signs in 2017.

Despite these efforts, the most significant change in people's knowledge about and behaviour at these sites seems to be related to the publication of the aforementioned book *Altaturer* in 2012 (Ottem 2012). By 2019, the book *Altaturer* had sold 4800 copies (www.altaturer.no), an extraordinary number for a local tour guide in an area with approximately 20,000 inhabitants. Here, the hike to Áhkku is described as a favourite trip, where a short walk brings you to a point in Alta where you are surrounded only by sea and mountains. The book describes the features, role and use of *sieidi* stones in Sámi pre-Christian religion, in line with the author's intention of giving an accurate and respectful description of these traditions (Ottem 2020). It also describes how you can find candles, coins and other offerings at the rock today, and suggests that visitors find some nice natural object along the shore to give to Áhkku—"grandma" (Ottem 2012, p. 85).

As our observations have not been as consistent for Fállegeađgi, an increase in visitors cannot be pinpointed in the same way. However, the description of the site in *Altaturer* notes that there were already many objects at the site when it was visited by the author in 2012. The book specifically mentions a torch, a backpack, lots of coins, fishhooks, several bottles of alcohol and the entire skeleton of a reindeer. The author does not encourage leaving things here but advises that taking something from an offering site is bad luck. The author's photos still appear to show fewer objects in 2012 than during our visit in 2017 (Ottem 2012, (Ottem 2012, p. 117)).

It should be mentioned that the sites are also depicted and described along with other Sámi offering sites in Finnmark in photographer Arvid Sveen's book *Mytisk landskap* ("Mythical landscapes") from 2003, although without explicit descriptions on hiking routes. This apparently did not result in a similar increase in visitors.

The observed increase in objects left by Áhkku in 2013 (Olsen 2019a) is likely to reflect the popularity of and specific hiking encouragement in the book *Altaturer*. Even before the book was published, some "sample trips" to other sites presented in the local newpaper *Altaposten* reportedly resulted in a lot more visitors (Ottem 2020). Conceivably, the book made the offering sites better known to a broader audience, with Áhkku as the easiest available close to Alta. As the category includes a wide variety of people from different backgrounds, their behaviour at the sites cannot be assumed to be heterogeneous, and motives for any depositions would be diverse. For instance, the category "hikers" includes grown-ups and children alike; in 2016, the local branch of the Norwegian Trekking Association (DNT) organised a trip specifically for children to Áhkku, where one activity was to pick branches, pine cones and other nice objects to make offerings by the stone for some good wish, like a warm summer (Alta DNT 2016).

6.6. Contemporary Deposits: Offerings or Mimicked Practices

The intentionality of leaving objects at the *sieidi* seems to vary between and within the groups of findings at Áhkku mentioned above. While many of the toys and 'pocket holdings' are objects that people can carry with them on a daily basis and leave on impulse, parting with jewellery or clothing —even if they are not valuable—might demand more reflection. Natural objects found at the *sieidi* included not only things that a person could have picked up at the site or on the way there, but also things that were brought from somewhere else, for example, an amethyst and certain flowers. In previous research on the *sieiddit* of Taatsi and Kirkkopahta in Finland, the use of natural objects has been ascribed to contemporary Pagan[2] practices (Äikäs 2015; Äikäs and Ahola in press). There are similar examples from Britain, Southern Finland and Estonia, and interviews give evidence of the preference of decomposing objects as contemporary Pagan offerings (Wallis 2003; Blain and Wallis 2007; Jonuks and Äikäs 2019). However, this preference is also shared by local Sámi in Alta (Sara 2019). In the conducted interviews, there is no reference to contemporary Pagan practices at the Alta sites. This does not of course strictly rule out the possibility of contemporary Pagan visits, but it makes it somewhat unlikely. It is therefore interesting to note that contemporary Pagan practices and other people's ideas of appropriate offerings are similar and not easily distinguished in the material.

On the other hand, the handiness of small stones and their placement next to each other might indicate a practice where a later visitor has mimicked the behaviour of previous visitors (Figure 6). Archaeologist Ceri Houlbrook (2018) has witnessed this kind of imitating practice when studying the use of coin trees in Britain and Ireland. The wish that others may imitate one's behaviour might, on the other hand, also be a reason for contemporary Pagan offerings (Wallis 2003; Blain and Wallis 2007). The handiness of natural objects makes them available for different groups visiting the site. One of the interviewees mentioned that a flower bouquet was offered by a schoolchild (Nordby 5 September 2019).

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[2] We recognise that the use of the term "Pagan" can be problematic since it has carried negative connotations referring to someone despicable who did not practise the main religion. The term has nevertheless been established in research literature and is also used as emic category by some contemporary Pagans (see e.g., Sjöblom 2000). In this study, the concept "Pagan" is therefore understood merely as an academic notion without any qualitative implications.

Figure 6. Small rocks placed on the Áhkku *sieidi* rock formation. (Photo: T. Äikäs).

A more intentional use of specific objects might be the finds that seem to address amorous wishes, most clearly a single rose placed under a heart-shaped stone (Figure 7). Hearts are also present in the form of a reflector and a small decorative item.

Figure 7. A heart-shaped rock holding down a rose deposited on the Áhkku *sieidi* rock formation. (Photo: T. Äikäs).

Most of the finds lay on the ground by the Áhkku *sieidi* stone in 2017 (Figure 8). They may have fallen down from their original place or have been dropped there by the person who left them there. The coins that have been pushed into the cracks of the stones indicate a more deliberate positioning of the objects. This shows how the intentionality of the offering can be manifested in either the selection of

a specific object or in the placing of even a mundane object, although it is also dictated by the material of the stone and where different things can be placed. Over the years, it has also been observed that "things move around". Things that are found on the ground in the spring may have been on a shelf the previous autumn and brought back again onto a different shelf the following autumn. Hence, many of the objects are being continuously repositioned on the rock. In some cases, the different items seem to have been deliberately ordered (Olsen 2020). This is quite interesting, as it shows how people do not necessarily leave new things when they visit but find ways of interacting with the site through objects that are already there.

Figure 8. Old signs once marking the path to the site and other objects at the foot of the Áhkku *sieidi* rock formation. (Photo: T. Äikäs).

In some cases, this reuse and interaction with the *sieidi* may appear close to vandalism. This could be said of the trail signs that have been taken from the track to the *sieidi* Áhkku and left at the stone, as well as of the mark painted on the *sieidi* in white (Figure 9). At first glance, the latter may be associated with graffiti or tagging, but the significance is not that easy to understand. The white paint is most likely a repainting of an older mark, and there used to be two such white marks on the rock (Olsen 2020).

At Fállegeađgi, the finds are more homogenous than at Áhkku and seem mostly to indicate the visits of locals and hikers. Reindeer bones and antler seem like unlikely deposits to be carried along on a hiking trip, whereas food-related items, clothing and hiking equipment could have been left by someone briefly visiting the site with or without a premediated plan to offer something. The fishing-related items could belong to either of these groups, even though it is noteworthy that the closest fishing waters are some 2 km from the *sieidi* as the crow flies. In summertime, the people in the Fállegeađgi area usually have a purpose, such as fishing, hunting or reindeer herding, and visiting the stone is actually a time-consuming detour for the two first groups. Thus, such finds indicate that people do visit the site specifically to interact with the *sieidi*. Mountain bikers also use the area, but they usually stay on the tracks. Wintertime visits are different, as these are made on snow by cross-country skiers who can make the detour more easily (Olsen 2020).

Figure 9. White spray paint on the Áhkku *sieidi* rock formation. (Photo: T. Äikäs).

7. Effects of the Different Uses

It seems clear that the sites discussed here hold limited interest for tourists and non-local visitors, and the extent to which these affect the sites is minimal. The schools use the sites with the intention of informing local schoolchildren, both Sámi and non-Sámi, about the traditional culture and history of their home area. After a long period of suppression of Sámi culture in the Alta area, this is a significant change that has occurred since the Sámi political and cultural revival in Norway in the 1970s and 1980s (Minde 2003). The primary school now visits Áhkku regularly, but since many pupils in the secondary school did not know the site before a visit in 2019, this is apparently a fairly recent development. The teachers we spoke to had taken trips to these sites largely on their own initiative and based their presentation and activities on their own former knowledge of these specific sites and Sámi culture, history and religion in general. The act of depositing objects was sometimes encouraged but not planned in advance, resulting in somewhat random objects being placed, especially at Áhkku.

Sámi groups have used the sites in much the same fashion, promoting an internal and external awareness of the ancient Sámi presence in Alta and, in the case of Áhkku, emphasising the presence of a coastal Sámi culture in addition to that of the mountain reindeer-herding Sámi. The Gula visits have resulted in some depositions at the site, but it is encouraged to leave only perishable objects. Contrary to this, the reindeer-herding Sámi interviewed expressed strong feelings about any recent use of the sites (see below) and said he had no knowledge of any Sámi use of Fállegeađgi (pers. comm. Eira 2019).

Hikers and skiers are the most likely origins of the large increase in objects left at these sites over the last decade, presumably with the exception of animal remains. The variation in objects deposited is probably based on different understandings of the significance of the sites, not least because our current knowledge of Sámi rituals on offering sites is limited. On the one hand, some want to adhere to some opaque old Sámi offering tradition based on historical and ethnographic sources that may be unrelated to the time and place in question. On the other hand, some have just been told that when you go there you should leave something, as stated by one visitor whom we met on our way to Áhkku in 2017. In fact, the objects themselves may be what tell them this. As described above, how people

interact in terms of deposition is also affected by what is already at the sites, making the accumulation self-reinforcing (Wallis 2003; Blain and Wallis 2007; Houlbrook 2018). Deposits attract more deposits, and especially similar deposits to those that have been made before.

Concerning what is deposited, the two sites are somewhat different. As one of the schoolteachers commented, people seem to leave things by Áhkku as a symbolic act, while there is more "rubbish" by Fállegeađgi (T. A. Olsen 5 September 2019). This tallies with our own observations, as there is a larger amount of food wrappers, toilet paper and objects that might be classed as "litter" at this site. This obviously has to do with topography and use—Áhkku is situated such that it is less inviting to camp right next to the rock, while Fállegeađgi is a skiing destination that provides shelter in open terrain. The use of the site as a shelter was demonstrated by the remains of a campfire close by the *sieidi* stone. People may well also leave or lose things in the snow that reappear as rubbish around this site in summertime. On the other hand, the distinction between ritual objects or offerings and litter can be fluid, and what appears as rubbish to one person might have ritual value to another (Finn 1997; Houlbrook 2015; Hukantaival in press).

8. Attitudes to the Current Use of the Offering Sites

It is clear that many of those actively relating to the sites today do this with the best intentions of promoting understanding of Sámi culture and past religion, and how this is an integral part of the history of Alta. Leaving objects is seen as a way to reflect on and respect its meaning (Sara 2019; Nordby 2019; Olsen 2019b; Ottem 2012, p. 85). Áhkku is seen as an important testament to the presence of coastal Sámi culture in Alta, and the representative for *Gula* who was interviewed expressed a wish for more information for visitors both here and on the sacred mountain Háldde (Sara 2019).

The litter-like deposits at Fállegeađgi may to some extent explain the more negative attitude to the current use from a mountain Sámi perspective. Our Sámi reindeer-herding interviewee mentioned an increase in objects in recent years and was not happy about more and more people being aware of the site and using it as a hiking and skiing destination. He considered most depositions as litter, including recent coins, which might be seen to mimic an older Sámi tradition. While he agreed that providing more information through signage might be a good idea to protect the sites, he considered limiting knowledge of them as more appropriate in order to avoid what he sees as misuse, which includes the heightened wear on the adjacent terrain. He strongly opposed our initial idea of an online questionnaire to gather information about the use of the sites, as this would only result in more widespread knowledge about and (mis-)use of the sites, comparing the latter to the desecration of churches (Eira 2019).

The situation at Fállegeađgi and the wish for restrictions has to be seen in a wider context. The area is used as grazing land for reindeer, and in northern Norway in general there have been continuous discussions and conflicts surrounding this use of various landscapes and other sites of interest, such as mining, the exploitation of wind energy and hydroelectricity and also recreational use (e.g., Olsen 2011).

9. Discussion

The sites discussed in this article are undoubtedly old Sámi offering sites that have been in more or less continuous use for centuries. A more recent deposition practice has been observed at both sites over a long period of time, but there seems to have been a distinct increase in objects since 2013 (Olsen 2017a, p. 122). This is likely a result of the publishing of the book *Altaturer* (Ottem 2012). Such private initiatives to disseminate knowledge of Sámi offering sites are not necessarily all negative, but more awareness of the opinions of key stakeholders and the problematic aspects of increased visits to such sites may be needed. Natural heritage sites are usually available to everyone in Norway based on legislation on public right of access to all countryside areas. It is perhaps not immediately evident that sacred Sámi sites, which are usually natural rock formations, mountains, etc., are both of great symbolic value and in fact automatically protected by law and should be treated with more care than

other natural landmarks. Furthermore, there is little to coherently inform individuals who wish to behave respectfully about what this would entail. Paradoxically, the exposure of Fállegeađgi and Áhkku may serve precisely to increase this understanding if information about the traditions related to them is made easily available at the sites.

The interviews and most of the objects left at the sites suggest that visitors to the sites are local people in different capacities and of different ages, occupations and ethnic backgrounds. Defining who are key stakeholders in these contexts is nevertheless not a straightforward issue because of the heterogeneity of the population in Alta, where there have been frequent changes in ethnic identification and there are also several different Sámi communities (Berg-Nordlie 2018). This results in a variety of ways of interacting with the sites. Some will have some knowledge about their being old offering sites, while others have rather vague ideas about the past and present meaning and use of them, so they behave accordingly, leaving substantial amounts of random deposits. This is upsetting for some Sámi stakeholders who would prefer to keep such sites secret, protected from wear, or at least clear of random deposits (Eira 2019). These views are, as mentioned, related to a broader debate about landscape use, but such opinions obviously need to be taken into consideration in any future dissemination or facilitation of access to the sites.

It is difficult to *undo* public knowledge about these sites as accessible hiking and skiing destinations. The popularity of hiking in general and the book *Altaturer* in particular predicts that the sites will be visited by an increasing number of people in the years to come. It would seem that more information about the meaning of and how to relate to the sites in a way that is not offensive to stakeholders is, at this point in time, the most viable way forward. The hope of the interviewees was that signposting would install a higher degree of awareness in visitors that these sites are to be treated with respect, and would provide more understanding of what it means to leave something there and perhaps make visitors consider more carefully if they should leave something and, if so, what, even if this for some of the interviewees would at best just be a way to slightly alter an already unacceptable situation (Sara 2019; Eira 2019). Having said that, views vary between Sámi stakeholders, as the Sámi in Alta were more positive to the exposure of Áhkku, because this would promote Coastal Sámi heritage as a more visible and integral part of the Alta cultural history than it used to be.

Signs with instructions on how to behave have been used with relative success at far more famous and widely visited indigenous sacred sites elsewhere in the world, such as Uluru in Australia. In studies in Finland, it has been noted that local Sámi both expressed their wish to conceal the location of the sacred places in order to protect them and to provide more information so that raised awareness would help protect the sites (Äikäs 2013). In Inari, Finland, visitors disembarking on a Sámi sacred island Ukonsaari (Äijihsuálui) have been stimulating discussion since the early 2000s because walking on the sacred island could be seen as disrespectful, just like the platforms and stairs built there in order to protect the fragile environment of the island. In 2019, a local tourist operator decided to discontinue allowing disembarkation during the cruises it offered, in response to newspaper articles written by a local Sámi and archaeologist (Torikka 2019). This has not, however, prevented individuals from landing on the island by themselves. In any case, these kinds of restrictions could not be used at the sites in question here due to their location and accessibility on the mainland.

Having established that the recent users of these offering sites are mainly the local population in Alta and not tourists, this gives other opportunities for integrated approaches to the dissemination and protection of the sites. One important aspect, which is also seen at other (perceived) offering sites, is active use by schools and kindergartens to convey knowledge about Sámi culture, history and religion to new generations of locals (Äikäs and Spangen 2016; Spangen 2016). This would be in accordance with the attitude of the coastal Sámi representative in Alta, although there is a need for guidelines concerning behaviour and the practical and material consequences of such visits. The visits are currently made on the initiative of individual schools and teachers or other organisations for children's activities, and knowledge about old Sámi offering rituals and sacred sites varies. Some teachers have encouraged the children to leave objects, and also do so themselves, while others

emphasise that what they leave should be perishable, or do not focus on the children engaging directly in this practice at all. As depositions are self-reinforcing, this leaving of non-perishable or random objects without thoroughly contextualising the practice can be problematic. The offerings left by non-Sámi could also be seen as problematic within the framework of the cultural appropriation of religion: the borrowing of cultural elements from indigenous people without proper knowledge of their meaning. Even though cultural appropriation has been widely discussed in Sámi contexts in recent years, there has been no reference to contemporary offerings (e.g., Humalajoki 2017; Äikäs and Salmi 2019).

Hence, better information for visitors in terms of proper and, importantly, good-quality signposting to emphasise the importance of the information (Søborg 2020) may be a way of remedying a use that is offensive to some stakeholders. At the same time, the aim of these visits, the learning experience of the schoolchildren, is enhanced. If such signposting is to be realised, it would be important for both academic experts on ethnic Sámi religion and the local Sámi communities in Alta to be involved in discussing and ratifying what information should be given before a sign is put up. Notably, the information about appropriate respectful behaviour may differ between the two sites, because each Sámi offering site has its unique cultural historical background and biography (Mathisen 2010; Äikäs and Spangen 2016).

