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Joik as the Golden Thread of Sami Revitalization

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

Joik as the Golden Thread of Sámi Revitalization

written by

Tori Bateman

and submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for completion of
the Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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Introduction

When studying music, it is important to understand its role in the change and continuity of culture. This understanding can be achieved by studying music as an element of peoples' collective identity and how it affects the variability of this identity. Through this, we can discern specific aspects of ethnicity, origination, and nationalism in an ever-changing globalized society. As seen in the Sámi people of northern Scandinavia and Russia, where joik[1] tradition is practiced, the relationship between the social identity of indigenous people and music is especially important, as these cultures are rapidly changing and adapting to a globalized society. Definitively Sámi, joik may be the oldest European musical tradition which, in the last forty years, has contributed to a Sámi cultural revival. Despite the increasing globalization of world cultures, the Sámi nation persists in their specific social identity, and music significantly contributes to this cultural renewal.

Methodology

The research conducted for this thesis includes both library research and field research conducted over a two-week period in Karasjok, Norway in July, 2015. During this trip, I was able to conduct library research at the Sámi Parliament *(Sámediggi),* which houses over 10,000 books on Sámi subjects and in several languages, including Sámi. I was also able to attend Sápmi Park, a cultural park that provides both information and entertainment based upon traditional Sámi culture. This park embodies the growth of tourism in indigenous cultures, and serves as a symbol of Sámi identity in Karasjok against a background of typical Norwegian lifestyle. In addition, I was able to visit NRK Sámi Radio, the Sámi Collection, which is a museum of various Sámi artifacts; and take a riverboat tour with a local Sámi and performer of joik.

[1] *Joik* (often anglicized to *yoik*), from the Sámi verb *joigat* meaning 'to produce a musical sound,' is a singing or chanting style of music in Sámi culture. *Joik* can be used as both a noun and a verb and may have an object. For example: "A man sings a joik," "A man joiks," "A man joiks his mother," "The man is a joiker."

Theories on Identity

The aim of this thesis is to bring forth the ways in which music reinforces and defines collective identity. Therefore, the treatises and theories of identity in the social sciences must first be addressed. Identity is defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as "the qualities, beliefs, etc., that make a particular person or group different than others."[2] To be gleaned from this definition is that identity is not a singular entity, but rather a multiplicity of factors determining the unique being of one person as compared to the next. Another tenet that many scholars agree upon is the idea that people possess an identity that is multifaceted, and that any facet of an individual's identity can be given precedence in varying situations. Facets of identity include but are not limited to religion, age, gender, interests, nationality, ethnicity, language group, or class. A person's individual identity is also influenced by the world and the people that are encountered within it, thus rendering an identity that is essentially shaped by parents, teachers, friends, and – especially in today's age of globalized internet and technology – complete strangers. In this sense we can see the interconnected nature of identity, a concept that both sets apart and associates people based upon certain traits.

Collective identity, therefore, is the connective fiber between individual identities, in which a group of people are set apart and associated based upon shared traits, values, or goals. Collective identities can be related to origination and kinship, shared experience, mutual belief, or common interest, and are affirmed through "ritualized" practices and common activities.[3] Two schools of thought exist in the area of collective identities - essentialist and non-essentialist; the former relying on the idea that group identity depends on "natural" traits and psychological agreements that are internalized, whereas the latter expands this idea to include goals and ritualization

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[2] *Merriam-Webster, s.v.* "Identity," accessed Dec. 29, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity.
[3] Hermanowicz, Joseph C., and Harriet P. Morgan. "Ritualizing the Routine: Collective Identity Affirmation," *Sociological Forum* 14 (1999), 198.

that are not necessarily natural to the individuals. The non-essentialist view has emerged in recent years as a response to social movements and political mobilization. The Sámi collective identity falls somewhere in the borders, where it is at once an identity based upon natural similarities but just as easily is used to fuel indigenous movements and cultural mobilization based upon common goals in the absence of a singular ethnic indicator. It is easy to visualize the vast interconnectedness of the world which is ever-increasing due to the Internet and ease of travel, and although this increase creates new collective identities, it also threatens the collective identities of traditional cultures as more young people are drawn to mimic the lifestyles of the majority, and to counter this global assimilation an increasing effort is being made to revitalize traditional and/or indigenous collective identity.

The nature of identity is complex and ever-changing, and thus it can be obviated and constructed depending upon specific events or situations in an individual's life. The obviation of cultural identity is an increasing issue, especially in the lives of urban Sámi, where pressures to blend with urban society are coupled with the lack of pressure to maintain traditional cultural elements. The construction of a Sámi cultural identity is common among people, especially young people, who have discovered a Sámi heritage and have pursued the "acquisition" of status as an indigenous Sámi. This pursuit ultimately constructs a new identity that contributes to an individual's decisions and actions.

According to Guiot, the construction of identity is achieved through observation of others and categorization of traits that may potentially be assimilated into one's own spectrum of identity.[4] We see, however, that in today's time identity construction can occur without the physical

[4]Guiot, Jean M. "Attribution and Identity Construction: Some Comments," *American Sociological Review* 42 (1977), 693.

presence of another individual through the use of technology.[5] This facilitates social movements, long-distance kinship, and global community-building. Music is, in many cases, a large part of these constructions, as it is easily produced and shared online. Music performance, preference, understanding, and contextual genre are all elements that build identity by building divides between individuals and bridging them. Music serves as a potent tool for the construction of identity, and thus serves as a powerful tool for the reconstruction of identity. Rebekah E. Moore eloquently states in her thesis:

> "Music, as a powerful, culturally constructed means of creating meaning, conveys societal values and views of the world; it also negotiates boundaries between cultures and within cultures. Music can serve many functions, including the transmission, creation, reproduction, or even reconstruction of identity, and musical performance creates a special space for the performance of identity, unlike any other context we encounter."[6]

Music creates meaning in much the same way as language by shaping our understanding on the basis of a commonly understood pattern of words and/or sounds. Music often uses language as a tool, but meaning is conveyed even in the absence of language – which contributes to its ability to connect those who speak different languages. Music performance is, therefore, a stage for identity affirmation on both a local and global scale.

Theories on Indigeneity

The Sámi scholar Odd Mathis Haetta defines indigenous people as "a people that inhabited an area before the present dominant group settled and decided the national borders."[7] Indigenous people are those who directly descend from original inhabitants of an area, such as the Native

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[5]Cerulo, Karen A. "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997), 386.

[6] Moore, Rebekah E. "Rewriting the Soundscape: Towards a New Understanding of Sámi Popular Music and Identity in the New Millennium," University of Maryland, College Park, Master of Arts, 2004, 5, hereinafter referred to as Moore, 5.

[7]Hætta, Odd Mathis, translated by Ole Petter Gurholt. The Sámi: An Indigenous People of the Arctic. Karasjok, Norway: Davvi Girji OS, 1996, 66.