Teachers and pupils would benefit even more from a full school programme, preferably developed in cooperation with local Sámi organisations, that would prepare them for a visit in advance. This could include, for instance, a comprehensive visitor's kit with thorough key information, activities teachers and classes can do in preparation, discussion points and, of course, guidelines for appropriate behaviour at the sites. This would achieve both increased understanding of Sámi cultural history and of the issues involved in using these sites for such excursions, even including current issues of littering in general. In time, schoolchildren would likely influence their parents who constitute the hikers and other visitors. This may help to create a knowledgeable population of responsible users of local Sámi cultural heritage.

10. Conclusions

Observations were made at two Sámi offering sites in Alta, Áhkku by the coast and Fállegeađgi inland, over several years, noting a living tradition for leaving a large variety of objects at these sites. The publication of a hiking guide including these two sites in 2012 has increased the number of visitors and depositions substantially, especially at Áhkku. It also seems that this has resulted in more litter-like depositions at Fállegeađgi. Through analyses of the object composition and interviews, we have established that the visitors are mainly local hikers and schoolchildren, not tourists and contemporary Pagans as in the case of Sámi offering sites elsewhere. The fact that, since 2012, the sites have become well known and used as hiking destinations for a variety of local groups presents some challenges in how to protect and convey them in the future. While some Sámi stakeholders are positive to and actively encourage the dissemination of especially Coastal Sámi culture through visits and interaction with such sites, other Sámi stakeholders are strongly opposed to the increase in visitors and/or random depositions, defining this as littering or even desecration. Despite a will among many visitors, including the author of the popular hiking guide, to behave in a respectful way, there is little coherent information about what this would entail. As the sites in question are by now very well known in the local community, the best way to mediate potential conflicts appears to be proper signposting with thorough information and guidelines for behaviour developed in cooperation with stakeholders. A further measure could be the development of a school programme to ensure and increase understanding and responsible use of Sámi cultural heritage in Alta.

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Article

Souvenirs and the Commodification of Sámi Spirituality in Tourism

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Abstract: Tangible, material objects sold in tourism contexts are often seen as problematic examples of commercialization, especially when they are marketed as examples of intangible Indigenous cultural heritages, representing Indigenous religion or spirituality. Taking the in situ presentations of examples of Sámi souvenirs connected to religious contexts in souvenir shops as a point of departure, this analysis investigates the complex relations these elements enter, with reference to religion, to the past, to the arts or crafts field, and to questions of ownership. The main theoretical focus is on how these souvenirs are adjusted to general, Western tourism imaginaries. One of the examples of such souvenirs are replicas in different sizes and qualities of the Sámi noaidi's drum, while other examples discuss the use of the symbols on the drum applied to souvenir products, such as jewelry or other design products. Points of departure are the material souvenirs themselves, contextualized with in situ presentations in shops, on the net, and in social media, and linked to tourism imaginaries. The article tries to show how this in turn is related to still prevailing, general Western understandings of Indigenous Sámi religion and spiritualty.

Keywords: tourist souvenirs; Sámi "shaman" drums; Indigenous spirituality

1. Introduction

Visiting any significant tourist destination will convince the accidental visitor, as well as the experienced and dedicated tourist, that souvenirs remain an important part of the tourism industry. Souvenir shops are always at the center of the tourism businesses, or very strategically located at tourist sites, and it is obvious that they form an important part of the tourism economy. This impression was strengthened when I, in the late spring of 2019, together with tourism studies colleagues, travelled through the northernmost areas of Finland and Norway, with the intention to visit souvenir shops when their products offered for sale were at their most complete, just before the hectic summer tourism season started. The trip took us to some of the most popular tourist destinations in this greater transnational area also referred to as Sápmi, such as Roavvenjárga/Rovaniemi, Anár/Inari, and Ohcejohka/Utsjoki in Finnish Lapland, and Guovdageidnu/Kautokeino, Kárášjohka/Karasjok, and Deatnu/Tana[1] in Norwegian Finnmark. Going by car, this of course also brought our group to many of the smaller (and certainly also bigger!) souvenir shops that suddenly would pop up along the road in these northern areas. Even if we travelled in remote areas, we were obviously on a beaten tourist track. Our primary aim was to study how ethnic and national minorities, and especially the Indigenous Sámi populations, were presented in the assortment and retail of souvenirs and handicraft in Sápmi.

The methodological approach of this paper is informed by cultural studies in anthropology, folklore, and tourism studies. The field method for documentation was at this first stage purely observational,

[1] Place names are written in North Sámi/Finnish or Norwegian.

looking at souvenir products with reference to Sámi culture in souvenir shops, and to some degree, this also involved a contextualization of the retail venues in relation to the larger attractions, businesses, theme parks, or museums that they were a part of. Documentation was also based on photography and film. In cases where photographing was explicitly forbidden, additional support for context was at a later stage found on companies' and shops' homepages on the net. An in situ understanding of what the tourist would encounter when they visited these shops was the initial and primary objective. In the analysis phase, however, further historical contextualization was needed and was sought in text and literature studies where relevant. The focus on tourism imaginaries demands knowledge of the history of Sámi religion, as well as knowledge of ethnic relations in the area. My present study focuses on the use of specific Sámi religious and spiritual symbols in these tourism souvenirs.

The selection of souvenirs in an area often primarily covers what is associated with the specific tourist destination in question and their main attraction(s), but often souvenirs also cover all kinds of elements connected to a broader geographical area, or any cultural elements connected to that context. For Sápmi, it is a given that the Indigenous Sámi culture is a main attraction in the area, and in that sense, it is also this culture that offers raw material for a very wide range of the souvenirs offered for sale, although the imagery of Sámi culture in tourism often is a very stereotypical version. Kjell Olsen has aptly called this version the "emblematic Sámi" (Olsen 2004). What is complicating the understanding here is, however, that souvenirs are not only mementos of tourists' travels. Many of the souvenirs offered for sale create meaningful links to other phenomena, such as history, identity, and religion—and generally, these meaningful links are connected to the past (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Graburn 1984). This means that the sale of souvenirs to tourists in different ways interferes with peoples' cultures, heritages, and identities. Where Indigenous people are the producers of souvenirs, they are motivated by an urge to demonstrate their existence and uniqueness and resist oblivion (Graburn 1976, p. 26). Or, they are left with the options of "distinction" or "extinction" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, p. 10). For both producers and consumers, "heritage production" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998) and claims of "authenticity" (MacCannell 1976) become important standards. They are, however, easily transformed and transported by market interests, and many of the souvenirs are also produced outside the Indigenous communities.

While major touristic attractions in this area would typically cover nature and natural phenomena such as the Midnight Sun (in the light summer season) and the Northern Lights (in the dark winter season), other or additional attractions would be mythical beings supposed to inhabit the area (Santa Claus and his reindeer, in Santa Claus Theme Park in Roavvenjárga/Rovaniemi), and not least the Indigenous population, the Sámi (with their reindeer and their spiritual traditions, to be found everywhere in the area, but "condensed" in Sápmi Park, Kárášjohka/Karasjok). However, great local handicraft traditions related to Sámi heritage are also attractions (for example, Juhls' Silversmith in Guovdageidnu/Kautokeino, and Tana Gull og Sølvsmie AS (n.d.) in Deatnu/Tana). Many of these businesses rely heavily on tourism in the area to survive, while some of the handicraft businesses also serve an important local market for jewelry meant for folk costumes.

However, the economic benefits of the trade in souvenirs are not the subject of the present discussion. Not because it is insignificant, but because the souvenir business raises other very interesting questions, related to their meaning-bearing capacities. Swanson and Timothy (2012) state that " … from a marketing perspective, it is important to commoditize the intangible meanings of souvenirs, and turn them into a tangible, consumable product for sale by destination merchants" (p. 493). It is therefore a central concern in this paper to have a closer look at souvenirs that have an explicit or more implicit linkage to Sámi Indigenous spirituality and religion.

Various discourses have lately emerged related to Sámi spirituality, Indigenous heritage, and ownership, and souvenirs and cultural appropriation. Just some of these questions are investigated here, but the cases show some of the complexities hidden in objects. The cases can tell us something about ethnic identifications, questions of ownership, and questions of how ethnic cultural elements should be represented, and by whom. The contexts where souvenirs are sold and bought might

at first glance look very similar, stereotypical, and standardized, leaving an impression of homogeneity. A closer investigation of these contexts shows that this first impression might be superficial, and that production, exhibition strategies, and identity relations are much more complicated and heterogeneous. It is exactly in these kinds of commercialized touristic contexts where a heterogeneous group of tourists, representing diverse values, buy the souvenir products. They buy the things they find appealing, pretty, or exotic, irrespective of the producers' intentions (that could also be multifaceted).

2. Souvenirs as Mementos of Imaginaries and Past Spiritualties

In his seminal and groundbreaking book on the tourist from 1976, Dean MacCannell in more than one sense set the stage for much of future tourism research in the social sciences and humanities. He set out to do an ethnography of the modern tourist, to " ... try to understand the place of the tourist in the modern world ... " (MacCannell 1976, p. 2). The way MacCannell saw this at the time of his investigation, the tourists were: " ... sightseers, mainly middle-class, who are at this moment deployed throughout the entire world in search of experience." (ibid., p. 1). One might add that these tourist were at that time most probably also Western middle-class persons (Graburn and Barthel-Bouchier 2001, p. 149). These tourists were, according to MacCannell, persons who felt their life in present-day, modern society was fragmented, divided, and alienated, lacking the alleged more holistic and genuine experiences of past and pre-modern societies. In short, tourists were on the search for this kind of more "authentic experiences" when they visited other countries and other cultures. As MacCannell pointed to, this search was most often doomed to be futile, because the visiting tourists together with the commercialization following the tourism encounter called for an arranged staging, in itself turning the performed version of the past into a kind of "staged authenticity" (MacCannell 1976, p. 91ff). Visits to souvenir shops can sometimes work against the feeling of authenticity, just because the commercial arragements are so blatant (see Figure 1), however, it is also possible to find elements that bring associations of a more exotic reality.

Figure 1. 'Sámi magic drum' with dolls in Sámi dresses, and other souvenir items in countryside souvenir shop in Alatalo, Finland, June 2019. Photo by the author.

Later tourism research has tried to understand this search for cultural authenticity in connection with the existence of widespread imaginaries, narratives, and fantasies about people and their cultures that eventually impels a constant search for meaningful experiences. Authors state that these "seductive images and discourses about peoples and places are so predominant that without them there probably would be little tourism, if any at all" (Salazar and Graburn 2014, p. 1), and tourism imaginaries and

their promise to generate a large experience tourism industry have of course long been realized by marketing businesses. These imaginaries are, however, to be found nearly everywhere, in books, movies, media, and popular culture. However, they often end up in tourism marketing, demonstrating concrete examples of how dreams, fantasies, and imaginaries could be made real if you just order this trip or visit that place.

Another important element in these imaginaries is tied to cultures and traditions that are disappearing, from one point of view because they belong to the past, from another because they are threatened by external forces, which could be anything from colonialism to general modernizing processes, or even tourism itself, as MacCannell pointed out (MacCannell 1976, p. 91). This sort of nostalgia for the past creates spaces for heritage production in tourism (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, p. 153; Hafstein 2018, p. 85), or "staged authenticity" in MacCannell's terms (ibid.). When this is linked with the brute influence from outside forces, with colonialism and imperialism (which is most often the case with Indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities), Renato Rosaldo's concept of "imperialist nostalgia" describes this process perfectly: "people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed" (Rosaldo 1989, p. 108).

Some such disappearing elements of culture are of course also religious and spiritual activities and beliefs. When modern tourism caught the interest of cultural research and anthropology, one very soon saw examples of trying to see tourism in relation to religious activities. One very obvious connection was to compare the old religious pilgrimages to modern tourism (Turner and Turner 1978); another analytical angel was to understand tourism in relation to ritual theory as presented by van Gennep [1909] (1960), and later developed by Victor Turner (1969) and Edmund Leach (1976). This relation to modern tourism was most explicitly developed by Nelson Graburn when he in 1977 published his article, "Tourism: The Sacred Journey". Here, he proposes to observe similarities between religious rituals, such as the rite de passage, and tourism. In passage rites, individuals move between profane and sacred stages. Graburn claims it has a heuristic function to understand the touristic journey as something that in a similar vein transports the tourist from the stage of work and everyday life, to a stage of holiday and leisure (and eventually back again). Being a tourist represents an extraordinary status, in contrast to ordinary life and work (Graburn 1977, p. 24ff). This perspective also explains tourism's general interest in the exotic and in "the Other", something to be found in what tourism companies in their promotional material would call "exotic cultures".

In this context, Graburn considered the souvenir as the tangible evidence of this aspect of touristic experiences of having been at the outside of ordinary, everyday life. Talking about cultural tourists seeking experiences among ethnic groups, he writes: "The Ethnic tourist rarely has the opportunity to bring home the "whole Primitive" but is content with arts or crafts, particularly if they were made by the ethnic for his/her own (preferably sacred) use" (Graburn 1977, p. 33). Imaginaries connected to Indigenous peoples could of course represent a wide range of ideas and understandings, ranging from the most banal stereotypes to deep respect and knowledge of historical and cultural transformations that these peoples have experienced—and the same is true when it comes to souvenirs, covering the whole spectrum from genuine works of art by renowned Indigenous artists, to mass produced series of items with clichéd motives and references to a people and their culture (Graburn 1976, 1984). Usually, this also ranges from expensive to cheap products. The relationship between souvenirs and religion becomes even more complicated when religious symbols are associated with the inexpensive and serialized material versions of Indigenous spirituality.

Nonetheless, it is important to understand that there also are connections between the finer arts and the more commercial mass production for a souvenir market. Buying more expensive art and handicraft products brings with it a higher status for the consumer. These products are seen as more "authentic" than the cheaper ones. However, for tourists, one of the main issues with souvenirs might be that they bring proof of visiting societies, where a spirituality from the common human past is still "alive". In the words of Beverly Gordon: "Handicraft products associated with people supposedly living in 'another time', also marks the traveler as someone who has really visited something out of the

ordinary." (Gordon 1986, p. 143). Therefore, it is important not only to focus on prices when looking at souvenirs, because other values are located in intangible imaginaries and in tangible souvenirs. Placing material objects such as relatively inexpensive tourist souvenirs at the center of analysis could also give a better understanding of the other values at play when Indigenous souvenirs are exchanging ownership in these tourism contexts.

3. Imaginaries of the Past: The Sámi *Noaidi* and His *Govadas*

Even in the oldest travelogues from travelers to the north of Europe, there are references to the magic activities of the peoples inhabiting this area (for an overview, see Moyne 1981). The Sámi *Noaidi* (a North Sámi word for a religious specialist) and his *goavdiss* (a North Sámi word for the drum this specialist used in his rituals) has been an important part of this imaginary for centuries, and the drum has a central place on many frontispieces on travelogues from the North. The production of this vital magic instrument travelled a long and complicated road from magic experts, to museums and collectors, to artful copies for exhibitions and art galleries, and then to mass-produced drums in various sizes for the tourism market today (Mathisen 2015; Joy 2018). In the same way, the users of the drums transformed from old descriptions of weird and heathen "sorcerers" to contemporary New Age shamans, and performers in the tourism business (Fonneland 2012). They have moved from an outlawed instrument for "heathen" doings to an interesting and respectful crafts product in souvenir shops. However, the development from a dangerous Noaidi's instrument of evil (in the eyes of colonizers and Christian missionaries) to a legitimate object in the souvenir shops has taken place only during the last 20 years or so.

I remember some 30 years ago making a phone call to one of the larger crafts and souvenir shops in Sápmi, asking if they had any "Sámi shaman drums" for sale. The owner denied this, but also sounded very skeptical, asked what my purpose with this drum would be, and what I wanted to use it for. I most probably referred to my interest in the object as a folklorist, or I might have said that I wanted to use it as a gift. I cannot remember the details anymore, but the main thing I experienced from this conversation was that there was no possibility for buying such an item in their shop, and that even asking for a possible purchase was a bit suspicious.

When the tourist theme park Sápmi Park opened in the village of Kárášjohka/Karasjok in the year of 2000, with its "Sápmi Magical Theatre" (named "Stálubákti" in North Sámi), this was the first ever effort in Norway to put to stage and performance parts of the Sámi spiritual world view (for a more detailed description and discussion of this performance, see Mathisen (2010, p. 62ff) and Mathisen (2015, p. 205f)). The effort seemed innovative and daring at the same time. Putting intangible heritage, such as world views, religious understandings, and Indigenous spirituality, up for display or performance is not always easy, especially in a commodified setting like a touristic theme park. However, when the Sápmi Theme Park decided to establish this, they contacted a well-established international company, BRC (n.d.) Imagination Arts[2], specializing in experience design and production. For support, some of the most prominent Sámi artists, authors, and filmmakers were contacted for cooperation (overview in the lobby of Sápmi Magic Theatre). The result was a multimedia production with technical solutions that, at least at the time, pushed boundaries and represented something new and never previously experienced in Sápmi. However, if the technology was brand new, the content was both old and well known. The old imaginaries of the Sámi as mythologized guardians of an ancient spirituality, in close contact with nature, which also made them potential ecological guardians for a future where humankind could still live in harmony with nature. What was related in this creative combination of old mythologies and modern ideas of environmentalism with the help of modern visual and media technologies was therefore simultaneously an old and a new narrative. The old narrative of a "noble savage" had been turned into a contemporary narrative of the "ecological

[2] (https://www.brcweb.com/).