Americans in North America and aboriginals in Australia and New Zealand. The Sámi are the indigenous people of Scandinavia and arguably all of Europe. Like other indigenous groups, the Sámi have made an effort to define the grounds upon which a person can be considered indigenous and Sámi, causing many people to fall "within the borders" of society. Determining one's status as indigenous seems as straightforward as determining one's own heritage, yet it is often difficult to determine who is indigenous in this world that is increasingly blended. In addition, many cultures, including the Sámi, rely on a combination of language proficiency, ethnicity, and indigenous self-identification to determine indigenous status. Scholars thus raise the two-fold question - What is indigenous identity, and is it truly authentic? This issue of indigenous authenticity is criticized in Kuper's controversial article, "The Return of the Native."[8] Kuper's criticism has caused an ongoing debate upon whether indigeneity is relevant in today's politics and culture, and despite his negative perspective the following criticism of indigenous rhetoric generally illustrates the ideas of the indigenous movement.

> "Local ways of life and group identities have been subjected to a variety of pressures and have seldom, if ever, remained stable over the long term. It is nevertheless often assumed that each local native group is the carrier of an ancient culture. In familiar romantic fashion, this culture is associated with spiritual rather than with material values. It is unique and expresses the genius of a native people. To be sure, it is conceded (even angrily insisted) that the authentic culture may survive only in rural enclaves, since (again in good romantic style) native cultures are represented as being everywhere under threat from an intrusive material civilization associated with cities, with stock markets, and with foreigners. However, it is argued that the essence survives and can be nursed back to health if the resources are provided. The alternative is represented in the bleakest terms. The loss of culture is sometimes spoken of as a form of genocide. Even in less apocalyptic discourses it is taken for granted that a people that loses its culture has been robbed of its identity and that the diminution of cultural variation represents a significant loss for all humanity."[9]

I am in opposition to Kuper's criticism. I earnestly believe that heritage and origin are the roots of identity, and that to lose a sense of indigenous identity would be a great loss to

[8]Kuper, Adam. "The Return of the Native," Current Anthropology 44 (2003), 389-402.
[9]Kuper, Adam. "The Return of the Native," Current Anthropology 44 (2003), 390.

both the individual and the struggling indigenous people group. Unlike nationalism, which sets people apart and depends upon the integrity of borders, indigenous identity is borderless and ideally focuses on the inclusion of people and invitation to form a connection to both present individuals and past ancestors. The focus of an indigenous mindset is very different from that of a nationalist or "Western" mindset, and concentrates on the preservation of culture, resources, and kinship rather than the preservation of power and nations. To criticize the authenticity of an indigenous identity as an outsider is presumptuous at best, and thus it is of utmost importance to me, a non- Sámi scholar, to represent the Sámi culture with the truest of voices. A conscious effort has been made to include scholars of Sámi origin at every opportunity, especially when expressing the nature of Sámi indigenous identity.

Theories on Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of the ways in which meaning is created, or the study of signs. Signs can be visual, as we know signs to be, but signs can also be aural. Natural spoken language, for example, is an aural sign upon which we base our understanding of the world. Language is described by some as a primary modeling system, an intangible structure that supports our understanding of the world while also connecting all humans through this structure. For example, we understand what a bird is, but we can categorize our understanding of the bird by giving it a word and words to describe it that are comprehended by more than just one individual. We structure our understanding of a tangible object - the bird - by giving it a sign that can signify its reality.

Many scholars debate the use of semiotics to understand music, especially in the Western tradition. With indigenous music, semiotics can contribute to the understanding of the role of music in society. Sámi music is a basis for Sámi understanding, has been a driving force in the revitalization of Sámi culture since the 1970s, is unique to the Sámi realm of experience, and has set Sámi apart from other Scandinavians and indigenous cultures. Because of an impetus from

indigenous communities globally to be recognized as such, they have rejuvenated the Sámi reality - through the primary modeling systems within their culture - and influenced the identity formation of youth in the indigenous communities.

Early Sámi History

Figure 1: A map depicting the approximate borders of Sápmi.

Before adopting the name "Sámi," the indigenous people of Scandinavia were referred to as Lapps by settlers and non-Sámi. This designation has taken a derogatory meaning over time, and today the accepted name for this people group is "Sámi," deriving from the native word *sápmelaš,* meaning person.[10] This designation is important in itself, as it represents an assertion by the Sámi of their autonomy as a separate culture. The area in which Sámi have historically occupied is commonly known as Lapland; however the name for Sámi land is Sápmi. Lapland is often used as a general term for the area of Scandinavia above the Arctic Circle, while Sápmi refers specifically to Sámi territory, as pictured in **figure 1.**

Sápmi is situated mainly above the Arctic Circle, called the circumpolar region, which is characterized by tundra permafrost and taiga coniferous forests. The Sámi people are connected to the natural world in which they live, and the harsh nature of the Arctic Circle has written their

[10]The spelling of Sámi titles and words will be closely aligned with those used by current Sámi scholars.

history and directly influenced their culture and lifestyle. Subsistence methods in circumpolar areas are varied, much like the landscape, and the area is defined by the northern tree line separating taiga from tundra. Because the overall natural production of this area is low, resources are minimal and subsistence has relied historically on a semi-nomadic lifestyle. The Sámi have long been associated with nomadicism and reindeer herding, although the two are not necessarily connected. Before reindeer pastoralism became a prominent method of subsistence and trade, the indigenous people of the inland areas of Sápmi were nomadic hunters. Nomadic lifestyles are defined by mobility, and burdensome items, including instruments, hinder the ability to travel with ease, and this combined with a lack of resources resulted in circumpolar cultures that did not develop a variety of musical instruments but instead music traditions mainly based around vocal styles.[11] Nomadicism has now died out, as Sámi live in permanent homes and herding is aided by technology that increases mobility of an individual herder.[12]

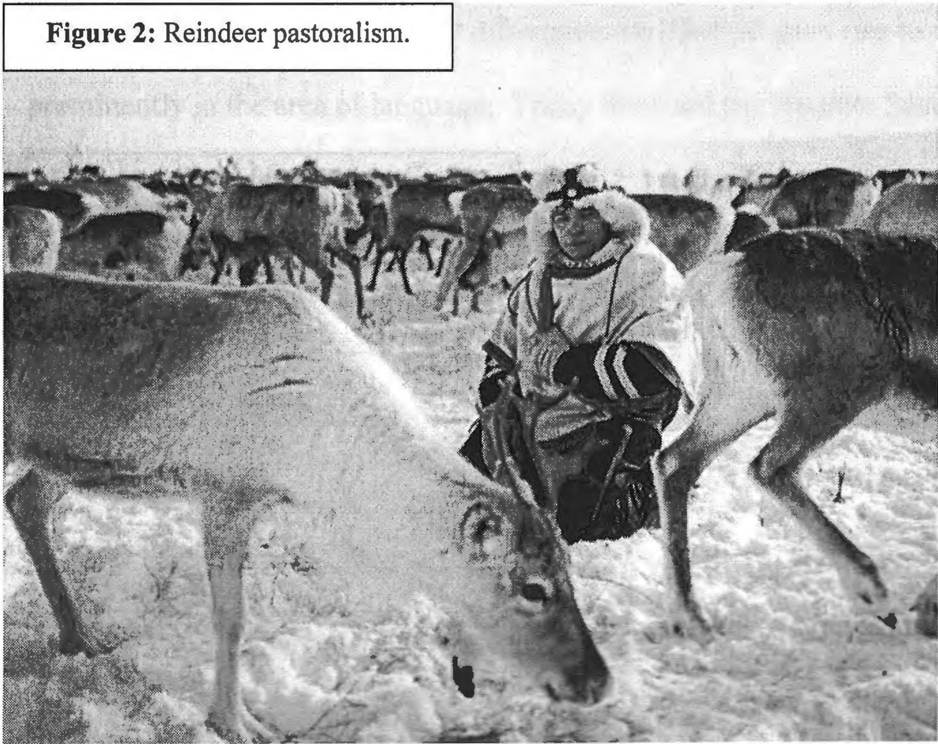
As depicted in **figure 1,** Sápmi is a large connected swath of land, and looks as though it is a large overlapping Scandinavian country. This image misleads us in two ways, the first being that Sápmi is divided due to national borders. Throughout European history the borders between Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia have shifted, forcing the Sámi to acknowledge borders between their own people. The border of Sápmi, unlike the borders of the countries dividing it, is based upon traditional Sámi settlement and language groups. This leads to the second misleading – despite their regional and social unity the Sámi are not a unified people group with regards to language and cultural practices. Because of regional and lifestyle differences, the Sámi are a culturally diverse people and are historically divided into three cultural groups, although they do not

[11] Moore, 30.

[12] Mackenzie, John, ed. "Saami or Sámi or Sabme or Lapps," *Cassell's Peoples, Nations and Cultures*. London: Cassell, 2005.

adequately represent the diversity of Sámi lifestyle today. The Forest Sámi lived within the coniferous forest area of Sápmi, and it is with this group that the siida system, or village system, was most prominently seen. Lehtola writes in his book that "the siida system was a permanent socio-economic and political institution and had been functional for centuries" despite the belief that all Sámi had been strictly nomadic.[13] The Sea Sámi lived almost exclusively in Norway along the coast of the Arctic Ocean, and surprisingly makes up the largest group of Sámi.[14] The Sea Sámi developed their way of life around fishing, and thus reindeer herding has not historically been a large part of their subsistence. Perhaps the most well-known group of Sámi is the Reindeer Sámi, who are the iconic reindeer herders of Sámi culture. Reindeer husbandry is estimated to have begun around the 1400s in small domesticated herds, although this estimation may be incorrect. Archaeologists attempt to explain the switch from hunting and gathering to reindeer pastoralism [15] using Sámi residence patterns. In a study of Sámi residence patterns, the authors conclude that "once a community changed from hunting subsistence to pastoralism, claiming ownership of reindeer, it posed a severe threat to neighboring

Figure 2: Reindeer pastoralism.



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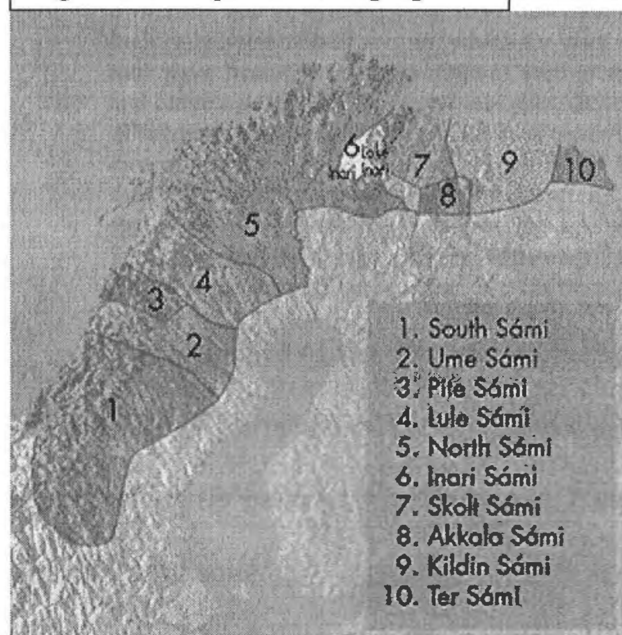
[13]Lehtola, Veli-Pekka, translated by Linna Weber Müller-Wille. The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2004, 23, hitherto referred to as Lehtola, 23.

[14]Lehtola, 12.

[15] Larsen, Erika. *Sámi, Walking With Reindeer,* accessed January 20, 2016. http://www.erikalarsenphoto.com/books/Sámi/, image.

communities, thereby catalyzing an irreversible and rapid chain reaction."[16] The domestication of reindeer resulted in a decrease of wild game for hunters, resulting in pressures to change the method of subsistence. Reindeer herding at this time was small and intensive, yet throughout history external pressures have resulted in an expansion of herds and pastoralism practices. In the 1600s, the Swedish crown began to influence the herding of reindeer through heavy taxation on furs and fish, which incidentally caused many Sámi to flee to the Norwegian coast, however the Sámi who stayed began to take on large-scale reindeer husbandry in the late 17th century in order to meet the taxation and continue their indigenous lifestyle.[17] This expansion continues today, as many Sámi still herd reindeer in the traditional manner on a large scale, profiting from the demand of reindeer meat and furs. These differences in lifestyle gave rise to differences in culture, most prominently in the area of language. Today there are ten separate Sámi languages that are spoken regionally, as depicted in **figure 3.**[18] The most common of these languages is Northern Sámi, which is spoken widely in Norway.

Figure 3: A map of Sámi languages.



The origins of the Sámi people are highly contested, and many consider Sámi origin to be "a great mystery and a riddle waiting to be solved."[19] This uncertainty is important, as it contributes to the ongoing discourse of Sámi indigenous status. Scholars continually debate

[16]Bergman, I., Liedgren, L., Östlund, and Olle Zackrisson. "Kinship and Settlements: Sámi Residence Patterns in the Fennoscandian Alpine Areas around A. D. 1000," Arctic Anthropology 45 (2008), 107.

[17]Lundmark, Lennart. "Reindeer Pastoralism in Sweden 1550-1950," Rangifer Report No. 12 (2007), 11.

[18] *Sámi Museum – Anarăš.* accessed January 20, 2016. http://www.Sámimuseum.fi/anaras/english/kieli/kieli.html, image.

[19]Ojala, Carl-Gösta. Sámi Prehistories: The Politics of Archaeology and Identity in Northernmost Europe. Västerås, Sweden: Edita Västra Aros, 2009, 11.

whether or not the Sámi are the original inhabitants of Scandinavia or are a product of cultural mixing between early northern Asian peoples and Europeans. Regardless, it is evident that the Sámi were one of the first inhabitants of Europe's northernmost region and that modern heritage is highly dependent upon European interaction and ethnic hybridity.