Indigenous Sámi". The new narrative, however, was caught in the same colonializing constructions from where it had originated. Even if it in many ways was a positive image of Indigenous thinking and spirituality, it still placed "the Other" in a static and immobile position, where all development and transformation would be negative (Mathisen 2004). Additionally, in this case, the similarities between different depictions of other Indigenous populations all over the world are striking. In many ways, Indigenous religions and spirituality have become parts of a global narrative and imaginary.

When I was a visiting professor in 2015–2016 at the Anthropology department at the University of California, Berkeley, I gave a lecture in The Forms of Folklore class, where I, among other subjects, also talked about this Sápmi Magic Theater performance at Sápmi Park. After the lecture, one of the GSIs (Teacher Assistants) approached me and said that what I had just told (and showed pictures from) reminded him very much of something he had witnessed close to his home in Los Angeles, California. At Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, there was a show called Mystery Lodge. The staging and the design was very similar to what I had presented, only the peoples portrayed there were Native Americans, not Sámi. I asked him if he could find the name of the company which made that show. It turned out that the same company was behind the show in Kárášjohka/Karasjok and the one in Knott's Berry Farm. This partly explains the similarities in the two presentations; however, this also shows that some of the myths told about the spirituality of Indigenous peoples are very similar, and that they might easily be interchanged, and hence immediately appreciated and understood by a global as well as a local audience.

Some of the same observations can be seen in relation to souvenir sales. In many of the souvenir shops we visited, cultural items associated with different Indigenous peoples could be found side by side on display. Sámi Noaidi's drums were, for example, exhibited together with Native American dreamcatchers in a souvenir shop in Roavvenjárga/Rovaniemi. They fit into and belonged to the same narrative on the spiritualties of Indigenous peoples. This is also partly a tendency where companies offering Sámi experiences for tourists are anxious to include aspects of Indigenous spiritual, most often pre-Christian, elements and symbols (Fonneland 2013), and the Noaidi's drum has a prominent place in the visualizing process.

The Sámi Noaidi's drum has in recent years made its entry in quite many museums in the Sápmi area, both as original drums because of repatriation processes, and as artful copies made by talented Sámi craftspeople (Äikäs 2019). In that capacity, many drums have entered art galleries and art collections, now understood as original artworks. The drums have become elements in the imagery of theme parks, and they have eventually entered the shelves of both museum shops and souvenir shops. One very popular and recurrent product comes from the company Lappituote (n.d.) Oy in Kemi, Finland, which offers "shaman's drums" (in Finnish: noitarummut) in various sizes, ranging from small ones, to one near "full size"[3]. These can be found both in souvenir shops and in museum shops all over the Sápmi area.

When our group in 2019 made a stop in Anár/Inari, we spent the night at the Hotel Inari, and I was anxious to see if the picture I had seen in an earlier visit to the hotel, in 2013, was still there (see Mathisen 2015, p. 192). The reproduced picture of a painting from 2006 made by the Sámi artist Merja Aletta Rauttila from the nearby town of Gáregasnjárga/Kargasniemi showed a little Sámi boy, a child Noaidi, leaning over his goavddis, more than half his own size, and with the drum hammer in his hand. It turned out that this picture decorated nearly every room occupied by us in the hotel, and the motive was also available as a postcard. What caught my attention now was that the figures painted on the drum skin had started to move out of the drum, as if they were set out to act, or going on a travel.

This made me think of something I had just observed the day before, when we were visiting souvenir shops in Santa Claus Theme Park in Roavvenjárga/Rovaniemi. The images that could be

[3] (https://www.lappituote.fi/tuote/noitarumpu-iso-29cm-lahjapakkaus/).

found on the old Noaidi's drums still to be found in museums were now available as decorations on nearly every souvenir product you could think of. They were very visible in enlarged versions printed on from every kind of home decoration, pillow, bedding, rug, and curtain to every kind of kitchen utensil, cup, napkin, and tablecloth—not to mention different clothing products, especially t-shirts with printed images of the Noaidi's drum, of course. What is striking here, as with the souvenir Noaidi's drums themselves, is that they are exhibited in the shop as serialities, and not as unique items. The supply of items seems endless, and there seem to be no limits to the use of the figures associated with the Noaidi's drum (see Figure 2 for some examples of this). Still, it is the association with Indigenous spirituality that is the selling point, and they are now attached to products that anyone might find useful in one way or another. In the souvenir industry, this would not necessarily be the case for the Noaidi's drum itself, which would only serve its purpose as decoration, or for some kind of exhibition.

Figure 2. 'Rugs and pillows with motifs from Sámi Noaidis divination drums in a souvenir shop in Roavvenárga/Rovaniemi, Finland June 2019. Photo by the author.

The fact that the symbols from the drums are the most important elements for this trade is visible because once they have been established as popular touristic icons, it is a tendency that they start appearing on nearly everything else that could possibly be bought as a souvenir, ranging from key holders and cups to pillows and towels. A symbol from the rune drum is printed on various objects, and they are transformed into materialized memories of a travel to a magic north, and experiences of enchanted landscapes and peoples.

4. Silver, Spirituality, and Ownership: Who Owns *Beaivi* (the Sun)?

Professor Yngvar Nielsen was the head of the Ethnographic Museum in Kristiania in 1877–1916. He was also chairman of Den Norske Turistforening (The Norwegian Trekking Association) in 1890–1908 and published a travel manual for tourists in Norway, popularly called "Yngvar". On one of his travels, he visited a Sámi camp in Troms County with the intention of buying utensils carved from reindeer antlers for the museum. He wrote in a popularized article in the German journal *Globus*, in which he claimed that this trade would be very easy for visiting travelers, because "the lust for silver" was very great among this group of people (Nielsen 1892, p. 66). He could proudly obtain these items for small silver coins. The Sámi would then send silver to silversmiths further south in Norway, who would make silver jewelry the way Sámi people wanted them. For nomadic people like the reindeer-herding Sámi, this was the most convenient way of keeping valuables. Moreover, the silver objects were valuable in another, more religious and spiritual sense. Silver would protect the carrier from evil forces. It was common to leave a silver spoon or a silver amulet in the child's *giehkta* (Sámi carrying cradle), so the children are not abducted by the *gufihtarat* (invisible underground people).

Later, some silversmiths established themselves permanently in Sápmi, relying on a steady market for silver products among the Sámi for their traditional Indigenous costumes, but also for a growing tourism market. Already from the outset, there was some concern over the ownership to some of the designs that had been popular among the Sámi for hundreds of years. Many of the silversmiths have solved this possible controversy by maintaining that they are doing their work "in the service of the Sámi", and that they are copying the old Sámi designs because this is the way the Sámi want them, and therefore, they have to be faithful to the original designs. If something should be changed, then that should only happen in close cooperation with the Sámi customers.

Juhls' (n.d.) Silver Gallery started their silver smithy in Goudageidnu/Kautokeino in 1959 and adhered to a philosophy of serving the Sámi people by supplying traditional designs. Alongside this production, they developed their own unique designs inspired by the surrounding Arctic nature and landscape. The business of course also relies on tourism; however, you would not find the typical souvenir products in their shop. When asked by our group during the visiting roundtrip in 2019, they maintained that they would not use the designs from the Sámi Noaidi's drum on their designs. They have, however, used some design patterns inspired by ancient petroglyphs in the northern area, as well as old designs associated with other northern Indigenous populations. It seemed that one important criterion was that these designs should be very old, and not possible to connect with the post-colonializing era. This is what Juhls' (n.d.) Silver Gallery in Gouvdageidnu/Kautokeino wrote on their webpage about one of these symbols:

> "The 'Sun cross'. This symbol comes in many different variants and are some of the oldest historical symbols—originally used by Finnish-Ugrian peoples in northern Russia. These embellished the belt but had a practical feature as well as an attachment for knifes, scissors, keys etc., as well as a "needle tent/nállugoahti" which is a container for sewing needles."[4]

They have also continued to produce some of the older Catholic jewelry that used to be popular among the Sámi and describe it in this way:

> "Originally an M for Virgin Mary from Catholic times in southern Scandinavia. After the reformation, this became a common merchandise further north where the Sami people were not yet Christian."[5]

Juhls' (n.d.) Silver Gallery then has in this way chosen to follow some very clear strategies to avoid conflicts with the Sámi Indigenous society. One strategy is that they promote themselves as

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4 (https://www.juhls.no/en/products/necklace-no-64).
5 (https://www.juhls.no/en/products/necklace-no-53).

servants to the Sámi, just reproducing their traditional designs, following the norms and demands from the Sámi people in how the design of the silver for their Indigenous costumes should be. Another strategy is to locate their inspirations for designs with spiritual connotations in a more distant past where contemporary ethnic categories are less obvious, and claims of cultural appropriation would not be voiced.

As mentioned above, inside the Santa Claus Village in Roavvenjárga/Rovaniemi, there is a sort of supermarket of souvenir shops. One of these shops belongs to the firm Taigakoru (n.d.), which specializes in silver jewelry, and many of its products are inspired by spiritual imagery. To underline this, a central part of their exhibition is a "shaman's drum", where the silver jewelry figures offered for sale in what is called the "shaman drum collection" are organized on the drum skin, to better demonstrate the very close connection between the jewelry and spirituality (see Figure 3). This is the way it is presented on their internet homepage:

> "SHAMAN DRUM was used by the shamans of the Northern peoples in their ceremonies. Shamans were healers and predicted the future. They called on the spirits for assistance by beating a drum with a drumstick made from reindeer bone until they fell into a trance. The upper part of the drum skin represented the heavens, the middle part earth and earthly life and the lower part Tuonela, the underworld.[6]

Figure 3. Silver figures, freely based on what allegedly are motifs from Sámi Noaidis' divination drums. From Taigakoru's souvenir shop in Santa Claus Theme Park in Roavvenárga/Rovaniemi, Finland June 2019. Photo by the author.

The silver patterns associated with the signs on the Noaidi's drum and represented in this collection are the sun, the bear, the black-throated loon, the crane, the moon, the salmon, the beaver, the god of hunting, the lights of the north, the reindeer, the rota[7], the goddess of fertility Akka, the shaman, the wolf, the god of thunder, and the boat (ibid.; see also on the Taigakoru (n.d.) jewelry,

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[6] (https://www.taigakoru.eu/category/120/shaman-drum).
[7] Sámi god of the underworld and death.

with image, in Ridanpää (2019, p. 130f)). Notable here is that the symbols from the drum skin are explicitly associated with a more general reference to a sub-Arctic, Fenno-Ugric cultural environment, possibly to avoid questions of cultural ownership.

However, there certainly are examples of controversies over inappropriate use of Sámi spiritual and religious symbols and over the ownership to such symbols. The most recurrent and central sign on the Sámi Noaidi's goavddis is a representation of the sun, either in a very stylized form, or pictured in a more naturalized shape, which anyone might recognize as the sun. Most early and later research into Sámi religion points to the sun as one of the highest divinities for the Sámi (for an overview, see Lundmark (1982, p. 13ff); Joy (2020b)). Just as our research group was making the trip investigating the offers of souvenirs in parts of Sápmi in the early summer of 2019, there was a substantial controversy in the area connected to one silversmith's use of the sun symbol. The reason was that Tana Gull og Sølvsmie AS (n.d.) in 2013 had applied for a design patent and trademark for their version of the sun symbol to Patentstyret (Norwegian Industrial Property Office), a governmental office that registers trademarks, designs, and patents in Norway. The design was then registered and announced in early 2014. By this time, the product had already been for sale in different variants as a silver jewelry for some years, and this is the way it is presented at Tana Gull og Sølvsmie AS's homepage:

> "The midnightsun is an important natural phenomenon for the sami people. The sun is painted on almost every preserved sjaman drum. The sun is often stylized beyond recognition but our sun is inspired by a drawing of a drum from Aasele Lappmark/Sveden. This drum has been known since 1693 but may be much older than this."[8]

The business places the sun symbol very explicitly as an important part of Sámi heritage, and this soon became a part of the controversy. Another reason was that the owners of the firm had started sending out letters of warning to other handicraft producers, claiming that they would run the risk of being accused of plagiarism if they used a similar sun symbol on their designs. This was then reported in NRK Sápmi, the Norwegian radio broadcaster (the program was later retracted, because it contained factual errors). When the owners of Tana Gull og Sølvsmie AS (n.d.) further announced their design property claims on their Facebook page[9], a storm of protests broke loose. A lot of craftspeople and others engaged in Sámi design protested, and people started to put their versions of the Sámi sun on their Facebook accounts. One handicraft producer took legal action and filed a claim to Patentstyret, appealing their decision on design property and demanded it changed, as this version of the sun was a common Sámi heritage, that no single person or company could claim ownership to. Many comments also referred to the late Sámi multiartist (music, visual art, and poetry) Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, who had used an almost identical design of the sun on the cover of his famous book "*The Sun, My Father*" (Valkeapää 1991). Patentstyret made a new decision in late November 2019 that the design was an old Sámi sun symbol, and not a new design, and hence should be understood as a copy, not filling the demands for genuine design. It is, however, still registered as a trademark for the Tana business.

This means that questions over Indigenous design now had entered what the anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff in their book on the commodification of ethnic cultures have called a stadium of "lawfare" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, p. 53ff). This is according to the authors a significant change in identity politics and the fight for the cultural rights of Indigenous peoples. The struggle for general human rights for these groups has now, in a time of neoliberal market economy, also come to include the ownership of cultural and spiritual knowledge (ibid., p. 56). It has become a question of matters that can be decided not only by political means, but also by legal instruments. This development would, eventually, have both positive and negative consequences, particularly because any use of the

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8 (https://www.tanagullogsolv.com/en/pendants/545-midnightsun.html).
9 (https://www.facebook.com/Tana-Gull-og-S%C3%B8lvsmie-As-381918231892959/).

legal system also will have to involve economic resources. Lack of resources would effectively silence those producers with little access to monetary means.

5. Tourist Souvenirs and Imaginaries

Sámi culture and religion have been at the center of attention among travelers to the Arctic North of Scandinavia ever since the first attempts to enter this area, and this takes up an important space in their writings. Olof Rudbeck the younger (1660–1740) traveled to Lapland in 1695 (Rudbeck [1695] 1987). His experiences from that travel as they appear in his journal are summed up by Koerner in her book on Linneaus: that the Sámi were already acting as tourist guides of the destruction of their own religious culture when they were showing the visiting travelers their former cult places (Koerner 1999, p. 58f). In a handwritten note, Rudbeck the younger, however, warned the visiting scientist and traveler Pierre Louis Maupertius (1698–1759) and his company when they visited Lapland in 1736 that these Sámi did not like it when the visitors laughed when they showed them the old offering places, the sieidis (Koerner 1999, pp. 59, 226; von Sydow [1695] 1987, p. 27).

This sense of paying due respect to past Sámi spiritual traditions still seems also to be at the core of much of contemporary attitudes, positive or negative, when it comes to relations between past Sámi spiritual imagery and tourist souvenirs. Sámi spirituality and religion should be presented in a respectful way. The Sámi Parliament in Finland (so far as the only national Sámi Parliament) has issued their “Responsible and Ethical Principles for Sustainable Sámi Tourism” (Sámediggi 2018), a small booklet where they outline guidelines for how Sámi culture should be presented for tourists. These guidelines are as yet only available in the Finnish and Sámi languages, setting up the main principles for tourism in Sápmi, and the “dos” and “don’ts” have been illustrated using easily accessible cartoons, made by the Sámi artist Sunna Kitti (Quinn 2020). However, guidelines have not been followed by legal measures. Souvenir production based on Sámi cultural heritage is often industrial in scale and more based on economic profit than moral judgement and cultural sensitivity (Joy 2020a). Even if souvenirs might at first glance seem to be very simple and sometimes even banal objects, attempts at contextualization show both complicated historical connections, as well as intriguing implications when it comes to using these objects as the basis for a contemporary presentation of a unique Sámi cultural heritage.

The starting point for the investigation, therefore, is not only the souvenir objects in themselves, but also the tourism imaginaries they are already connected to. This makes the field of research when it comes to tourism souvenirs associated with Indigenous religion and spirituality complicated. The souvenirs serve purposes in relation to larger narratives. The tourism imaginaries of contemporary visitors to the Sápmi area have had their respectful as well as their stereotypical ideas about the area and its people formed by previous narratives and imagery. The orientation toward the past creates stereotypical imaginaries about a reindeer people living in a perfect harmony with the surrounding nature. This and similar kinds of imagery create problematic positions for Indigenous peoples throughout the world who want to make their voices heard in contemporary struggles for natural resources and rights, even when they are living as modern contemporary citizens in a developed world. Imaginaries of the past hold a value for the visiting tourists who want to visit something exotic and out of the ordinary. The souvenirs, and especially those with Indigenous spiritual connotations, serve as documentation of such visits for visiting travelers. For the Indigenous Sámi population, the souvenirs carry mixed and ambivalent messages that they will have to relate to as contemporary citizens. The tourism imaginaries’ orientation toward a mythic past tends to place Indigenous people in an ambivalent position, on one hand, as proud representatives of genuine spiritual traditions, and on the other, as exotic representatives of a past with no place in modern society (Mathisen 2004).

Questions of ownership to spiritual traditions raise similar problematic positions. Craftspeople would like to protect their products, while increased tourism and commercialization open up a path for seriality, mass production, and copying. The present situation on the tourist market will affect the communication of Indigenous identity values. Mass tourism and large theme parks seem to have

an effect on the souvenir market, favoring serialized objects and mass production. This is apparent in the manner in which the symbolic figures on the Sámi Noaidi's drum have left the drum skin and started appearing on nearly all kinds of other souvenir products. These kinds of innovations are also making the possibilities for contextualizing previous meanings of these symbols difficult. There are, however, always innovative and transformational resources in the Indigenous art and crafts field, inventing new and interesting products that hopefully will invigorate souvenir production and still communicate important Indigenous values.

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Article

Nature and Magic as Representation of "The Sami"—Sami Shamanistic Material in Popular Culture

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Abstract: This article examines how magic and nature become representations of both "the Sami" and "Sami shamanism" in animation films *Frozen 2* and *Klaus*, in the television crime series *Midnattssol* (*Midnight Sun*) and in three Eurovision Song Contest contributions partly by Sami artists, containing *joik*. With a methodological ludism approach and with material theory, the article asks how "the Sami" and shamanism are made relevant as spiritual or religious categories within popular cultural products, and how (and why) spirituality is being constructed and communicated on a more general level in a time of eco-crisis, where there is a growing global interest in perceived shamanistic and animistic perceptions of the world, nature, and ourselves.

Keywords: Sami; Sami shamanism; animism; popular culture; ludism; materialist turn; *Frozen 2*; *Klaus*; *Midnattssol*; KEiiNO; ESC

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1. Introduction

The last decade has seen an increase in the use of Sami religion and culture as a resource in popular culture products. In this article, I will present representations of "the Sami" given to the users of various popular cultural products, like animation movies, crime series and song contests, and discuss whether and how religion and spirituality—presented and allegedly perceived as Sami shamanism—are useful when considering these cultural products. This, I hope, can add to a more general understanding of how popular culture and religion intersect in the present, specifically seen in the light of our contemporary, urgent conditions of global eco crisis. My research questions in this article are hence *how are "the Sami" and shamanism made relevant as spiritual or religious categories within popular cultural products*, and *how (and why) is spirituality being constructed and communicated on a more general level in a time of eco-crisis, where there is a growing global interest in perceived shamanistic and animistic perceptions of the world, nature, and ourselves?* The analysis will thus provide answers to "how" in terms of illustrative examples of religion and popular culture interfaces, and "why" in terms of ecology, indigeneity, materiality, and religion as potentially powerful, cultural communication.

This analysis looks at the animation movie *Frozen 2* (2019) and the Netflix animated Christmas adventure *Klaus* (2019), as well as the Swedish television crime series *Midnattssol (Midnight Sun)* (2016), all of which contain mediation of Sami culture as central components. These visual and storytelling popular culture products are supplemented with performative popular culture in the form of Sami or Sami related contributions to the national (Norwegian) and international Eurovision Song Contest programs in 2017, 2019, and 2020, in order to have a somewhat broader selection of popular culture products, enabling modest comparison. As disparate as this material may seem, its common denominators are that it is part of Norwegian (Nordic) and Sami, mass mediated culture, and thus can be expected to have or have had some impact on these cultural settings, as well as globally, in terms of the material being to a large extent also globally distributed products.

The discursive uses of "the Sami" have similarities throughout all the examples listed, as I will demonstrate. Sami artists and personnel have been creators of or involved in the material that is investigated, and the popular cultural scene thus points to material engagements in the production of Sami religion, as well as identity politics and heritagization processes. Overall, I aim to show that this material and materialization/ritualization take place in a time where nature and ecology become important frames of reference, whether we are dealing with a global blockbuster animated children's movie, a Netflix Christmas story, or the glittering scene of the Eurovision Song Contest, ESC.

Theoretical Perspectives and Methodical Considerations

Starting from a cultural analytical basis, where religion is seen as interwoven into the fabric of culture as a whole (Gilhus and Mikaelsson 2001), the article will employ a mixed approach to the material, where media as a bridge between people and the realms of the spiritual they relate to, through "picturing the invisible" (Meyer 2015), is central, as well as religion and spirituality seen through a lenses of playfulness, "ludism" and the subjunctive (Droogers 2011; Grimes 2011). In line with these views, religion as enjoyment (Gauthier 2018) and the material turn (Bräunlein 2016) will also be employed. Taken together, these perspectives on media, senses, and enjoyment, materiality and the "nature" of religion open up to serious scrutinization of entertaining material as parts of culture, that is, religion and/through/as popular culture made important and relevant to both people and to the study of religion. This is what Endsjø and Lied (2011) calls religion "that people want to have", building on the seminal works of Alver et al. (1999) of religion as "thinly distributed" on a cultural level, with detraditionalization, traditionalization, dedifferentiation, market logic, and media as factors and processes changing the religious landscape. Partridge (2004) followed by stating this situation as popular culture directly enabling religious participation, transformation, understanding and experience, and that the concepts and cosmologies in popular culture lead to familiarization and fascination as well as development of spiritualities (Partridge 2004, p. 141). Meyer (Meyer 2008, p. 18) discusses religion, popular culture, mediatization, and cultural impact as a necessary field of study, as this is something which impacts contemporary communities and religion:

> Instead of grounding our analysis on an essentialist view of either community or religion as being in danger of corruption by the forces of mass mediatization, entertainment and the logic of the market, it is more productive to explore how the use of electronic and digital media actually shapes the transformation—and hence continuation—of both communities and religion in our time.

More specifically, I intend to show that the ludic "debordering" of religion is not only a reflective stance of the researcher, but a way of actively and creatively "work with" traditions and religions for the producers and consumers of (popular) culture, as (also) conscious tools of culture changing efforts and ambitions. As such, this article enters an ongoing discourse on reception of myths, rituals and religion connected to "the Sami". Concerning reception, I follow Skjoldli in her definition of reception as "selective recycling, creative reuse and effect of something preexistent" (Skjoldli 2020, p. 44), in order to show how reception is at work in and from popular cultural products. The reception is furthermore related to the playful and fictional reorganizing and adding of new elements in the popular cultural products, partly defined by current interests and concerns, and the specific, discursive dynamics in which these works of reception and new, material products take part. This will be highlighted as hybrid forms and hybridization. Fonneland and Kraft (2013) see hybrid products as "products whose New Age components are open to different interpretations" (Fonneland and Kraft 2013, p. 132) and describe the interplay between secular and religious elements as hybridity and fluid boundaries (Fonneland and Kraft 2013, p. 143). Here, I follow their emphasis on fluid boundaries and a hybrid product as something open to different interpretations, also highlighted by the notion of semiotic resources and reception. We are dealing with new products, presented to a public with their unique blend of

elements, though still culturally and religiously recognizable and relatable—and perhaps even more so than less hybrid products, being popular cultural products that "sell".

This article does not present fieldwork; hence, central questions are not whether actual, selected people "believe" or not in the narratives and claims of popular culture, neither the personal stories of popular culture use or consumption in people's daily lives and meaning making. As an ethnic Norwegian doing the present analysis, my rendering of how "the Sami" is made relevant is thus from a non-Sami point of view, based on the products as "semiotic resources" (Undheim 2019), and the contexts into which I consider these "affordances" (interpretations, possibilities) of the semiotic resources, namely the contexts of nature, magic and eco-crisis. Magic and religion are slippery concepts subject to century-old discussions, as is the concept of shamanism. In this article, I will use magic and religion interchangeably, following Goody (Goody 1961) in that these cannot be definitively separated. I employ magic due to its popularity as phenomenon and denominator in popular culture, not least in commercialization of "the Artic" (Mathisen 2014). However, there is a need for conceptualization of what is meant by religion and magic in the following, and with a methodological, ludic approach, religion is, according to Droogers (2011, p. 361),

> The human capacity for play to the articulation of the tension experienced between inexpressibility and representation, between belonging and separation, between a unifying identification and a differentiating identity, adding an extra dimension to reality that allows the believers to overcome this tension

An "extra dimension to reality" is what will be scrutinized in what follows, in a globalized setting that seemingly "stimulate free religious play" (Droogers 2011, p. 361). We will see that the material presented is dealing with the "extra dimension" to overcome tensions of various kinds, and whereas I do not deem popular culture users and producers "believers", they might be called "practitioners" in the playful ritualization (Grimes 2011, p. 82) of reality that immersion into fiction and performance can be said to entail. "Believers" are thus in this context exchanged with viewers, listeners, audience, as I operationalize this definition in a magic/religious "reality" that might well be short-lived, with a duration similar to the popular cultural product, or the ritualization, that takes place and becomes part of our cultural communication. As such, it may have an impact beyond its immediate sphere of consumption or experience. The subjunctive "as if", mediated through and consumed in popular culture, where "extra dimensions" are vital and central, is at play whether or not "belief" is. The playful and/or fictional dimensions in the mediated representations of religion (the adding of an extra dimension) also have serious and even somber aspects to them, due to the minority position of the Sami as indigenous people, highlighting power aspects of the belonging and separation-dimensions of this intricate web of religion in/as popular culture. This will also be evident and discussed when analyzing the material.

In addition to religion and religiosity, I employ the concept spirituality. Although it might be argued that spirituality is a superfluous word in a discourse that already has religion and magic at hand, my use of the word has again to do with what appear as common, contemporary denominators for religion. Magic and spirituality appear as vernacular concepts preferred to religion due to both the study of religion's professional history itself, and the hegemonic, perceived connotations of religion in Western society as something institutional, denominational, solemn, textual, pious (resembling Christianity), etc. The study of religion has historically underscored Christian, official assumptions of religion as "archetypical" or the most "real", and this favoring has not been missed by other groups relating to religion, opting for "spirituality" as a way of pointing out a different stance. That said, I do not follow, for example, Heelas and Woodhead in their dichotomous framework of qualitative differences between religion as "life as" and spirituality as "life from within" (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, p. 7), as this cannot be empirically tested and appear too emic or normative. I simply relate to, and use, words that are common in the field that I study, that is, popular religion and alternative

spirituality, and when spirituality is seen as a meaningful word to many actors in this field over religion, it is used in this analysis as well.

Shamanism in this context is also a construct pointing to popular as well as academic use. It is beyond the frames of this article to clarify the historical and scholarly uses of (Sami) shamanism as object of study (Hutton 2001; Hammer 2015; Kraft 2016), but as a denominator for certain phenomena and practices in this article, it points to religious and popular cultural practitioners using historical and invented symbols and rituals as semiotic resources, in the receptive way illustrated by Skjoldli (2020). Here, the shaman is a person capable of communicating with the spirits, a mediator between the various "dimensions", and, for example, the Sami shaman drum and drumming, Sami song, *joik*, and Sami notions of and connections between powers in nature are "remembered", and the U.S. origins of neoshamanism as core shamanism developed by Michael Harner, is "forgotten", or more precisely, these elements are selectively recycled and creatively reused (cf. also Fonneland 2015, pp. 47–51). The shaman and shamanism are thus broad terms in this article, primarily pointing to practice and use of semiotic resources.

I focus on a concrete material in this article, that is, popular cultural products, and their relation to spirituality. In his article on the material turn in the study of religion, "Thinking Religion Through Things", Bräunlein (2016) scrutinizes how "far" we may follow the material turn, or the ontological claims of New Materialism, and what methodological consequences this gives for our scholarly endeavors (Bräunlein 2016, p. 367). I follow his argument that a serious attention to things and materiality opens new perspectives regarding spirituality, and I also follow his warnings against believing that a "non-anthropocentric" analysis of things, "vibrant matter" (Bräunlein 2016, p. 386) and "agency of things" actually are possible to convey scientifically. For such a shift in perspective, Bräunlein suggests semiotic ideology, methodological ludism, and aesthetics-of-religion as approaches (Bräunlein 2016, pp. 387–91), whereby we can "discover new relations between thing and humans" (Bräunlein 2016, p. 392). Seeing how popular cultural products like the ones I will present, deal with the materiality of reality, and how, where, and why spirituality is addressed, put the semiotic resources, the ludic "as if" attitude and the aesthetics and sensational aspects of religion to the forefront. We will see that, *within* these products, according to the perspectives and "cosmologies" that they offer, matter (nature) is indeed vibrant, with agency and with ontological statements about the relation between the spiritual and material realms, that often become indivisible. As such, *animism* may serve as a summarizing concept (Harvey 2017).

In what follows, I will present short synopses of the films, series, songs, and performances chosen. I will then highlight the semiotic resources they offer and answer the "how" and "why" nature, magic and eco-crisis become relevant for understanding the materializing of Sami shamanism in/as popular culture.

2. Material

2.1. Frozen 2

Frozen 2 is Disney's sequel to the first *Frozen* animation film success back in 2013, both directed by Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee. Set in a fictive Norway, the kingdom of Arendelle is now ruled by Elsa, who in the first film discovered and eventually became able to control her magical powers, that is, her ability to create ice and snow. Her sister Anna is also her closest friend, and lives with her in the castle of Arendelle, at the coast of the fjord. Whereas trust and mutual understanding between the sisters are important vehicles for the plot in both stories, in *Frozen 2*, this has to do with Elsa and Anna's discovery of their "Sami" ancestry. As it turns out, there is a land hitherto unknown to the sisters, The Enchanted Forest of the Northuldra tribe, to the north of Arendelle, and a long-standing conflict between the Northuldrian people and the people of Arendelle becomes evident. The tribe is a nomadic people herding reindeers, and Elsa and Anna's late grandfather deceived the tribe by building a dam in order to contain their powers—they are able to communicate with the spirits of

nature and were seen as a threat by him. Elsa and Anna's parents are also dead (shortly described as shipwrecked in the first film), and, in *Frozen 2*, we learn their shipwreck was on a journey up north in order to find out where Elsa's magical powers originate from.

Initially and throughout *Frozen 2*, Elsa hears a song resembling a "kulokk", a traditional Nordic calling of the cows in the mountain pastures. Her attention to this song awakens the spirits of nature and forces the people of Arendelle to evacuate. Advised by the trolls, the plot thereafter is about Elsa's discovery and recovery of the happenings of the past, and Anna's demolition of the dam with the help of the earth spirits, rock giants dwelling up north. The key to all the events is that Elsa and Anna's mother is a Northuldrian, Iduna, who saved their father's, Agnarr's, life. As a prince and part of the Arendelle troop to the Enchanted Forest, he became part of the fatal clash between the peoples in the past, instigated by his father, Runeard, who dies in the chaotic battle. The battle causes the spirits of the forest, earth, wind, water, and fire, to disappear, and a wall of mist encases everyone in the forest—both the remaining Northuldran people, and the troop from Arendelle, except the few who managed to escape, among them Elsa and Anna's parents. When Elsa, with the help from the Nokk ("Nøkken") spirit, manages to go all the way up north to the river of memory, Athohallan's springs, all the wrongdoings of the past become evident to her, and her own status as the fifth elemental spirit is finally revealed. This status is a gift, or the result, from her mother's selfless act of saving Agnarr. The gift is nature's or the spirit dimension's way of epitomizing the unifying of differences and border transcending as a most powerful, magical force. Peace among the Northuldrian and Arendelle people is finally realized, the waters from the dam are set free, and Anna is coronated queen of Arendelle instead of Elsa, who from now on is the protector of the Enchanted Forest, its people, and spirits.

2.2. Klaus

This 2D (hand drawn) animated Christmas story, directed by Spanish Sergio Pablos, is seemingly the opposite of *Frozen 2* in terms of magic and an "extra dimension" explaining and driving the events. It is a fable suggesting the secular origins of the Christmas folklore. Pablo chose to situate his story in Smeerensburg, a place he in interviews has said he thought was in Norway, as he was looking up the most Northern, inhabited places on earth (Radulovic 2019). In real life, it is an abandoned whaling station in Svalbard, in the film redesigned as a North-Norwegian coastal and/or island location with Sami people dwelling in the plains in the interior of the land. Jesper, the main protagonist besides the old carpenter and Smeerensburg dweller Klaus, is a spoilt son of a Postmaster General, the setting being sometime in the 19th century. To make Jesper become a decent, hardworking man, his father sends him to Smeerensburg with the task of posting six thousand letters within a year, or else he will be cut off from the family estate. Jesper encounters a gloomy community, ridden with family feuds and hostility. When visiting an isolated dwelling at the outskirts of Smeerensburg, Jesper discovers its buildings are brimming with wooden toys, and he encounters and is terrified by Klaus, the toymaker, a square-built, bearded old man. Motivated by a sad drawing by one of the town's children, a drawing that Jesper inadvertently had found and left behind in Klaus' address, Klaus forces Jesper to help him deliver a toy to brighten the sad child. Then, the word spreads that writing letters to Klaus will result in toys delivered, enabled by this unlikely duo, though secretly, at night. Jesper actually had a plan of escaping Smeerensburg by making the kids send letters, but his selfishness diminishes by the joy they create in the children's lives.