Because of the widely accepted theory that the Sámi are the original inhabitants of northern Europe, it is also theorized that joik is the oldest form of music in Europe. The exploration of this theory alone would merit an entirely separate written work, however if it holds truth then the Sámi culture and music tradition is an important part of European musicology that has repeatedly been left out of discourse. Joik has been recorded as a phenomenon as early as the Roman Empire, and Cornelius Tacitus describes a people who were closely connected with nature in his book *Germania:*

> "In wonderful savageness live the nation of the Fennians, and in beastly poverty, destitute of arms, of horses, and of homes; their food, the common herbs; their apparel, skins; their bed, the earth; their only hope in their arrows, which for want of iron they point with bones. Their common support they have from the chase, women as well as men; for with these the former wander up and down, and crave a portion of the prey. Nor other shelter have they even for their babes, against the violence of tempests and ravening beasts, than to cover them with the branches of trees twisted together; this a reception for the old men, and hither resort the young. Such a condition they judge more happy than the painful occupation of cultivating the ground, than the labour of rearing houses, than the agitations of hope and fear attending the defence of their own property or the seizing that of others. Secure against the designs of men, secure against the malignity of the Gods, they have accomplished a thing of infinite difficulty; that to them nothing remains even to be wished."[20]

The influence of the Sámi on other European cultures has not been studied as thoroughly as the effect of European settlers on Sámi culture, but it would be an interesting course of speculation to identify patterns of influence in Western art music from the joik style and its potential derivatives of song.

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[20] Tacitus. *Germania,* accessed February 20, 2016. http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tacitus1.html

The Joik

Musical expression in Sámi culture has been historically based upon the vocal tradition of joik, which derives from the Sámi verb *juoigat* meaning "to produce a musical sound."[21] Traditionally joik is performed solo voice without accompaniment, with the exception of the Sámi shaman drum during shamanic rituals, which was a dominant spiritual practice in Sámi early history. Shamans, called *noiadi,* would use the drum in combination with joik to induce a trance state, which would often be induced to aid hunters in finding large game. The drum was considered to be sacred, and would be carefully made and maintained to be passed down through generations.[22]

There are three recognized dialects of joik – the luohti, vuolle, and Eastern joik. The luohti is the most common form of joik, and is associated with North Sámi. This style is characterized by large intervals in the melody, a mumbling quality, vocables, and shorter length. A vuolle, associated with South Sámi, is characterized by shorter intervals, clearer melodic phrasing, and use of text. Eastern joik is performed by Finnish Sámi, and is often called epic joik, as it is sung to a large body of text, although it exhibits many of the same qualities of the luohti and vuolle. For the purpose of this thesis, the qualities of the joik style will be most aligned with the luohti dialect, however many of the attributes are shared across the three.

The style in which the joik is sung is unique yet some elements are comparable to other traditions, such as yodeling. Joiking is achieved through a combination of chest and head voice, and often the singer will flip rapidly between the two to create ornaments. The tune itself is taught rather than written, and falls along the spectrum between simplistic and complex, sometimes utilizing quarter tones and subtle rhythmic variances. In Finnmark, Norway, joikers will incorporate

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[21]Jones-Bamman, Richard, ed. Timothy Rice, James Porter, and Chris Goertzen. "Saami Music," *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* vol. 8: Europe. New York: Garland, 2000, 299.

[22]Solbakk, Aage. *What We Believe in: Noaidevuohta - An Introduction to the Religion of the Northern Saami.* Kárášjohka-Karasjok, Norway: ČálliidLágádus vuođđudus, 2009, 23, hitherto referred to as *Solbakk, 23.*

large leaps into the melody, accentuating the switch between chest and head voice. Distinct from the Scandinavian classical singing tradition, joik is delivered through extensive use of nasality which often sounds forced or harsh. The comprehensive style of the joik is unique and because of this can be identified easily. Despite its uniqueness, however, the joik has also been compared to yodeling and Native American chant, especially in the west where a minor modality is often used.

Traditional joik is sung primarily with vocables, or meaningful sounds, but can also be sung in combination with meaningful words.[23] These vocables are usually one syllable and always end in a vowel or combination of vowels.[24] Although the vocables may seem to be meaningless substitutes for text, it can be argued that the vocables serve a contextual meaning to local Sámi listeners, even in the cases where vocables have replaced text. A remarkable aspect of joik is its descriptive qualities, and it is fundamental that the description is evoked through sound rather than through text.

Joik is based upon cyclic phrasing, meaning that rather than a beginning and an end, a joik is seen as a circle of sound. The cycle only ends when the singer has run out of breath, and it is then that it repeats. It is a common idea that when one joiks in a cycle one must jump out of the circle quickly. In performance this abrupt stop creates an "unfinished" quality within the phrase, as can be seen in the transcription of "Simiha Ristina Måkon" (**figure 4**).[25] Also unique to phrasing in joik is the slight elevation in pitch during performance. The pitch change is almost unnoticeable and could almost be interpreted as a mistake; however this is a definite part of performance practice

[23]Moore, 36.
[24]Lu, le, lo, loa, lai, no, yo, na, la, etc.
[25] Gaup, M. *Luođis Luohtái 2,* with Elen Inga Eira Sara, Mathis M. Gaup, and Ole Larsen Gaino. © 1997 by Iđut AS, ICD 972. Compact disc.

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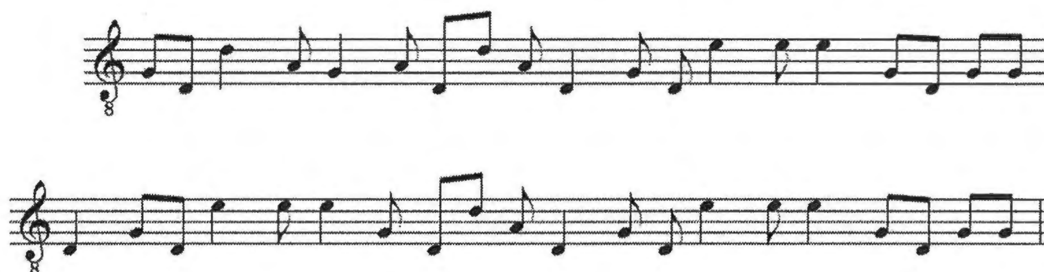
and is intended to increase emotion. Issues arise in modern contexts of joik where tuned instruments are incorporated, and often this element is left out of the modern conception of joik performance and utilized in traditional unaccompanied contexts.

Figure 4. A notational representation of the joik "Simiha Ristena Måkon."



A joik has no object. In most other song traditions, a song is performed *about* or *for* something or someone, whereas in joik this is simply never the case. Somby describes this phenomenon as follows: "...one does not yoik about someone or something, but one simply yoiks someone or something. In a manner of speaking, a yoik has no object. In fact, it is altogether impossible to envision yoik in terms of subject and object."[26] The joik is conceived as a way of recollecting in the most real sense without experiencing the joik's "subject," and in this sense joik is a way of understanding the world in which one lives, much like language. The qualities of a particular joik are intended to create this experience with sound alone, encapsulating the qualities of whatever is being evoked. Ursula Länsman of the Sámi group *Angelit* defines the joik as follows:

> "A *yoik* is not merely a description; it attempts to capture its subject in its entirety: it's like a holographic, multi-dimensional living image, a replica, not just a flat photograph or simple visual memory. It is not **about** something, it **is** that something. It does not begin and it does not end. A *yoik* does not need to have words – its narrative is in its power, it can tell a life story in song. The singer can tell the story through words, melody, rhythm, expressions or gestures."[27]

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[26]Somby, Á. "Joik and the Theory of Knowledge," *Kunnskap og utvikling* (1995), 17, hereafter referred to as *Somby, 17.*

[27]Burke, Kathryn. "The Sámi Yoik," *Sámi Culture, the University of Texas,* accessed January 14, 2016. http://www.laits.utexas.edu/Sámi/diehtu/giella/music/yoiksunna.htm.

The philosophical nature of the joik is surely one of the most compelling arguments for its significance in Sámi culture and culture revitalization. This truly unique perspective on music performance and function is crucial to understanding the traditional Sámi worldview. Memory is one of the most important elements of oral traditions, and joik is one of the most potent methods of remembering people, stories, events, and natural elements. Because of this, joiks are most often attributed to specific people, called personal joiks, which are given by a close family member, friend, or significant other to someone as a gift which can be given early in life or as late as after death. The "composer" will joik that person, and as others learn it they will often use it as a friendly greeting for that specific person.[28] In a sense, the joik becomes a part of that person as much as their own name. It is important to note that not all Sámi have a joik but it is common to receive a joik from an elder family member or as an engagement gift from a significant other. It is considered a *faux pas* to joik oneself, as this signifies haughtiness and condescension.

Joik can be used to substitute for existence, as when a family member dies. To grieve, members of the family will joik the deceased in order to feel their presence. Often Sámi will joik aspects of nature, such as the wind or certain animals, and by doing so essentially substitutes the word for these aspects with joik, which embodies them. It is easy to see that joik is often used like language to create meaning, and becomes a primary modeling system for Sámi understanding. Joik is unique to the Sámi in this way, as it does not hold the same symbolic meaning for non-Sámi ears. Israel Ruong once said that "language is a map of Sámi reality,"[29] and I believe that because of the semiotic relationship between language and music that joik is also a map of Sámi reality.

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[28]For example, rather than calling someone's name combined with a greeting, he or she is joiked instead.

[29] Lehtola, Veli-Pekka. *The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition*, trans. Linna Weber Müller-Wille. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2004.m

The Sámi Drum

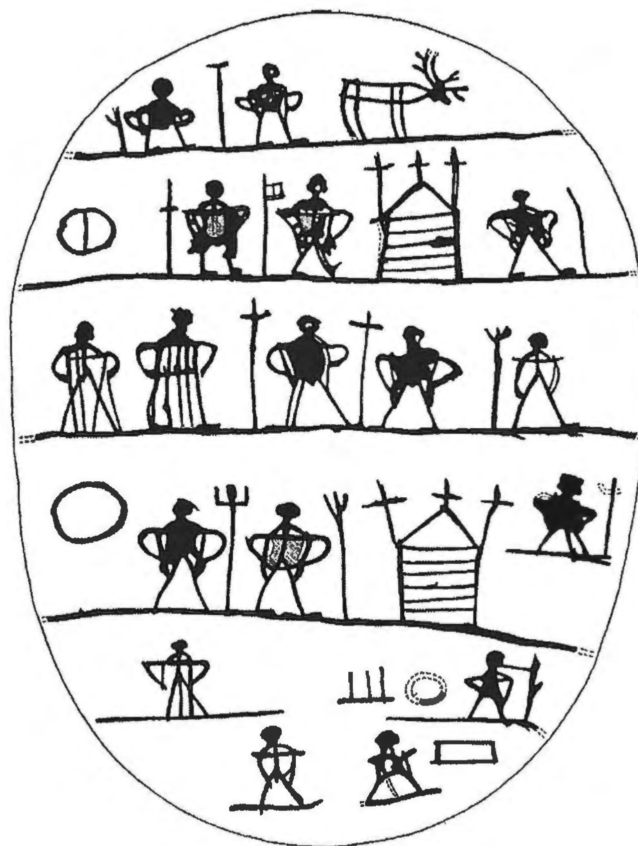

Figure 5. A clear illustration of the figures present on Anders Poulsen's drum.

Once Christianity began to encroach with European settlers, many noaidi, or shamans, were executed and shaman drums burned. In 1692, Anders Poulsen was accused and sentenced to death for sorcery upon being discovered with a shaman drum in his possession. On the drum, pictured in **figure 3,**[30] are figures that the prosecution considered to be attributed to "Satanic" shamanistic practices, however Poulsen described many of the figures as Christian symbols, potentially hoping for a less rigorous sentence.[31] Rather than being burned the drum was preserved, and is currently on display in The Sámi Collections, or *Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat*, in Karasjok, Norway (**figure 5**). During my research in Karasjok I was fortunate enough to visit this museum, which is among four in western Finnmark featuring Sámi artifacts. The museum in Karasjok, though small, houses a multitude of artisan crafts, modern art, traditional costumes, and various tools and artifacts that illustrate the way of Sámi life, both past and present. Perhaps the most prominent of all is the Anders Poulsen shaman drum. This drum was placed behind ropes, suspended from the ceiling above a strange-shaped rock (possibly meant to illustrate sacred rocks of the old tradition). Its presence in the

[30] *Sámi Faith and Mythology: A Web Exhibition,* accessed January 22, 2016. http://www.saivu.com/web/calahus.php?artihkkal=487&giella1=eng, image.
[31] Solbakk, 28.

room is immediate and awe-inspiring, especially with the knowledge that the drum is over four hundred years old. Below the drum, scattered about the stones, are reindeer antlers and coins. It is not certain whether these offerings were placed for visual effect by the museum curators or if they were left there by visitors to the exhibit, but regardless they serve as a vivid reminder that joik is rooted in a history of shamanism and nature tradition. The drum was the most significant part of Sámi religious culture until their confiscation and destruction in the 16th century, and today only around seventy remain in various Scandinavian museums. Their significance today is reflective of the significance in Sámi collective memory, as it serves as a symbol to Sámi cultural reclamation. The shaman drum is a present symbol in Sámi culture today. In Sápmi Park, another tourist attraction in Karasjok, the signs are in the shape of the drum, and its steady beating rhythm was the initial sound heard during the Sámi "magic theater," a modern presentation on the old religion of Sámi natives. Frame drums are often used in Sámi music, both recorded and live, and are a feature of popular Sámi artists, such as Mari Boine. Why is the use of the drum so significant? Many cultures use drums and other percussive instruments to accompany their music, but in Sámi culture the drum carries an inseparable connection to shamanism and traditional culture. Shamanism and the old religion were nearly entirely destroyed by settlers and missionaries throughout Sápmi, and joik was henceforth done in secret and without the aid of the drum. Although joik serves as a symbol of dissent to the authority of oppressive settlers, the shaman

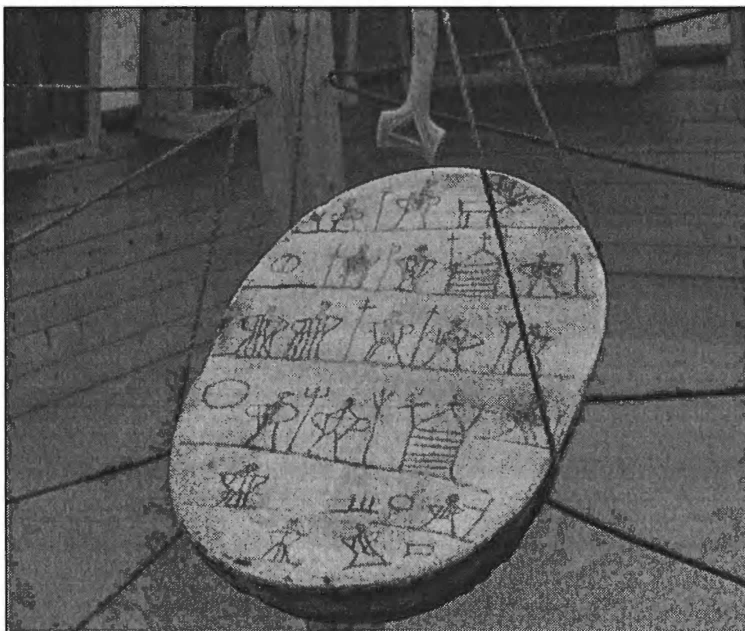

Figure 6. Anders Poulsen's drum, ca. 1692, currently in the Sámi Collections in Karasjok, Norway.