The heads of the feuding families are not at all interested in more amicable relations starting to grow in Smeerensburg due to the toy delivery by Jesper and Klaus. They scheme to put an end to it. Meanwhile, a plot line involving the Sami becomes the turning point of the film: Margu, a little Sami girl that has come all the way from the plains in order to make Jesper write and deliver her letter to Klaus, is repeatedly dismissed because nobody understands what she says (she speaks Sami in the movie, in real life voiced by the young Sami Neda Labba living in Tromsø, Norway). When Klaus and Jesper at last receive help to translate by Alva, the young teacher in town, they are reconciled from a dispute of their own, and hurry to carpenter and deliver the little sledge that Margu wishes for.

The whole Sami community then gratefully shows up at a critical point when Klaus and Jesper are all out of toys, and Christmas is coming up. It is the Sami community that enables the story to have a happy ending—with plot lines of deceit finding their solutions. The feuding families almost succeeded in destroying what Klaus and Jesper had built up and done for the next generation of Smeerensburgers, but both the children and the Sami come to the rescue. The Sami community form the labor force of Klaus' toy workshop, and with their uniform blue and red garments and hats, they are likened to Santa Klaus' elves in anglophone folklore and suggested as their "origin". At the end of the film, the story behind Klaus' storage of toys is revealed; it was made for his own, future children that he and his wife Lydia never had. Eventually, Lydia died and left him all alone with all the unused toys before Jesper arrived. As a story, the film tells of acts of kindness being necessary for change and development, and the biggest changemaking act is, besides Jesper's arrival, that the two men actually respected Margu, got help with translation and fulfilled her wish, obtaining the Sami community as a powerful ally. In the years to come, Jesper and Klaus continue their gift giving service on Christmases, but then Klaus one day disappears, as he follows whirling autumn leaves into the light, meeting his beloved Lydia again, that is, he dies. Nevertheless, the gifts magically continue to be delivered each Christmas, as the telling voice of Jesper concludes.

2.3. *Midnattssol*

The critically acclaimed television crime series *Midnattssol* is directed by Måns Mårlind and Björn Stein. It mainly takes place in the town of Kiruna in the Northern Sweden, part of traditional Sami land or Sápmi ("Lappland" in Swedish). The plot deals with differences, borders and reconciliation on many levels; the French police inspector Kahina Zadi (Lëila Bekhti), with a family background from Algeria, arrives in the town in mid-summer to investigate the brutal murder of a French citizen. She cooperates with the prosecutor and detective Anders Harnesk (Gustaf Hammarsten), half Sami, half Swedish, and with a homosexual orientation that he hides from his teenage daughter. Zadi has not only ventured on a job far up north. She has also fled from her teenage son's discovery that she is in fact not his sister, as her family has pretended, but his mother, secretly giving birth at the age of 15.

As *Nordic noir*, the eight-episode series covers several brutal murders, part of an intricate web of both ethnic and cultural conflicts, economic interests, and industry secrets on multinational levels, in addition to the relational conflicts and issues in various families. Most important regarding the current analysis, however, are the Sami-Swedish relations and the use of Sami religion and spirituality as part of the plot. It turns out that (most of) the killings are a revenge carried out by the young Sami Eddie Geatki (Iggy Malmborg), to avenge the killing of his sister, Evelina (Maxida Märak). She was shot dead because she got to know of a bribing crime committed a decade earlier by several employees of the Kiruna mine, the community's cornerstone company. The narrative technique in the series is tricking the viewer to believe Eddi's sister is still alive, as Evelina accompanies Eddie in all the scenes where they are alone; however, it is Eddie's delusional mind/ the ghost of Evelina that is accompanying him. In addition, she tells him to avenge her death by alluding to Sami mythology and folklore in each killing, confusing the inspectors to believe that a Sami activist group leader of Kiruna is responsible. This gloomy representation of the Sami is balanced by the important role played by the Sami female shaman, named only The Nåjd/Noaiden in the film (Sofia Jannok), who helps the investigators by using her "sight" and Sami traditional rituals in order to reveal the truth about what has happened in the past, and who the killer is. In the end, the murder mystery is solved, and important relations mended on the micro level, however, structural injustice and ecological destruction remain unsolved.

2.4. *Eurovision Song Contest 2017, 2019, and 2020—Elin & The Woods and KEiiNO*

The Sami performances in the Norwegian national semifinals and international final of the popular song contest ESC that will be analyzed in this article, are from the duo "Elin & The Woods" and the trio

"KEiiNO".[1] "KEiiNO" ended as number six in the international finale in 2019 and won "the viewers' votes". "Elin & The Woods" won third place in the national finale in 2017, and the second place in the semi-finale in 2020. Both of these musical groups are ethnically mixed and consist of both Sami and Norwegian artists; Sami Elin Kåven in "Elin & The Woods" and Sami Fredrik Buljo in "KEiiNO" are songwriters, performers, and use *joik* as part of their music.

"Elin & The Woods" take their name from the experience of Kåven repeatedly telling duo partner Robin Lynch "I have to go out to the woods before I decide!", when making music together (Elin & The Woods 2020a). Their 2017 MGP (Melodi Grand Prix, the national competition) song was entitled "The first step in faith". It is a kind of electronic folk music, "Electrojoik, which is electronic music with heavy beats blended together with the traditional Sami singing known as joik", as the group formulates it on their web pages (Elin & The Woods 2020a). The song is in Sami, with a few English lines in between ("(Just take) the first step in faith", "You and I" and "Let us take"). The lyrics goes as follows (translated to English):[2]

> The world is how is supposed to be/ Hey o o yo o yo oh [*joik*]/ Even when rushing you will see that too/ Teyo oyo onyo ah/ Heyo oyo yo yo yo/ Exactly like the primal human/ You are what you are/ Teyo eyo oyo yoyo oh//
>
> Just take the first step in faith/ Te yo oyo oyo ah/ Teyono oyo ah/ Teyono oyo oyo o yoyo yo ah/ Heiono oyo ah, heiono oyo ah/ Teyono oyo oyo o yoyo// You are nature and love/ Te yo o yo yono ah/ Accept that you are perfect/ Eyo oyo yo yo ah/ Heio oyo yo yo o ah// Let yourself be/ You are what you are/ Teyo eyo ojo jo//
>
> (. . .)
>
> Come into faith/ Come into faith/ Hey o lo leah lo leah lay la (x 4)/ Heyo o yo oyo oyo oh/ Te yo oyo oyo ah//
>
> You and I/ Teyono oyo ah/ The first step in faith/ Teyono oyo oyo o yoyo yo ah/ Let us take/ The first step in faith/ Teyono oyo ah/ You and I/ Teyono oyo ah/ The first step in faith/ Teyono oyo oyo o yoyo/ Let us take/ The first step in faith/ Oyo oyo oyo oyo o

When performing this song, Kåven wore a pair of reindeer antlers on her head, had her long, red-colored hair flowing down and wore a green, full tulle dress, with her chest heavily adorned with Sami jewelry, that is, silvers and gold broches.[3] The scenography was dominated by dark green colors and spotlights, wide screen footage of trees, and fog-like smoke. In glimpses, the audience was also shown partner Robin Lynch, placed below and in front of the scene, drumming a giant Sami shaman drum as well as an electronic drum pad. Two-thirds of the way into the performance (ESC/MGP songs are only allowed a duration of 3 min), Kåven was accompanied by a choir of six Sami persons dressed in traditional costumes, *kofte*, or *gákti* in Sami, joiking along the chorus lines, and, shortly thereafter, a somewhat mysterious choir of twenty cloaked persons appearing behind Kåven, their faces hidden by hoods, singing the same joik as both Kåven and the six "traditional" Sami singers.

The 2020 contribution of "Elin & The Woods", entitled "As One", has the following, largely English, lyrics:

> He-lo e loi-la [*joik*]

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[1] Sami singers and songwriters have several times participated in MGP (Melodi Grand Prix)/ESC in both Norway and Sweden. In 1960, Norway debuted in ESC when the ethnic Norwegian Nora Brockstedt performed the song "Voi voi" that ended up in fourth place. The title is a somewhat misspelled version of Sami "hi", and Brockstedt was dressed as a Sami girl singing to her beloved one far away, about their next meeting. This representation of the Sami by a Norwegian would not be relevant or accepted today. For an overview over Sami entries and contributions to ESC from Norway, Sweden, and Finland, see (Maude 2019).

[2] I do not speak any of the three Sami languages, so I am depending on the accuracy of the translation online (BertBrac 2017). It is stated that it is taken from the official translation by Elin & The Wood, but I have not been able to find the original translation that is referred to.

[3] The performance is available at (Elin & The Woods 2017).

Where do we begin?/ We are light and paper thin/ Born without a name/ Different and we're still the same//

[joik]

Guldalat/ Váimmusteamet/ Mii Oktan// ["We listen to our hearts as one"]

Light the sky, you're a shooting star (We are, we are)/ Shining no matter who you are (We are as one)/ Look inside, see what you will find (We are, we are)/ Always grow with an open mind (We are, we are) As one//

Leave for Neverland/ Your destiny is in your hands (We are, we are)/ Live in harmony/ Only love will set you free (We are, we are)//

[joik]

(. . .)

Light the sky, you're a shooting star (We are, we are)/ Shining no matter who you are (We are as one)/ Look inside, see what you will find (We are, we are)/ Always grow with an open mind (We are, we are) As one//

Oktan mii leat [*joik*](x 3)/ As one/ Oktan mii leat/ As one/ Mii oktan/ As one

[joik]

Again, the scenography had a scenery-like, green colored design, with tree coulisses and what appeared to be real, though tropical/ in-door plants arranged in several groups onstage.[4] This time, Lynch joined Kåven onstage with his shaman drum and drum pad, though in the periphery, whereas she was in the center. Kåven was dressed in a long, golden, Sami inspired dress with a glittering shawl, and with bits of traditional Sami jewelry in her hair. This time, there were no choirs appearing during the performance, which had a somewhat more subdued style than their 2017 contribution.

KEiiNO's "Spirit in the sky" is a more upbeat song, from a trio which came together for the purpose of MGP/ESC solely and has continued to work together since, with great success. Their music is "dance-pop, nordic folk, and joik", as described on their webpages (KEiiNO 2020). The lyrics of "Spirit in the sky" goes as follows:

Can't you stay/ Stay with me into the night?/ Stay, I need you close/ You can go back when the sun rise again/ Just stay tonight, just stay//

Have you seen my spirit/ Lost in the night?/ The violent nightshade/ They took away my light/ They call us nothing/ My name is nothing/ Come see me/ Please see me//

'Cause I've been running with the demons now/ They all see my fear/ They say there's nothing/ Nothing here//

I see your spirit in the sky/ When northern lights are dancing/ He-lo e loi-la [*joik*]/ I hear you calling me at night/ Whenever wind is blowing/ He-lo e loi-la (x 2)/ Čajet dan čuovgga ["show me the light", North-Sami]//

I'll follow you until the daylight/ Shy us away//

I need a hero/ I need my light/ Her shining lightwaves/ Will break away the night/ I call it freedom/ Our name is freedom/ Come find me/ Please find me//

'Cause I am dancing with the fairies now/ They all sing our name/ I got my light here/ Shining here//

I hear you calling me at night/ Whenever wind is blowing/ He-lo e loi-la//

I can see your spirit in the sky/ When northern lights are dancing/ He-lo e loi-la/ Čajet dan čuovgga (x 2)

[4] The performance is available at (Elin & The Woods 2020b).

Their international ESC finale show[5] had several elements pointing to the north of Norway and Sami heritage, although two-thirds of the group are not Sami nor North Norwegian. The *joik* parts of the song are signature elements, as in the contributions from "Elin & The Woods", but group members Alexandra Rotan and Tom Hugo Hermansen have prominent roles and are singing larger parts of the song than Fred Buljo. The show scenography was a mix of rather crude data animation resembling drone footage of northern Norwegian plains with *aurora borealis*, and then in the latter half of the song, data animated, large Sami shaman drum symbols accompanying Buljo's joik, with three "spirit animals" appearing in the last seconds of the piece; a cubistic looking polar fox, a wolf and a reindeer/stag.[6] The three artists were all clothed in black costumes, with Buljo's costume resembling or being a variant of Sami traditional clothes.

3. Pictures of the Sami and Sami Shamanism in the Visual Media

The Sami and Sami shamanistic elements in *Frozen 2* are partly presented as an ethnic group, a tribal people, called the Northuldrians, and partly shown to be the powers of Elsa herself. The Northuldrians are easily conceived as Sami due to their way of life, a nomadic lifestyle in the northern plains (of "Norway"), herding reindeer. The color palette of both the *Frozen* films is mainly bluish and purple, though with orange autumn colors added in the second film. This perhaps could explain why the Sami/Northuldrians are depicted as a people wearing brown and beige clothes, contrasting their real life typical use (concerning traditional clothes) of bright colors like red, blue and yellow—for the contrast between the people of Arendelle and the Northuldrians to be made, and as a way of underscoring the fictive of this depiction, an atypical, brownish palette is chosen. This could perhaps also be in order to fit into possible mainstream representation and iconography of "the indigenous" as typically "earth colored".

The *Frozen* Northuldrians appear as a flawless people, in terms of them being victims of the majority culture's wrongdoings in the past, and as doing no wrong in the story's narrative, in addition to the "secret" Northuldrian Iduna being the true heroine, with her self-sacrificing acts in the past. Moreover, they are "at one" with the elemental forces of nature, which makes them wiser and more powerful, although not powerful enough to escape the Enchanted Forest—here, the "missing link" represented by Elsa turns out to be paramount.

There are some confusing comments in the film about magic when introducing the Northuldrians—their connection with the elemental forces both is and is not magic, and the origin of the Northuldrian's connection with these powers is not explained.

Iduna, Elsa and Anna's mother in lifelong exile in Arendelle, sings the song of Ahtohallan to the girls as a lullaby one night, and the river Ahtohallan turns out to be a real, frozen river of memories that finally connect Elsa to her Sami/Northuldrian origin. She needed to *remember*, to see the past materialized through the magic of Athohallan, before reaching the full potential of her own powers. Once the memory of the past was restored, and the wrongdoings against the Northuldrians were mended, radically changing magic blooms in both Northuldra and Arendelle.

Nature is the basis for, and the basic forms of, the magic shown in *Frozen 2*. The film starts with autumn leaves blowing, and the viewers are given the impression that the leaves are mediating a message, a trait that is followed up when Elsa and her team reaches The Enchanted Forest, and the elemental forces turn out to be real forces to interact with.

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[5] Here, analysis will primarily be based on this performance of the song, available at (Eurovision Song Contest 2019). However, the group released an official music video in April 2019 for the song, related to quite different tropes and symbols than those prominent in their scenic shows, where the Norwegian members of the group (quite humorously) are dressed up as (spirit) animals (KEiiNO 2019). Notably, Buljo is not dressed up or "funny" in this more parodic video.

[6] The animals are also shown in KEiiNO's Instagram post (keiinomusic 2019). Upon question, Buljo states that both the reindeer and the stag are his spirit animals, as their Asian illustrator first thought a reindeer was the same as a stag, when designing the logo for «Spirit in the Sky» (personal communication, 4 August 2020).

In *Klaus*, the Sami is depicted as representing something exotic, unintelligible, close to nature and the wild, a collective, benevolent force that rescues the majority culture (the people of Smeerensburg) when the crisis occurs. They are depicted as wearing blue and red-colored *kofte* and thus more in line with realities when it comes to the actual outlook of Sami traditional clothing, but the fact-to-fiction turn of the Sami as the origin of the image of the Santa Klaus' work force consisting of elves, is clearly problematic, and will be discussed below. Since the film is an alleged attempt at showing the secular origins of Santa Klaus—or a fabulation over what could be the origins—magic does not have a central place in the film. However, Klaus and his relation to his late wife does have magical or spiritual overtones. Again, autumn leaves are used to indicate magic afoot—the leaves show Klaus the drawing by the unhappy child (and eventually "rescues" him from his grieving state), and the leaves are also dancing when Klaus dies/disappears, as if the female figure in the beyond is somehow reaching out to the mundane.

Midnattssol clearly has a more realistic approach when depicting the Sami and Sami spirituality. Both Sami and non-Sami people in the series are all flawed, some are murderers, some with psychiatric disorders, they make mistakes, cheat on one another, deceive and disappoint one another—this is, after all, *Nordic noir* and not a product meant for children and families to watch together, like *Frozen* and *Klaus*. The cultural and social realities of being Sami in Kiruna are highlighted from several angles, and the narrative of the series is clearly sympathetic towards the Samis as indigenous people and their struggle for justice as ethnic minority. Sami mythology, for example concerning *Saivo*, the underworld, is even told in detail with a kind of sand paint animation in episode 3, with Hanesk as the telling voice, and, it turns out, as a story he, in the present/real life, tells his male lover, in bed. His lover has grown up in Stockholm and admits he never got to learn such stories about the Sami when growing up.

One figure, however, is strikingly "otherworldly" and benevolent, and that is the nameless Sami female shaman. She appears as a solemn, mysterious, young, strong, and just character, capable of using magic and/or shamanistic techniques for the better for both communities, both the Swedish majority and the Sami minority. She dwells with her partner in a simple hut out in the wild outside of Kiruna, and quite contrary to the situation in, for example, Norway, Sami shamans or *noaids*, are in the series told to be living in disclosure. Hanesk says he has never met one. Three old, male *noaids* that we do not get to know, show up outside the police station when the female shaman is there for examination, and both they and she start *joiking*, as if to cast off evil. All these shamans are wearing clothes that tell little of their Sami ancestry or their status as shamans. On examination, the female shaman tells of an "inauthentic" Sami shaman who has traveled around the world and talked to all kinds of shamans and is motivated by false persuasion, as she sees it, collecting plants and toxic substances that are not part of Sápmi. The man is called Bangkok Jori, a convicted criminal, and is depicted as someone who is not respected by the "real" shamans and is a shady figure. He covers his skin with ancient symbols and lives in a *lavvo*, a traditional tent. However, when inspector Kahina meets him, he is portraited in a more nuanced way, as a former drug addict who tries to help the police. Still, the categories of authentic/respectable and inauthentic/ridiculous are clearly established and conveyed.