drum functions as a physical representation of the freedom and culture that was lost at the time and the continual oppression of the "Lapps." The use of the drum is a tool for the subversion of the governmental structures that considered the Sámi as an assimilated ethnic minority rather than their desired status - an autonomous indigenous nation with a separate set of values and a self-determination to rights. The drum's continual use in Sámi media promotes this "symbolic warfare" to achieve this goal shared by many other Fourth World nations.

Language and Performance

The Sámi language is an integral part of cultural reclamation today, as it is the vessel for Sámi thought and worldview. Scholars theorize that the Sámi languages are related to Finnish, as they are thought to have both originated with the proto-Finnish people preceding modern people groups of Scandinavia. From a linguistic standpoint, this seems to be a valid argument as both Finnish and Sámi are distinct from other languages of the area but somewhat similar in tense and complexity. Despite their similarities, speakers of any of the Sámi languages are not likely to be able to understand others as they have developed separately. Of all the Sámi languages it can be said that they are irreplaceable in content and practice, as the languages are unique and closely tied with the natural elements of Sápmi. It is a common misconception that all languages can be translated word-for-word; however this is simply not the case. Each language is its own separate construct of social meaning with its own contexts, idioms, histories, and uses. To translate, for example, the phrase "I love you" from one's mother tongue into a secondary language would result in the lack of emotional and relational connection to the translated phrase. Our initial understanding of relationships and simple emotions are rooted in the construct of language, which organize reason around an otherwise meaningless mass of emotions within each individual's psyche. It is because of this that there is a loss, or lacuna, between an original language and a translation. According to Walter Benjamin, translation is a function to illuminate the gaining of new ideas from the act of

translation despite this lacuna, and he focuses in his writing on the necessity of translation for the survival of languages and cultural practices.[32] A paradox thus emerges from the topic of translation: there is both a loss and a gain when languages are translated. Despite the gain that occurs when an individual is bilingual, the loss in translation can be detrimental, especially in the case of Sámi who have lost the ability to speak Sámi over time despite it being their mother tongue.

Although the joik is performed extensively through the use of vocables, language continues to be an important element of joik performance. Many of the earliest accounts of joik, before the benefit of recording technology, were written as poetry instead. The use of language in joik also varies according to region and community, with western and southern areas of Sápmi generally employing more vocables than words, whereas eastern and northern Sámi usually perform joik that tell stories with more extensive use of language. The text, complimentary to the heavily descriptive nature of the joik itself, should be considered as much as the music itself. In Krister Stoor's dissertation, he explains that the joik tradition should be examined through both spoken and sung messages, asserting that "yoik must be recognised as verbal art or storytelling."[33] This is achieved by tone painting, artistic interpretation, and most prominently through the language and text that tells the story through the joik.

In an interview with Marko Jouste, an ethnomusicologist at Tampere University, Rebekah Moore explores the importance and necessity of language in Sámi performance, revealing that, according to Jouste, Sámi identity in music performance is not dependent upon the use of Sámi language or texts, but instead seems to be dependent upon the context of performance.[34] This highlights that, although cultural signifiers are important to Sámi identity, it is not dependent upon

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[32]Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator," *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume I: 1913-1926.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, 253-263.

[33]Stoor, Krister. "Juoiganmuitalusat - Jojkberättelser: En studie av jojkens narrativa egenskaper," unpublished PhD dissertation, Umeå University, 2007. http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-1323.

[34]Moore, 112.

these signifiers. Joik is an important part of the many facets of Sámi identity, but the identity does not rely on joik or its attributes, but rather on the context of performance beginning with the individual.

The Sámi reality is largely based upon language competence. In order to be considered a Sámi, one must be able to speak a Sámi language or have a parent or grandparent who speaks fluently. In many cases, members of Sámi society will lose the ability to speak Sámi after childhood despite it being their first learned language, and thus they lose their mother tongue and the initial concepts of relationships and emotions realized through the language. Lawra Somby, a Sámi performer in the band Adjagas, talks of losing his fluency in South Sámi after childhood as difficult and frustrating. This loss has impacted his life so intensely that much of his music involves the emotional impact of losing a language. In the film documentary "Firekeepers," Somby shares his frustration and performs a joik entitled *Im manne gåarkah* (trans. "I do not understand") that serves as an anthem for the isolation of being both an insider to a culture and separated by barriers of language and identity.[35] The joik itself is reminiscent of both sobbing and angry muttering, as it is low and wavering much like traditional joik, and is reminiscent of the shamanic chant in the old Sámi religion. In the documentary, Somby also discusses the emotional toll of his childhood experiences with losing fluency in South Sámi. He recalls that he was both encouraged and discouraged from using the language. This dichotomy is evidence of the generational differences within Sámi culture, and the opposing ideas present throughout the conflict of the 1900s.

According to the band's website, Adjagas "is the Sámi word for the mental state between waking and sleeping. As the band's title it is wholly appropriate - the music is gentle, peaceful, hypnotic, quietly passionate, dreamlike, deeply spiritual and utterly engrossing."[36] Despite the

[35] *Firekeepers: Joik Between Sleep and Awakening,* digital video, directed by Rossella Ragazzi (2007; Tromso, Norway: Sonar Film DA), DVD.
[36] "Adjagas," *Ever Records,* accessed March 15, 2016. http://www.everrecords.com/adjagas.

obvious correlation to the dreamlike quality of the group's music, the name also signals a reference to the "in-between" nature of the artists, caught between the past and the future of Sámi cultural survival and the "in-between" of authentic Sámi identity.

Festivals

Music festivals have driven the development of a pan- Sámi identity and fostered a connection with other indigenous groups on a global scale. These highly organized festivals held in Finnmark and throughout Sápmi are the result of an evolution humbly beginning in the 1970s and continuing to grow today. Davvi Suvva, held in 1979, was "the first Sámi and international indigenous culture and music festival after the establishing of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples."[37] This festival took place at Kaarevarra near the Swedish and Finnish border and drew a crowd of multiple indigenous groups, but most prominently the Sámi.