3.1. The Sami Magic and Mystery through ESC Songs

Elin & The Woods' lyrics in their two ESC (MGP) contributions are obviously religious/spiritual. "The first step in faith" (2017) is about *faith*, and although "faith" can be interpreted as trust, persuasion in various secular contexts, the song's narrative is about our human condition, spanning back to the "primal human", in a world that is perfect, with us humans being perfect, too—consisting of nature and love—if only we realize it. The song could be read as a summoning of feelings of belonging and trust. The *joik* has its own status as spiritual song and practice and is a contested issue in Sami contexts (Kraft 2015; Bøe and Kalvig 2020, pp. 144–145), and, in this song, it heightens the feelings and connotations of ritual, magic, and spirituality. Kåven's appearance as a kind of hybrid forest creature with her antlers and adornment strongly adds to the spiritual and mysterious "package"

given to the audience, with the large Sami shaman drum as central symbol too. The Sami shaman drum is today emblematic as Sami cultural heritagization (Kraft 2016, pp. 58–59), and enlarging it to a clearly "oversized" version as Lynch's is, can be seen as a statement of proud, Sami heritage and spirituality, even when Lynch himself is not Sami. The mix of choirs, the small, traditionally (North Sami) dressed and adorned choir of *joikers* and the large, "mysterious" choir of *joikers* that we never fully see, complete the song's message of Sami spiritual, shamanic content in new forms and fashions. The more subdued "As One" (2020) conveys the same impressions, though stripped down to the core elements of *joik*, shaman drum, and lyrics about mysterious bonds tying us together as One in a harmonious state of love and evolution, symbolized by stars and starlight, that is, natural elements. In Elin & The Woods' work generally, as in these two ESC/MGP contributions, the *Sami* is fundamental. Thus, even though the songs could be said to thematize mainstream neospiritual/"New Age" tropes, it is the placement and handling of their content in a Sami framework that makes them stand out.

KEiiNO as a group has also made the most out of the Sami element in their 2019 ESC contribution. The group has explained the song to be about the need for respect and belonging for all, whether one feels at odds with one's environment because of lack of friends with mutual interests, or because of sexual orientation or other kind of "othering", like being Sami (Grøtte 2019). Neglect and bullying is thematized (in their official video this link is clearer), but, in the end, the spiritual dimension to it all, is what appears defining; hence, the song's title, the lyrics and the performance focusing on *joik*, northern landscape and light, and "inner light" as well as spirit animals (the animals have been important in wider online dissemination, especially). With such a focus, the lyrics conveys, one's name and freedom are (re)gained, and illustrated in the phrase "dancing with the fairies". Buljo explains that his *joik* intends to give the audience a "quick tour" through historical phases of *joiking*, with the first strophes being simpler and more "arcaic" and then the final *joik* more modern and even song-resembling, together containing the feelings of an oppressed people (Grøtte 2019).[7]

3.2. Why Such an Appeal to Sami Shamanism and Religion, and Why Now?

From this analysis, we see that the (Sami) magic and religion that become evident in these popular culture products, come very close to Drooger's definition presented above—belonging and separation being particularly important. What does this appeal to Sami shamanism and religion/spirituality tell us of our current, global cultural situation?

Playful ritualization is clearly taking place within popular culture, and "the Sami" has become centerpiece in this process, both as a people and as a vaguer denominator of certain ideas, traditions and practices. In real life, the majority of Sami people (or people living in Sami areas, as ethnic identity is not counted in religious belonging statistics) belong to various, Christian denominations, including the Norwegian Church (Den norske kirke) (Fonneland and Olsen 2015, p. 7). This is not thematized in the material I have presented, it is something made relevant in historical films like *Kautokeinoopprøret* (*The Kautokeino uprising*) (2008), and hardly presented as a trope in the fantasy and fictional genre of popular culture products. However, this also goes for the majority people in the films and series in the present analysis; the Arendelle, Smeerensburg, and Kiruna ethnic majority would most likely belong to various, Christian churches, and for the period set for the stories of the two films, it would likely be an important and hegemonic part of daily life, but this is not developed as something interesting to explore in these products. Neither is Christianity thematized from Sami nor Norwegian representatives or perspectives in the ESC/MGP songs analyzed. This probably has to do with institutional religion having a "less open affordance" as semiotic resource, at least in very clear and direct ways. This is opposed to the folk religious, the magical and "free floating resources" which have a much larger

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[7] When the 2020 Norwegian MGP final was held, last year's winner was, as is the tradition, opening the show. In this version of their song and show, KEiiNO wanted to highlight the "minority within the minority" and had four South-Sami male *joikers* dressed in the South-Sami *kofte* with them (Larsen 2020).

appeal in popular culture mediations (Alver et al. 1999; Hjarvard 2011; Endsjø and Lied 2011), due to its subjectively oriented, emotional, sensuous, embodied, and nature oriented character (Taylor 2013) (see also the introductory comments on the use of "spirituality" in the present article).

Kraft presents the Sami shaman and the Sami shaman drum as "heritagization" (Kraft 2016), using the cultural scientist Anne Eriksen's analysis of how "cultural heritage" has become an omnipresent, positively laden word (Eriksen 2009), thereby also producing some "cultural heirs" as opposed to those who cannot claim this heritage (Eriksen 2009, p. 479). Cultural heritage is defined by our relation to things, and a certain way of evaluating this relation (Eriksen 2009, p. 480). Kraft's article thematizes the Sami (fine) art and cultural field and how Sami shamanism has become a common denominator as cultural heritage in order to highlight something general, not confined by (various) religious belief system(s). As such, it resonates more harmoniously with a broader spirituality discourse, common in indigenous settings, providing "roots, borders and markers of community" (Kraft 2016, p. 70).

Within the popular, cultural fields and the products analyzed in this article, the Sami and the Sami shamanism are used in a more direct, ludic, hybridizing and religious-aesthetic way, pointing to something that seems to be presented as relevant and "good" religion/tradition for humanity as a whole, because it enables us to find new, sustainable ways of relating to each other and our surroundings in eco-critical times. The discourse is transcending the indigeneity debate, and brings the Sami shamanism into the general, both by being thematized in mass mediated, commercial, global settings, and by actively being and/or promoting hybrid interpretations, from hybrid originators.

In *Frozen 2*, the Disney team uses a whole range of Nordic folk religious and Sami shamanistic elements to create their new, magical, nature religion blend for children globally to consume, relate to, and reproduce.[8] The Sami is underscored by the narrative about indigenous rights, historical wrongdoings, and by the Disney team discussing the production with the Nordic Sami Council and other Sami representatives during the making of the film (Verstad 2019), but the conclusion is *magic and nature speaking to everyone, everywhere*, realized *par excellence* by Elsa as the blend of Arendelle and Northuldrian ancestry finally releasing nature's and our full, magical potential. This stem, however, from Northuldrian/Sami, ancient knowledge and tradition, so to speak. Furthermore, there is an *animistic* message underlying, and enabling, the further elaborations and cultural comments in the film. Matter (nature) is infused with (spiritual) agency.

In *Klaus*, director Pablos underscores the "respect" to indigenous claims by providing the central, Sami figure Margu with real, Sami speech, and the Sami are represented as the people from the plains who deserve respect and who turn out to be benevolent and rewarding "powers" in times of crisis. However, this narrative is problematic, in spite of things turning in the right direction only when Margu's thoughts, wishes and speech were respected/listened to by the majority (she also gets her gift)—in the end, the collective of a Sami tribe becomes the origin of Santa's elves, and there is what could easily be read as a colonialist othering going on here, where the Sami, except Margu, in the later folklore (so the film's story goes) becomes an exotic *collective* primarily functioning as a work force. Significantly, Margu's Sami speech is not translated in the subtitles of *Klaus* and remains unintelligible to all who do not speak Sami. We do not get to know what wish Alva translates from her, until Margu unwraps her gift. But, in the preceding scenes, when Jesper tries to carpenter her gift wish, the lyrics of a song sung are as follows: "The greatest things you'll ever know, are invisible". The wind blowing is nature/the invisible force showing where good/transcendent things will happen, and thus point to animism also in this film, even though it is rendered concrete as messages from the dead or "the other side", whereas Sami people are "naturally" skilled in carpeting and selfless sacrifice. However, as in *Frozen*, it is the mixed forces of the ethnic majority representatives and the indigenous/Sami

[8] This Disney elaboration of Sami shamanism for children is in stark contrast to their 2013 *Donald Duck* story about the vile Sami shaman Elmeri (Kalvig 2015, pp. 82–84).

representatives that together enable good things to happen, and that finally set Klaus "free" (he can walk into the light, knowing he did create happiness for others, particularly children, even though he remained childless in this life). As such, recalling Drooger's definition (Droogers 2011, p. 361), the "magic" presented in an allegedly secularizing film, turns out to be the "articulation of the tension experienced between inexpressibility and representation, between belonging and separation, between a unifying identification and a differentiating identity, adding an extra dimension to reality that allows the believers to overcome this tension". A film that sets out to find the secular beginnings of the Santa Klaus folklore and ends up conveying an animistic worldview, could be said to embrace a conjunctive, "as if" ethos at full; the consumers/viewers are given the freedom to stress whichever layer of "explanation" given in the film that they choose, and the playful and subjective thus appear even stronger here than in a film like *Frozen 2*, which carefully builds a "unified" magical universe for the viewers to delve into.

Hybridity and animism are also promoted in *Midnattssol*, where half Sami Hanesk and the female Sami shaman together—with the directors using various, narrative techniques – present the viewers with an inclusive, ecologically conscious spiritual understanding and alternative that we perceive as sounder and better for our time—though not without flaws. Sofia Jannok, who plays the female shaman, is a well-known Sami artist and Sami rights activist,[9] and it is her *joik* that is used in the series. The Sami knowledge of nature and nature's sustainability are contrasted with the majority culture, with its mining and destroying of Sami land. When conveying the spiritual dimensions, the directors of *Midnattssol* choose to deviate from the social realistic narrative style otherwise utilized, and a kind of sand animation, appearance of people from "the other side" in realistic style and other magical situations rendered real, show us the visual media's prerogative of "picturing the invisible" and playing with neomaterialist claims. The "painting" of the tremendous landscape of Sápmi/ Northern Sweden is also paramount in the series, with a lot of footage from helicopter rides, conveying the natural magnitude of the land, and framing the happenings and intrigues of the series in *nature*, and the struggle for finding one's own place in nature, of belonging, connecting, and using/ relating with respect (mining versus Sami herding).

Even stronger examples of the conjunctive spheres than in visual storytelling are the real time performances of both musical and visual stories, as in the MGP/ESC songs and shows. Here, both Sami shamanism and animism most clearly come to the fore, as Kåven and Buljo appear as Sami "shamans" through their song and their *joik* in a condensed way that of course differs strongly from the multilayered narratives of lengthy films and series. During the time span of only three minutes, they must persuade the audience that they do have a magical, spiritual story to tell, a ritualization to perform, and that we can join their journey if we "open our minds" and go into "the flow" made by the combined soundscape and "landscape" created on the scene. As described, these "-scapes" together provide the audience/ritual practitioners with statements about—and preferably *experiences of*—the human condition, nature, relationality and how "an extra dimension" is all around us, in an animistic/ neomaterialist sense. There are also permeable borders between the artists on the scene and in real life, as both Kåven and Buljo strive to make Sami voices and concerns heard through various means and channels, as do Jannok from *Midnattssol*.

4. Conclusions

The magic and religion promoted by and/or materialized from these popular culture products, make perfect sense in a subjunctive, ludic, joyful and material way, fitting a popular cultural audience. Material religion is a large field of study, but, in the present context, I have followed Bräunlein (2016) who refers to scholarly efforts to analyze new relations between humans and things, here popular cultural products:

[9] Cf. (Jannok 2020a, 2020b).

> I take the material turn, including assemblage theory and ideas of New Materialism, as an inspiration to discover new relations or connections between things and humans. However, a reversed view, the frequently invoked non-anthropocentric perspective, can only be realized in a playful mode, with nevertheless serious consequences, since it is always the human being who reflects upon her or his relation to things and the complexity of the material world with which she or he is entangled (Bräunlein 2016, p. 392).

As such, the films, series, songs, and performances are/convey magic and religion in their own right, in playful ways, for those willing to see, listen, sense and indulge themselves. The creators of these products stand out as confident creators of new worlds, magical worlds and ritualizations for us to take part in. The "extra dimension" of these magical worlds has turned out to be Sami, shaman, and nature based. This is in accordance with what Fonneland and Kraft label "a reversal of the primitivism of the past" (Fonneland and Kraft 2013, p. 140), where the traits that once placed indigenous people on a lower, evolutionary stage now cater for their "position as peaceful, wise and noble caretakers of environmental wisdom" (ibid.). This reversal of a primitivism also essentializes non-indigenous, industrialized (Christian) cultures as detached from (Mother) Nature. Fonneland and Kraft (2013, p. 132) identify this as a discourse "forwarded by representatives of indigenous people's movements, the UN and legislation, tourism and popular culture, academics and activists, and New Age and neo-pagan movements", and spiritual bonds to nature, landscape, animism, and shamanism is crucial to this discourse. These standpoints and processes are clearly seen in the present material: Our eco-critical times call for attention to nature and relationality, and the responses hint to or confidently speak of animism as a solution. Animism in/as indigenous religion/ Sami religion or shamanism thus gain broader impact in popular cultural terms and avoid paradoxes and dilemmas that for example the Shamanistic Association in Norway faces (Fonneland 2018), as an attempt to gain approval and impact. Obviously, this popular cultural variant of (Sami) shamanism is also a kind of magic and religion evolving and spreading by means of commercialism, entertainment, and the plight of constant renewal that registered faith associations are less bound to. Nonetheless, in our present eco-critical times, animism and Sami shamanistic inspired elements seem to fuse successfully with mediatized, material longings and belongings, where "real" magic is where our hearts are, and we are *nature*. Sami culture and religion are a source from which some individuals are more entitled to drink than others, according to a cultural heritage, indigenous spirituality and human rights narrative. However, Sami people as producers, and Sami religion and spirituality as semiotic resources, offer all of us to join in the ritualization of these resources through popular culture. The material enables the experience of the Sami as a living version of animism, where we are "As One".

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Article

Religion-Making in the Disney Feature Film, Frozen II: Indigenous Religion and Dynamics of Agency

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Abstract: This paper explores the religion-making potential of a particular secular institution, namely the Walt Disney Studios. Focusing on the animation film Frozen II that was launched in November 2019, the current article enters into debates about the manner in which indigenous religion is part of the commodity presented—how religion is produced, packaged, and staged. In the article I argue that contemporary media-scapes can be seen as agents of religion-making, of religious circulation, and renewal. As such, religion, as it is expressed in Frozen II, is outlined and produced by a particular media-form and shaped as a popular cultural formation. Further discussions about cultural appropriation are highlighted, focusing on how Disney's reach out for cooperation with the Sámi community can generate new cultural policies and practices.

Keywords: Frozen II; indigenous religion; religion-making; appropriation; collaboration

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1. Introduction

Frozen II had its world premiere at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood on 7 November 2019, was released in the United States by Walt Disney Studios on 22 November 2019, and is ranked as one of the highest grossing animated movies of all time.[1] The sequel to the 2013 film Frozen provides a reunion with the famous royal sisters Elsa and Anna and their friends, the high-spirited snowman Olaf, the reindeer Sven and the ice harvester and deliverer, Kristoff who together embark on a journey from their kingdom Arendelle. Frozen II expands the mythology behind its characters. It dives into magic, nature worship, and the betrayal of indigenous peoples by Western society. The Enchanted Forest, where a fictional indigenous community called Northuldra lives, who are modelled on the Sámi[2], is where a pivotal part of the story takes place. Frozen II features religion as a founding element in the categorisation of the Northuldra people. They are characterised as a spiritual community as well as good stewards of the planet due to their understanding of the importance of the balance between the natural elements.

In the culture industries, references to indigenous religion is not a new phenomenon. For a long time, indigenous religion has been represented within experience and entertainment institutions like museums, festivals, theatres, within the film and tourism industry, as well as in the form of products of a more tangible nature like books, video games, and souvenirs (see Mathisen this issue). The various products are offered by professional shamans and secular agents, and by indigenous and

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1 https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/05/frozen-2-is-now-the-highest-grossing-animated-movie-of-all-time.html (accessed on 14 May 2020).