The significance of festivals in the reestablishment and reinforcement of Sámi identity lies in the fact that the joik and other inherited cultural expressions were being expressed freely in a communal gathering, despite the expressions' past of muffled suppression and forbidden use. The early festivals served as a form of icebreaker, providing an official venue for the act of dissent against prior ideas about the repression of indigenous culture and becoming powerful weapons for reclaiming culture.[38] Although an argument can be made for the merit of festivals in building cultural identity, Angell suggests that the ethnic identity of the Sámi were relatively strong and that Davvi Suvva was centered less on ethnic identity and more on "becoming indigenous and a 'member' of the Fourth World."[39] The "Fourth World" of indigenous groups has grown to become a prominent global community despite the distance and regional nature of indigenous groups, due

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[37]Angell, Synnøve. "Davvi Šuvva 1979: Being Sámi, Becoming Indigenous," Master's thesis, University of Tromsø, 2009, 1, hereinafter referred to as Angell, 1.
[38]Angell, 83.
[39]Angell, 90.

Figure 7. An image of the various indigenous groups dancing at Riddu Riđđu.

in a large part to festivals such as Davvi Suvva. Upon interviewing an attendee to Davvi Suvva in 1979, Angell writes - "One even said: 'People did not come for the music, but to be together' but without the music, no Davvi Suvva and no sounds from the north."[40] The fellowship and cultural experiences at these festivals revolve around the music, the cornerstone of indigenous gatherings in Sápmi. The festival tradition continues to be an important part of Sámi expression, and one of the most popular events in recent years is Riddu Riđđu, a music festival reaching to all indigenous groups. This festival, on the west coast of Norway, draws Australian aborigines, Native Americans, and other indigenous groups from around the world, as pictured in **figure 7.**[41] Many of the performers are Sámi, who perform joik and popular genres outside of traditional culture (**figure 8**).[42]

Figure 8. The Sámi flag being held onstage at Riddu Riđđu.

Reconstructing Identity

Following World War II during the reconstruction of war-torn communities across Sápmi, an awareness of Sámi unification and the act of reconstruction contributed to a shifting perception

[40]Angell, 89.
[41] Bertelsen, Ørjan. "Riddu Riđđu," *Norway Festival,* accessed April 3, 2016. http://norwayfestivals.com/nb/festivals/riddu-riddu, image.
[42] St. Marie, Buffy. "Riddu Riđđu," *Norway Festival,* accessed April 3, 2016. http://norwayfestivals.com/nb/festivals/riddu-riddu, image.

In the spring and summer of 1945, when the Sámi returned to their home regions, they found them destroyed. Only in remote regions were buildings saved from burning by the Germans.

Figure 9. Sámi returning home to destruction after World War II.

of identity - from that of regional community-based identity to that of a collective identity formed on a broader scale. Prior to World War II, Sámi lived in separate sectors of Sápmi, mostly isolated and community-based on the local level. World War II and its atrocities brought both destruction and technological advancement to the Nordic countries, greatly influencing the transmission of culture and information among the Sámi. This also, however, allowed greater influence toward assimilation and cultural appropriation. Many elements of assimilation occurred during the reconstruction of Sápmi. Perhaps the greatest shift was economic. [43]The idea of a cash economy was limited and sporadic prior to the war, and once it was introduced to the majority of Sámi a decline in reindeer husbandry and nomadicism occurred. Because for many Sámi reindeer husbandry defined traditional lifestyle, this decline had a major impact on the decline of other areas of Sámi culture, including music. Also during this time a change occurred in the Sámi educational system, in which students participated in mandatory Finnish-style education and school boarding houses. This separation from Sámi traditions and immersion in mandatory European education created a generation of Sámi estranged from their own culture during school years.[44] Often called the "boarding house Sámi" or "boarding house generation," these individuals are associated with a shunning of Sámi language

[43]Lehtola, 55, image.
[44]Lehtola, 53.

and culture in favor of European ideas and Christianized lifestyle. For many of these Sámi, the boarding house culture effectively wiped the embedded Sámi identity from their minds and they became essentially assimilated. If it weren't for this and the global "folk revival" of the 1970s, the Sámi Movement, or "Sámi Renaissance,"[45] would not have been as potent or effective. Many elements of life following World War II contributed to the collective move toward tradition and cultural indigenous identity, also leading to a rise of Sámi political actors to perpetuate this change. These Sámi combated marginalization in post-war Sápmi in what is known as the Sámi Movement. This began with a birth of ethnic identity and solidarity among all Sámi which, according to Lehtola, "came in waves and was different in each region in the different countries."[46] Despite the differentiation, the first trans-national Sámi meeting took place in 1953 to discuss Sámi political and cultural issues.

Like other movements seen throughout history, the Sámi Movement was born in conflict. Assimilation actions had been taken throughout post-contact Sámi history, but in after the mid-1800s Norway began to implement harsh policies that emphasized European superiority and attempted to norwegianize "lower" Sámi culture.[47] These policies, based partially upon Darwinist views, not only brought legal action into the effort for assimilation, but established educational infrastructure that taught the Norwegian language to Sámi students. In addition, the right to land ownership was based upon language competence, thus undermining the Sámi language's legitimacy. The authority of the assimilation policies carried into the twentieth century, and contributed to the outlaw of joik in Norway.

Despite the fact that the joik was virtually abolished under policies of assimilation, it has become a weapon of symbolic warfare combating the pattern of appropriation and emerging as a

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[45]Lehtola, 70.
[46]Lehtola, 57.
[47]Lehtola, 44.

symbol of Sámi identity and global presence. Joik is a strong weapon due to its multiple functions and subtle encoded meanings as well as the wide range of audience. According to Moore, the joik "could serve as a rather neutral symbol of Sámi culture, while simultaneously conveying messages of political resistance, and existing as a form of popular entertainment for insiders and outsiders."[48] The cultural memory of repression continues to be strong, as exemplified in Lawra Somby's statement in a documentary covering the creative journey of a joik musician duo - "Our drums were burned, but it is not possible to burn the songs inside."[49] Referring to the burning of shaman drums in early Sámi history, Somby both acknowledges the history of assimilation and of passing on cultural knowledge by means less easily controlled - through music and oral tradition. The film in which he makes this statement, called *Firekeepers,* discusses the band Adjagas and their ideas about the joik and cultural expression. The title refers to the act of keeping embers burning so that a fire does not go out, which is a metaphoric representation of the task of those who carried on cultural practices, including joik, during times of assimilation, mobilization, and repression. Such acts were essential to reconstructing Sámi identity and fortifying existing ideas within Sámi culture.

The Álta Conflict

The Álta Conflict is one of the most defining events in Sámi history, and contributed to the perpetuation of the Sámi Movement into the twenty-first century. In the mid-1900s, the Sámi began to face the destruction of their homeland in the form of dam-building, mining, and timber clearing. This was not an isolated event, but occurred across several years and several areas of Sápmi.[50] The Sámi are very close with nature, out of both necessity and cultural belief, and this closeness is largely to do with the careful balance of natural resources that is essential to traditional

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[48]Moore, 31.
[49]*Firekeepers: Joik Between Sleep and Awakening,* digital video, directed by Rossella Ragazzi (2007; Tromso, Norway: Sonar Film DA), DVD.
[50]Lehtola, 72.