2 The Sámi people are the indigenous people inhabiting the Arctic area of Sápmi, which encompasses parts of Sweden, Norway, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. The Sámi are recognised under the international conventions of Indigenous people, and are the northernmost indigenous people of Europe.

non-indigenous alike, and they draw on trends in the spiritual milieu as well as in the experience economy. Secular and spiritual actors and institutions share an interest in landscapes of wilderness and opportunities, catering for broader audiences and for a variety of needs, including tourism, regional development, and entertainment. The phrase "arctic magic," for instance, has during the last decade been established as a common ingredient in promotional material of various sorts, with the northern Norwegian region constructed as an arctic region, situated near the borders of civilization (Bæck and Paulgaard 2012). The identification of indigenous people as a spiritual community thus seem to fit exceptionally well into contemporary structures of needs and motivations in different cultural areas beyond the religious-spiritual field. Frozen II is not the first Disney film in which indigenous religion is thematised. Films such as Pocahontas (1995), Brother Bear (2003), as well as Moana (2016) all include indigenous religious elements. In Frozen II, however, indigenous religion is the film's carrying element and the film's main character, queen Elsa, is endowed with magical powers.

The article is situated in the intersection of indigenous studies and religious studies. I explore how indigenous religion is constructed by a world leading Film Company who previously has received heavy criticism for inaccurate depictions of indigenous cultures and for exploiting indigenous cultures for profit (see for example (Norgam 2016; Yin 2014; Budd and Kirsch 2005; Edgerton and Jackson 1996). Further, I elaborate what role indigenous religion plays in the construction of Frozen II, and focus on the manner in which it is part of the commodity presented—how religion is produced, packaged, and staged. The media is an increasingly important actor in the contemporary society, and contributes to religion-making, to the flows of religion, as well as to religious change, circulation, and renewal (see Endsjø and Lied 2011; Christensen 2013; Hjarvard 2008; Partridge 2004, 2005).[3] As Kraft, Tafjord, Longkumer, Alles, and Johnson argue, media and media technologies have also "contributed to the creation and maintenance of the connections, both real and imagined, that constitute emerging global indigeneities" (Kraft et al. 2020, p. 22).

Indigenous studies constitute another source of inspiration, particularly in terms of the dynamics of colonialism. In Frozen II, this theme is elaborated in terms of the Northuldra tribe and their subjection to colonial oppression and betrayal at the hands of Elsa's and Anna's grandfather, King Runeard. Like many indigenous people worldwide, the Northuldra are faced with threats to their sovereignty, their economic well-being and access to the resources on which their culture depends. As for the Sámi, whom the Northuldra people are inspired by, rough and long lasting processes of forced Christianisation and assimilation have led to loss of religion, land, languages, as well as identities.

Indigenous peoples increasingly exist in a global framework, both self-consciously drawing on globalised strategies of rights and identity, as well as being objectively situated through international legal frameworks. The Sámi have from the very beginning been engaging in indigenous people's affairs. The impact of Sámi membership in World Council of Indigenous People (WCIP) as well as their active participation in UN activities, have consequences for how Sámi issues are dealt with in regional and national contexts, as well as for the national governments' abilities to function in an international capacity (see Lehtola 2004; Minde 2003). A recent engagement is the Verdett cooperation with the Disney company where the Sámi Parliaments of Norway, Sweden, and Finland took part to ensure that the content of Frozen II is culturally sensitive and respectful of Sámi cultures.

2. Background

The Disney universe has appealed to audiences around the world for nearly a century. On their website, the company describes itself as one of the most prominent creators of animated children movies and as, "a leading diversified international family entertainment and media enterprise" (Disney 2018).

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[3] As noted by Ingvild Sælid Gilhus and Siv Ellen Kraft Stig Hjarvard's theory of mediatisation fails to take seriously New Age forms of religion. They point out that "New Age more than "normal" institutionalized religions, are uniquely suited for late modern media-scapes, and thrive partly because of them" (Gilhus and Kraft 2017, p. 6), (see also Boutros 2011).

Frozen II is the 58th film in the series of animated Disney children classics. Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee are the film's producers and Peter Del Vecho is its director. The film is computer animated and was released in both 2D and 3D formats. Frozen II drew large crowds of audiences to the theatres, and must be considered a phenomenal box office success that earned Disney $1.45 billion (Kandell 2020). Frozen II is the sequel to the 2013 movie Frozen, and the film's events take place three years after its predecessor. It tells a story centred on an adventure set in a time of ecological sensitivity and aims to discover the origin of Elsa's magical powers that were the primary focus in the first Frozen film. Queen Elsa keeps hearing a mysterious voice that nobody else can hear, encouraging her to start a journey into the unknown. An earthquake suddenly interferes with the idyll of Arendelle and forces everyone in the kingdom to evacuate. The Troll King, Grand Pabbie (who has the ability to heal injuries caused by magical elements, such as Elsa's power over ice and snow) and the Trolls colony arrive at Arendelle. Pabbie points out that Elsa must set things right, and re-establish harmony by discovering the truth about the kingdom's past. Remembering the voice, Elsa knows that her journey into the unknown has started and follows the voice northwards. The voice leads Elsa, Anna, Olaf, Kristoff, and Sven to the Enchanted Forest, and to the indigneous Northuldra people, who draw inspiration from the Sámi, and whose close kinship with the royal sisters, Elsa and Anna, is previously unknown (their departed mother, queen Iduna, was a member of the Northuldra tribe). Throughout the production of the film, filmmakers collaborated with Sámi experts on the depiction of the fictional Northuldra tribe. The Sámi parliaments of Norway, Sweden, and Finland, along with the transnational Sámi Council (a non-governmental organization of the Sámi people) reached out to Disney to collaborate and an advisory group, Verdett, was formed.

3. Indigenous Religion

In Frozen II, what is played out as religion relates to what Siv Ellen Kraft and Greg Johnson refer to as "indigenous religion" in the singular—a globalizing discourse "consisting of notions of an indigenous we and a flexible, but fairly standardized vocabulary of assumed similarities" (Johnson and Kraft 2017, p. 4).[4] In the film we learn that King Runeard, Elsa's grandfather, feared the Northuldra people's magical powers and that this fear led to a betrayal of the Northuldra tribe. Like many indigenous people worldwide, Sámi people for a long time period were portrayed as skilled in magic or demonic sorcery and as heathen idol worshippers. As an example, King Christian IV in a letter dated 1609 to district Governor Claus Gagge describes the Sámi as a people who by nature were particularly apt to use magic, and he encouraged Gagge to show no mercy in cases involving Sámi sorcery (see Willumsen 2013, p. 234). During the 17th century, about 125 people were sentenced to death and to burn at the stake in the three northernmost counties of Norway. As Rune Blix Hagen argues, compared to the low population, the witch-hunts in northern Norway are some of Europe's most extensive witch processes (Hagen 2012, p. 2).

In the same way, the missionaries' accounts describe Sámi beliefs and practices as idolatry, paganism, and superstition. Nordic missionaries managed to disrupt traditional Sámi religion as a comprehensive religious system through persecution and punishment of people who used ritual drums (*goavddis)*, through collection and destruction of ritual drums, destruction of sacred sites (*sieiddit*), and building of churches. One may obtain a clear sense of this destructive process from studies such as historian of religion Håkan Rydving's *The End of Drum Time* (Rydving 1993) that examines some aspects of the process of religious change among the Lule Sámi, when the indigenous religion was confronted with Christianity. The reformatory processes, and the missionaries' entry into local communities,

[4] In comparison, indigenous religions in plural refers to distinct local traditions (Johnson and Kraft 2017, see also (Johnson and Kraft 2017).

contributed to new religious thoughts and ideas leaving their mark on the landscape as well as the people.[5]

Recently, the discussions concerning "Sámi religion" has changed.[6] As a consequence of what can be called the "Indigenous turn," particularly within the arts and culture, indigenous religion is approached as a something that adds value by a range of diverse actors and for a variety of reasons. "Indigenous religion" in other words is seen as something that is worth pursuing, owning, and consuming. As Bjørn Ola Tafjord argues, in some contexts, indigenous religion has even become "a figure of power" (Tafjord 2018, p. 320; Tafjord and Alles 2018).

As stated by Kraft and Johnson, processes of indigenous revitalisation often include attempts to bring to new life ancient religious traditions that have been disrupted or erased from memory and that this appeal to religious traditions serves to open up new cultural, economic, and political horizons (Johnson and Kraft 2017). To some extent, a reversal of the primitivism of the past, the discourse on indigenous religion qualifies for Michael Shermer's notion of "the myth of the beautiful people" (Shermer 1997). Characteristics that once placed indigenous people on a lower level of the evolutionary scale today account for their position as peaceful, wise, and noble caretakers of environmental wisdom. As anthropologist Jonathan Friedman has put it:

> [The] indigenous is now part of a larger inversion of Western cosmology in which the traditional other, a modern category, is no longer the starting point of a long and positive evolution of civilisation, but a voice of Wisdom, a way of life in tune with nature, a culture in harmony, a gemeinschaft, that we have all but lost. (Freidman 1999, p. 391)

Several scholars have referred to notions of a religious dimension of indigenism. According to James Clifford "Indigènitude is sustained through media-disseminated images, including a shared symbolic repertoire "the sacred," "Mother Earth," "shamanism," "sovereignty," the wisdom of "elders," stewardship over "the land" (Clifford 2013, p. 16). Popular culture, like music and film, has been important for the wider spread of such images (see Christensen 2013; Kraft 2015). The Disney Company, through the production of Frozen II, is precisely an actor who contribute to the construction and spread of religious dimensions of indigenism. The Northuldra tribe is inscribed in a romantic image and portrayed as an ecological friendly and spiritual community. They are known (and feared) for their magical skills and the name of their home, the Enchanted Forest, also gives us hints of the magical power of the people and their ancestors, as a place where the natural landscape is bonded with the spiritual world.

This type of representation of indigenous people as a community with shared religious values relating to nature, to the past, and to traditions, can be traced back to 1960s counterculture, and in particular to the interplay between the environmental movement and the New Age movement. These movements emerged within the same period, and have been exchanging ideas ever since, especially in terms of consciousness about ecology and fascination with the world's indigenous peoples.

From the late 1970 environmental concerns created a distinction in views of what could be considered sustainable forms of human development. Thomas Karl Alberts notes that, "Conservationists turned to indigenous peoples believing they could derive models from indigenous examples of sustainable use of natural resources" (Alberts 2015, p. 2). The new "ecospiritual-politics of indigenism" is also expressed in legal and political documents. For example, former UN special rapporteur José Martinez Cobo in the so-called Maritinez-Cobo report claims that there exists "a deeply spiritual relationships between indigenous peoples and their lands as basic to their existence as such and to all their beliefs, customs, traditions and culture" (Cobo 1986, p. 7). Regular references to indigenous people as children of Mother Earth are similarly common in UN-fora, along with references to a holistic worldview. As Dorothy L.

[5] For more details on the Christianisation processes see Fonneland and Äikäs's introduction to this special issue.

[6] "Indigenous religion" is still surrounded by negative associations and linked to primitivism and superstition in some contexts and situations, as for example within mission networks (see also Tafjord 2018).

Hodgson notes, the UN presentations of indigenous people "draw on and reproduce familiar tropes and images of Indigenous people as colourful, spiritual 'authentic' and artistic" (Hodgson 2014, p. 62). In contrast to the "freedom of beliefs" promoted by human rights discourse, the beliefs of indigenous people tend to be explicitly connected to particular landscapes. To cite one example: ILO Convention 169, ratified by Norway in 1990, claims that governments must "respect the special importance for the cultures and spiritual values of the peoples concerning their relationship with the lands or territories" (Article 13, 1). As Thomas Karl Alberts points out,

> Whereas transnational NGOs may promote essentialist representations of indigenous peoples' inherent closeness to nature, for indigenous these representations often reflect tactical choices about securing interests within structures of opportunity and constraints generated by the symbolic economy itself. (Alberts 2015, p. 132)

In other words, this new global religious-identity is partly a result of UN meetings and regulations, including laws that have helped standardise certain qualities by translating them into rights. Nevertheless, as Alberts and several researchers have pointed out, these values are also often expressed by indigenous people themselves, in their identity constructions, in the struggle for political rights and "governance value," and in cultural revitalisation processes (see Alberts 2015; Whyte 2018; Beyer 1998; Kalland 2003; Kraft 2009; Niezen 2012; Clifford 2013). Indigenous religion is thus a global discourse that attributes a particular kind of spirituality and value to indigenous peoples, while indigenous people are also able to contribute to the shaping of this discourse and to utilise it for their own more or less strategic purposes. In the following, a discussion about how indigenous religion discourses are promoted and renewed by Disney in the production of Frozen II is outlined.

4. Reindeer, Joik, and Nature Magic as Identity Markers

In the Enchanted Forest, Elsa discovers the origin of her magical powers and learns about the betrayal of the Northuldra tribe by her own ancestors. Due to the imbalance of the spiritual elements, the Enchanted Forest is in a state of ecological crisis, wrapped in a mist that traps the Northuldra tribe and hinders people from getting into the forest. As Elsa and her companions reach the edge of the forest, it turns out that because of Elsa's powers, the mist parts at her touch. In the forest Elsa and Anna realise that their mother, Queen Iduna, was a Northuldra who at the time of the riot saved her father, Agnarr. Elsa discovers that the voice calling to her was the memory of young Iduna's call; and that her powers were given to her by nature because of Iduna's selfless act of saving Agnarr.

In the film, the allure of the north has acquired spiritual dimensions. The Enchanted Forest, the home of the Northuldra tribe, is wrapped in a local indigenous culture situated as far north as one can go. The Northuldra people are described as a nomadic reindeer people as well as guardians of nature. They live in wooden tents that resembles the Sámi lavvo as well as in goađit (turf huts), wear clothes similar to the gákti (Sámi traditional dresses), and welcome Elsa and Anna and their companions with a joik (a traditional Sámi way of singing). The south Sámi musician and composer, Frode Fjellheim, who was invited to take part in crafting the soundscape for the first Frozen film, also composed music for the sequel, but this time the joik is performed by the Northuldra people, confirming their bond to the Sámi and to indigenous people worldwide. The joik is considered a marker of Sámi identity and was a central element in the old Sámi religion, serving in part as a tool helping the noaidi to navigate the spiritual world (see Graff 2016). In the film the joik communicates culturally specific information, and is an element that frams the Northuldra people's authenticity as well as otherness.

Reindeer herding has become a key symbol for Sámi cultures and is the most established marker of Sámi identity. The reindeer itself has gradually gained a strong symbolic power in various Sámi representations as a common denominator for Sámi cultures—and not least for indigenous status. According to folklorist Stein Mathisen, versions of Sámi reindeer-herding culture are "central symbols for a way of life that represents harmony with nature and the environment and that offers a special

kind of indigenous, spiritual conscience" (Mathisen 2015, p. 204). In the song "Lost in the Wood," Kristoff, seeking advice from his reindeer companion Sven about how to propose to Anna, even states that "reindeer are better than people."

In Frozen II, the portrayal of the Northuldra people's interactions with their reindeer serves to demonstrate the strength of the Northuldra as a nature people. The Northuldra and their reindeer are depicted as a holistic unit and their home, the Enchanted Forest, as holding an invisible bond between people, animals, and nature. This type of portrayal that links the Northuldra community exclusively to reindeer husbandry, even though the majority of the Sámi are not part of the reindeer husbandry culture, can be said to provide a univocal understanding of Sámi identity and fails to recognize the diversity of Sámi cultures. It can be seen as a constructed "myth of origin" that both simplifies the past and excludes contradictory voices (see Mathisen 2010). In addition to a nomadic reindeer herding community, the Northuldra tribe is portrayed as a matriarchal society. The female local tribal leader is described as a wise, elder woman who is both strong and independent. She has no government or religious institutions to support her, and is a leader by virtue of her knowledge about the forces of nature. She is also the one who admonishes Elsa to trust only nature and listen when it speaks. The highlighting of female divinity is in line with the claim that media representations are gender specific, and that particular religious coverage reflects the women's emphasis on improvement (Romarheim 2011; Gresaker 2018).

In Frozen II, indigenous religion is also materialised in four natural and agentive elements in the shape of animals, nature forces, and figures of folklore. The air spirit takes the shape of a tornado, the fire spirit of an agitated salamander, the earth spirits of giants made of stone, and finally the water spirit of a nokk, a water horse who guard the sea to the glacier Atohallan[7], said to contain the truth about the past. Because of King Runeard's betrayal of the Northuldra tribe, the natural elements are in imbalance and the Enchanted Forest in a state of ecological crisis. Elsa confronts and tames the tornado, the salamander and the nokk and they become her guides in search for a fifth and lost element. Anna is the one who takes care of the earth giants, not taming them, but tricking them into destroying King Runeard's dam as an act of reconciliation. The focus on nature as a door opener for establishing contact with the spiritual world and the notion that nature possesses a force that can be used for the cultivation of self and society is particularly prevalent in contemporary New Age movements. It is hard, in the landscapes explored in this case, to distinguish clearly between "New Age" and "indigenous religion", and not necessarily fruitful to do so. A close and spiritual relationship to nature is a crucial commonality, along with sacred landscapes, healing, and holism, and practices such as animism and shamanism (see Fonneland and Kraft 2013). Another denominator is the notion of self-spirituality. In Frozen II, this theme is highlighted through Elsa's travel to Atohallan in search for the fifth natural element. This is the element that she hopes will make both herself and the societies she belongs to complete, but instead of a new magical creature like the Nokk or the salamander, Elsa discovers that the fifth element is herself. In a fog of memories from her childhood, Elsa sees her mother, calling out, "you are the one you have been waiting for."