Sámi life. Perhaps the most threatening event was the planned damming of the Áltá-Guovdageaidnu River system in Norway, which would result in the flooding of reindeer herding lands. The plans to dam the river system brought heavy opposition by the Sámi, who predicted that the damming would cause major flooding of reindeer herding grounds and other natural resources that the Sámi depended upon for their livelihood. This opposition resulted in a ten year conflict consisting of numerous demonstrations by the Sámi, culminating in a serious of violent and non-violent demonstrations in Norway. Because of the need to come together in their opposition, Sámi leaders influenced the creation and reinforcement of several cultural symbols in Sámi culture. One of these symbols is the Sámi flag, which even to this day is not supported by the Norwegian government but continues to be used by nearly all Sámi groups. Despite these protests, the building of the dam continued and the natural resources of the river system were indefinitely altered. This event, however, bolstered Sámi presence within the Norwegian governing body, and resulted in changes to policies regarding minorities, most prominently the Sámi. They appointed a state committee to discuss and decide upon Sámi affairs. Under the amended constitution in 1988, Norway officially recognized the Sámi as an aboriginal people and the Sámi "obtained their own representative body, the Sámediggi, in 1989; received their own political advisory authority to the government, the Coordinating Committee of Sámi Affairs; and secured the Sámi language act in 1990."[51] Many Sámi had their "awakening" during this time, and the lasting impact of this event resulted in the awakening of Sámi culture among artists and musicians.

Generational Differences

As mentioned previously, modern Sámi identities are largely affected by the attitudes of older generations. In order to fully comprehend the collective identity of the Sámi people, it must

[51] Lehtola, 73.

be noted that many generational differences exist within the spectrum of Sámi experience and expression. The attitudes belonging to those of the boardinghouse era are contrasting in many ways to those who were adults during the Álta Conflict. Possible causes for the ideological chasms are religious beliefs, conditioning, and unique worldviews. The Laestadian faith practiced by many Sámi, especially those of the boardinghouse era, strictly forbids the practice of joik on the basis of condemning references to the old religion. This led to a muting of joik practice among the generation following, up until the second awakening of Sámi culture in the late 1900s. Even today the lasting influence of Sámi language and cultural prejudice can be seen within the realm of Sápmi, and affects the spread and influence of cultural uniformity.

Because of the generational differences of Sámi in modern society, traditional culture experiences a stage of simultaneous solidification and dissolution. A prominent example of this is the use of modern technology and subsequent globalization, which threatens traditional ways of life and drives young Sámi to urban areas rather than encouraging them to embrace the traditional lifestyle. In contrast, increased communications technology has also contributed to the unification of Sámi through popular media, radio, and Internet communities.[52] This illustrates the complex nature of cultures in the context of time and generations and the many facets of life included in these contexts - the joik is a small yet significant portion of the patterns of multiculturalism and cultural change in Sámi society.

Multiculturalism and the Modern Joik

Music is often seen as a reflection of the time and society in which it was conceived, and in fact it reflects the life of the composer, the world events of the time, and the conflict within a society. Music is an organic vessel to comprehend the emotions of a single person or group of

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[52]Lehtola, 57.

people. With joik today, however, the music is both reflective and evocative, meaning that joik both represents and evokes the subject while also being a reflection of the composer or performer's attitude toward the subject. Orbina, a popular joik in Karasjok, is a traditional joik from the area about a young boy who is orphaned. It reflects the melancoly nature of the time in this boy's life. The joik is evocative in that it has been transformed and used as a proponent of the transformation of Sámi history this very moment.

Intrigue is a band led by Kai Somby, a native Sámi of Karasjok. Their music is a unique blend of traditional joik and heavy metal. Orbina has been transformed into a heavy metal popular song, and is commonly played on the radio and sung by young people in Karasjok. Orbina, in this case, both reflects upon the time of the young boy and is a proponent of exposing traditional joik to young Sámi people in Finnmark. Whether this was Somby's intention is not known, but his unique blend of musical styles is a perfect example of the ways that Sámi artists are bringing young people to know about and care about their own culture in their everyday lives.

Another artist who is seamlessly blending music styles is Wimme. Wimme Saari is one of the most prominent joik artists from Finland. His music is imbued with Sámi influence, but is a blend of ambient New Age style and joik. His voice is the main focus, with an ensemble of both synthesized and live percussive and ambient elements accompanying. This unique blend has influenced other Sámi artists, and yet other artists are pushing boundaries to enter into a multicultural era for the joik.

One Sámi artist in particular is paving way for a new era of Sámi cultural realization – Maxida Märak[53] – and is drawing upon several cultural influences to do so. Märak has performed with Downhill Bluegrass Band, which is a bluegrass band based and founded in Sweden. From

[53] *Downhill Bluegrass Band,* accessed April 12, 2016. http://downhillbluegrassband.com/downhill-featuring-maxida-marak, image.

Figure 10. Sámi artist Maxida Märak.

the mountains of Appalachia, bluegrass has made its way into the mountains of Scandinavia and to Sámi ears. In "The Mountain," a traditional bluegrass song performed by the group, Märak sings of the timber being cleared away from the mountain that she calls home. She states on the band's website that "the more you listen to bluegrass, the more common ground you find with Sámi culture."[54] The connection with nature and the political angst expressed both in the mountains of Appalachia and in Sápmi can truly be heard in this groundbreaking meld of cultural styles. Märak not only sings and joiks to bluegrass, but is an avid member of the hip hop, pop, and alternative music scenes in Sweden. She is also a strong Sámi activist and an upcoming cultural idol. Her blend of styles and, even in her appearance, blend of modern and traditional is defining a new avenue for Sámi expression – one that truly embraces the adaptation of the living Sámi culture.

Conclusion

It was the artistic pioneer of the Sámi Movement and of the evolution of joik into its modern multicultural conception, Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, who once said:

> "I myself believe that if a culture is to live, then it must change constantly, bring with it new material and customs and utilize them in a manner suitable for everyday use. In my opinion a culture is not a museum artifact, but must be something that lives from day to day."[55]

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[54] *Downhill Bluegrass Band,* accessed April 12, 2016. http://downhillbluegrassband.com/downhill-featuring-maxida-marak/, image.

[55] Helander, Elina. "Nils-Aslak Valkeapää: I Have No Beginning, No End," *No Beginning, No End.* Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 1998, 27.

The Sámi culture is truly a living culture, as it changes and conforms to the society in which it resides. Music is perhaps the best vessel for this change and conformity, as it is always changing to match the tastes of modern listeners. It is true that many cultures have become nothing but a museum exhibit, and their culture remains a fixed memory. The Sámi, although their past is often proudly displayed in museums, are a living and adapting traditional people group, and because of this are perhaps the most striking example of cultural survival in a globalized world. Even in the past few years, the joik has been featured in a mainstream Disney movie, *Frozen,* and continues to gain attention from the general public to the life of the Sámi.

Although many may say that Sámi culture is declining, joik is fading into ethnomusicological history, and the reindeer herding industry is in moratorium, it is my belief and the belief of many Sámi, such as joik artist Sofia Jannok, that the joik is only now becoming a recognized art form and will continue to perpetuate the Sámi traditional culture into the future. This prophetic idea is yet to be confirmed, but as we enter into an aesthetically-centered era, the nostalgia and exoticism of joik is sure to become a draw to crowds beyond the shores of Scandinavia. It is because of the survival of the joik that I believe the culture will survive, as it is an essential element to achieving cultural distinctness and unity within the Sámi reality.

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