Even though Læstadianism (a Lutheran revival movement which spread among the Sámi during the late nineteenth century) gradually grew to a strong position within the Sámi community (a position it still has today), there is no mention of Læstadianism nor Christianity in the narrative that Disney elaborates. Sámi religion more than Læstadianism and Christianity reinforces the image of the Sámi culture as different from Western cultures. This also makes Sámi religion an important sign of otherness and authenticity (see also Kalvig 2020). As Kraft argues, "Due to this logic, perhaps,

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[7] Lauren Dundes, in the article "Elsa as Horse Whisperer in Disney's Frozen 2:Opportunity "Nokk"s to Quash Gender Stereotypes" (2020) points out that Disney fails to move past the discomfort about the confluence of women's sexuality and power. "Elsa's heroic actions fall within a category of sport in which she risks a subordinated position that does not threaten men's hegemony" (Dundes 2020, p. 3). According to Dundes, Elsa's horse-taming prowess offers the "safe" choice of pairing her with the Nokk as a surrogate human man (Dundes 2020).

Christianity (as a "foreign" religion) has to a large extent been excluded from the Sámi national project, while pre-Christian Sámi religion has emerged as a primary source" (Kraft 2009, p. 180). The picture drawn here is of a society located in a mythical past of indigenous traditions and ceremonies that serves as a part of the "seasoning" of the Disney narrative.

The ability of popular culture to appeal to our emotions and our identification processes makes it well-suited for communicating religious ideas and ideals (Clark 2007, p. 10). The way indigenous religion is articulated in the film and linked with New Age concepts such as self-spirituality, holism, and feminism that all have secular counterparts (see Kraft 2017) inscribes Frozen II in a religious "neutral" environment, where religious symbols and values circulate almost unnoticed. This more vague form of spirituality fits perfectly to the popular media and their genres which, as Stig Hjarvard underlines, create a form of religion that appears as a part of the background owing to its implicit, "unwaved flag" qualities (Hjarvard 2011, p. 128). According to Hjarvard, because these media produced forms of religion are seldom referred to or talked about as religion and have a more implicit quality, they also spread more easily and tend to affect contemporary everyday religiosity and "become the backdrop for human knowledge about religious issues and serve to encourage "the subjectivist spiritual imagination" (Hjarvard 2011, p. 132, 2012), see also (Lied 2012). The portrayal of the Northuldra society as deeply spiritual, matriarchal, harmonious, and ecologically sensitive and Elsa's self-development and her strive for the balancing of the elements, in other words contributes to a cultural repertoire that serves to promote indigenous religion as a Sámi identity marker (see also Christensen 2013; Christensen and Kraft 2011).

5. The Bridge Conflict

In Frozen II, local stories and materialities are connected to a global network and global categories. One such example is the story that is the basis of the plot itself and that reveals the betrayal of the Northuldra people. King Agnarr of Arendelle tells a story to his young children, Elsa and Anna, about how their grandfather, King Runeard, established a treaty with the neighbouring tribe of Northuldra by building a dam in the Enchanted Forest. However, the treaty failed and a fight occurred in which king Runeard was killed and the elemental spirits of Earth, Fire, Water, and Air of the forest were enraged. Entering the Enchanted Forest and confronting the past Elsa learns "the real story," namely that her grandfather wanted to build the dam as a ruse to reduce the Northuldra's resources and that he intended to incorporate the region into his kingdom. She also learns that he was the one who initiated the conflict by killing the unarmed leader of the Northuldra tribe.

The bridge conflict in Frozen II shines a light on a Sámi indigenous issue from the real world, namely the construction of a hydroelectric plant in the Alta-Kautokeino River (1979–1981) in a substantial reindeer herding area where the dam would disrupt reindeer migration and traditional salmon fishing and also flood and displace the Sámi village Máze.[8] Still, the Alta affair represented something more than concerns for the reindeer and the environment. The demonstrations, roadblocks, and hunger strikes that took placed in connection with the "Alta affair" sparked a Sámi ethnic revival, and are generally regarded as the beginning of the Sámi cultural revival movement (Hætta 2002). They also served as premises for what the founding father of shamanism in Norway, Ailo Gaup has referred to as the 78 generation—the Sámi version of the 1968-generation (see Fonneland 2017), The Sámi 1978 generation consisted of young people as well as scholars, musicians, and artists who had more or less been cut off from the Sámi culture and language and who wanted to improve the political situation of the Sámi people. This was a generation whose parents, due to strong assimilation processes, had shielded their children from a cultural baggage they considered shameful, in order to secure them a better life and more positive prospects (see Fonneland and Kraft 2013, p. 133). After a prolonged period of acts of civil disobedience, hunger strikes, and an occupation of the Prime minister's office

[8] Máze was excluded from the plans and permanently protected in 1973.

(see Alver 2015), the decision was effectuated in January 1981, against massive protests. Despite the building of the plant, the Sámi won a victory in achieving a positive outlook for Sámi autonomy. Thanks to the Alta conflict the Sámi achieved a great deal both when it comes to publicity, an extended focus on Sámi rights, and it also put the question of Sámi indigenous status on the national political agenda" (see Thuen 1995, p. 13). In 1989, The Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament) was established and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989 No 169 (ILO 169) was ratified by Norway the following year.

What the producers of Frozen II has added that differs from the real story, in addition to destroying the dam, is the staging of indigenous religion as a key element in the bridge affair. As Siv Ellen Kraft has pointed out, the Alta-conflict was stripped of religious symbols and references. Only more revitalized secular symbols like the gákti, the lavvo, as well as other examples of duodji (traditional Sámi handcraft) were displayed (Kraft 2020). In Frozen II, the Northuldra tribe is recognised as an indigenous community precisely due to the display of indigenous religious references. Religion in Frozen II is no longer absent, but a core of the bridge conflict. In the film, the highlighting of religion as a key feature of the conflict is a tool that marks the Northuldra as a distinct people, rooted in a magical landscape and living in harmony with their natural surroundings. This cultural marker is defined as a binary to Western society, religions, and worldviews, in this case, the people of Arendelle who are portrayed as more modern and disconnected from Mother Earth, and the Northuldra tribe as her protectors.

6. An American Story

Frozen II mediatizes Sámi indigenous religion in a globalised form. In this global religion, all local elements that do not travel well in the Disney universe are wiped out and those that do are remodelled and assimilated to wider global idioms and interests. The film's producer, Peter Del Vecho, visited the Sámi parliament in Kárášjohka in October 2018 and in an interview with the national broadcasting company NRK Sápmi, he precisely states that: "The Sámi culture has a unique history. We are very interested in different angles, so we can try to make films that appeal universally. That is why we are here."[9] Frozen II in other words is an American story, where the local materialities, knowledge, and traditions are moved to and shaped by a global setting to appeal to a global audience.

Contemporary old Sámi religious symbols are no longer as stigmatised, but revitalised (see Joy this volume) and embedded in new contexts, practices, and meanings (see Äikäs and Spangen this volume, and Kraft this volume). Despite the reversal of status and these symbols' present-day position as Sámi cultural heritage, no specific religious symbols or characters are staged in Frozen II. The film is stripped of the goavvdis (Sámi ritual drums), the sieiditt (Sámi sacrificial stones), as well as the noaidi (Sámi religious specialist), which are the most well-known markers of the ethnic religion of the Sámi indigenous population.

This way of adapting local markers to a global market can be seen as an example of what Siv Ellen Kraft and Greg Johnson refer to as, "scalar translations," namely "ways in which locally specific objects and actions gain relevance outside of their site-specific locations and contexts, as belonging to the broader indigenous we and our" (Johnson and Kraft 2017, pp. 6–7)[10]. In Frozen II, this process of scalar translations have blurred the more locally specific elements and brought a focus on more indefinite characteristics of indigenous religion. The directors describe the Northuldra religion as

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[9] https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/oscar-vinner-og-frost-2-produsent_-_-den-samiske-kulturen-har-en-unik-historie-1.14230144 (accessed on 21 May 2020), translation by author (Den samiske kulturen har en unik historie. Vi er svært interesserte i forskjellige innfallsvinkler, så vi kan prøve å lage filmer som appellerer universelt. Derfor er vi her).

[10] There is also a wise versa to the "Scalar translations"story, namely, "how globalizing idioms are anchored in the local we" (Johnson and Kraft 2017, pp. 6–7). In terms of Frozen II, it remains to be seen how its religion-making will be stated in terms of new images, figures, or realities. The tourism operator Visit Norway together with the Disney Company have already arranged a press tour for international journalists throughout Sápmi to discuss how Frozen II can serve as a means for increasing tourism to the region (https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/haper-pa-turistboom-etter-_frost-2_-1.14782432 (accessed on 2 May 2020)).

an indistinct form of spirituality; a spirituality embedded in indigenous ways of life and thinking, and with a focus on concepts such as holism, environmental protection, feminism, ancestral anchorage, and nature worship.

As Janet Wasko (2001) argues, the Disney Company has form the very start "Disneyfied" fairy tales and folktales by adapting them as a source material for their classic children animations to make them appealing for Western audiences. The Disneyfication process in other words comprises an adaption, simplification, Americanisation, or westernisation of the original source material (see Wasko 2001; Zipes 1999; Giroux and Pollock 2010; Griffin et al. 2017). In Frozen II, the source material that Disney builds on is not a not a fairy tale or folktale, but Sámi cultures and religion are here framed to fit with the Disney fairy tale standard.[11] As the film's director Peter Del Vecho announced to NRK Sápmi, Disney's goal is precisely to transform Sámi cultures and religion to make the source material "universal" and attractive to theatregoers globally.

The Sámi religious symbols in Frozen II are part of a global arrangement, and it is within these frameworks that patterns of knowledge and practice transmitted from the local community become alive in the Disney universe. Considering the indigenous religion staged in Frozen II, it is impossible to draw a line between the global and the local. Although the symbols chosen have their roots in a local context, their performance takes into account global flows. These circulations of religious thematics and symbols through scalar translations call our attention to religious change, and the flexibility and capacity of religion in processes of mediation.

When a company such as Disney chooses to use indigenous religion as a main source material, it is important to highlight the power dynamics involved. Despite the huge success of Disney's fairy tale films, many critics object to the way the fairy tales have been adapted. As Jack Zipes argues, the Disney corporation is attempting to impose American value systems upon the rest of the world in a deliberately political, colonizing, or imperialist way (Zipes 1999). Rather than viewing staging of indigenous religions in Frozen II as a discourse that is exclusively imposed from outside, an equally important approach is to discuss how indigenous people are also able to contribute to the shaping of this discourse and to utilise it for their own more or less strategic purposes (see also Christensen 2013).

7. Framing Otherness through Collaboration—Conclusions

Several of Disney's film productions have been heavily criticized for cultural appropriation and inaccurate depictions of indigenous cultures (see for example Norgam 2016; Yin 2014; Budd and Kirsch 2005; Edgerton and Jackson 1996). Pocahontas (1995) is one of the Disney animations that has drawn heavy criticism from indigenous communities for whitewashing and erasing a genocidal history (see Ristola 2020). Cultural appropriation refers to processes of asymmetrical cultural exchanges in which one part exploits elements from the culture of a part whose position is significantly weaker (see Clifford 1983; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Accusation of appropriation was also the case for the first Frozen film, launched in 2013. The film opened with a song inspired by traditional Indigenous joik and Kristoff wore clothes that resembled the Sámi gákti, but there was no mention of the origin of the song nor clothes and no permission was sought from the Sámi people. After the debates about cultural appropriation that surrounded Frozen, Disney decided to lay the ground for a more sustainable indigenous cultural policy in the sequel. That the criticism connected to the first Frozen film generated changes in terms of the production of Frozen II, marks a transition in the balance of power and representation. As Michelle Anya Anjirbag points out,

> It is also arguable that in the past two decades, the shift from sending a production team on a research trip and engaging consultants as needed, to deliberately involving people who are of and invested in a particular culture to be part of the adaptation and storytelling

[11] The first Frozen film is said to build loosely on *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Andersen, while Frozen II has no source material that is related to a particular folktale or fairytale.

process, marks a significant change in how Disney has approached telling stories from other cultures. This latter move is, at face value, a positive step, as the studio begins a necessary process of potentially moving away from appropriating and transforming cultural property in decontextualized ways and perpetuating harmful, often colonializing, stereotypes. (Anjirbag 2018, p. 13)

A collaboration between the Walt Disney Company, the transnational Sámi Council, and Sámi parliaments of Norway, Sweden, and Finland was established and a so called Verdett-advisory group[12] of Sámi artists, authors, scholars, and political leaders was formed. All parts also signed a contract that outlines Disney's desire to "collaborate with the Sámi in an effort to ensure that the content of Frozen II is culturally sensitive, appropriate and respectful of the Sámi and their culture."[13] Disney agreed to produce a dubbed version of the movie in the North Sámi language titled Jikŋon that was released 25 December 2019 at the same time as the Norwegian, Frost 2.[14] Cross-learning initiatives where Sámi filmmakers and animators will have the chance to head to California for internships with Disney were also initiated. In several media coverings, the members of the Verdett-group praise the cooperation with the Disney Company. Ánne Lajla Utsi, director of Internášunála Sámi Filbmainstituhtta (The International Sámi Film Institute) underlines that: "It has been a very, very good collaboration, I must say. We are really proud of that, and happy about the film, as it is now."[15]

Frozen II in other words can be seen as Disney's redevelopment project encouraged by what Ronald Niezen has termed "the politics of shame"—"the effort to influence a decision or policy through dissemination of information to an audience that is a source of political power, information that exposes the inappropriateness, harm, or illegality of a course of action" (Niezen 2003, p. 179). The politics of shame is thus nourished by a general understanding of the colonialization process as a blemish history of the West, and of indigenous people's right to speak back (Niezen 2003). In the case of Frozen II, these politics generated new cultural policies and practices which sought to establish positive alternatives to appropriation, and the collaboration with the Verdett group has obviously been important for the film's legitimacy, as well as for its role as a contributor to Sámi indigenous religion.

In a research context, there has been a tendency to describe romantic indigenous images as an expression of destructive exotification, largely under the auspices of New Agers, and when religious symbols are branded and packaged through media or in tourism settings, issues of commodification, religious authenticity, as well as dilution of spiritual value are often raised (Vukonic 2002; Zaidman 2003). The processes involved in the production of Frozen II and the portrayal of the Northuldra tribe as an indigenous spiritual community, are still more complex than a construction of a romanticised other. Through a close cooperation with the Disney Company, indigenous people were able to contribute to the shaping of the indigenous religion discourse and in this process indigenous religion also becomes part of broader functional apparatuses linked to contemporary politics, economy, and to what James Clifford describes as ongoing processes of "becoming indigenous" (Clifford 2013).

Limited scholarly attention has been directed to cases "in which marginalised sociocultural communities have adopted the language of religion as a means of empowerment vis-à-vis assimilationist politics directed against them" (Dressler and Mandair 2011, p. 22). The production of Sámi indigenous religion in Frozen II can be described as processes of religion-making. Religion-making, according to a model developed by Markus Dressler and Arvind Mandair, is expressed on diverse arenas and is a process that emerges from various positions of power and that also comprise secular institutions

[12] The north Sámi word verdett refers to the word friends or more precisely "guest friends." The Sámi Verde-system is an informal arrangement that lasts over time where two or more people/families exchange services.
[13] https://nowtoronto.com/movies/news-features/disney-frozen-2-indigenous-culture-sami (accessed on 31 May 2020).
[14] The Internášunála Sámi Filbmainstituhtta (The International Sámi Film Institute), which took over the production of the Sámi dubbing, had previously asked, back in 2013, to dub Frozen, but Disney declined their request. Frozen II is the third film to receive a special dubbing.
[15] https://www.sofn.com/blog/sami-culture-represented-in-frozen-2/ (accessed on 5 May 2020).

(Dressler and Mandair 2011; Dressler 2019). They point out that that religion-making from below forms a dialectical relationship with religion-making from above, and that attention needs to be given to the "more complex dynamics of agency in the adaptation of these discourses in non-Western vernacular languages" (Dressler and Mandair 2011, p. 22) With reference to Charles Halisey's concept of intercultural mimesis[16], they argue that,

> We need to think the appropriation of the Western discourses of religion and the secular in a manner that does not reduce local actors to the role of passive objects but instead focuses on "local productions of meaning," that is, the agency of locals in the encounter with Orientalist knowledge. (Dressler and Mandair 2011, p. 22)

In Frozen II, a narrative about the Northuldra community and its members takes shape through the selection and interpretations of the "local" and "traditional," and through the activation of different symbols and events that are highlighted as particularly meaningful for the Sámi community. This narrative underpins and develops discourse about indigenous religion by presenting the Enchanted Forest and the Northuldra culture as spiritual, close to nature, in balance with the natural elements, and associated with ancient traditions. In Frozen II, Sámi religion is portrayed as a living and valuable symbol. Here, Sámi religion is no longer a cultural stigma and a reminder of a pagan past, but a powerful, authentic, and magical symbol for a living Sámi culture.

Cultural forms will always be shaped and reshaped. Tradition is not an objective capacity with roots in the past, but rather something dynamic and shifting—a contemporary man-made process that facilitates a symbolic construction of relationships between past and present (see Handler and Linnikin 1984). The signposting of indigenous religion in Frozen II is a result of complex, innovative processes where cultural elements from the past are reframed, transformed, retrieved, and added new and positive value in order to create awareness about Sámi identity, culture, and politics. The religious images emerge not from ethnographic documentation but from an imaginative construction stimulated by contemporary encounters.

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[16] Halisey is in this chapter paraphrased in Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion* (King 1999, p. 148).

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