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The Institutional Process of Repatriation of Indigenous Heritage

The Case of the Sami Drum Freavnantjahke gievrie

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Abstract

This paper addresses the repatriation debate about the South Sami Freavnantjahke gievrie that was taken from its owner, the Sami Bendix Andersen Frennings Fjeld, in 1723 by the missionary Thomas von Westen. After the confiscation, the drum came to the Danish royal family and was gifted in 1757 to the noble family Saxony-Hildburghausen in what is now Thuringia, Germany. Today the gievrie is in possession of the Meininger Museen. In 2017, the drum was exhibited on loan in Trondheim at the exhibition "Hvem eier historien?" [Who owns history?], which was the impetus for the repatriation debate. The South Sami Museum Saemien Sijte requested a meeting with the German museum in 2021 to discuss a repatriation of the drum.

This thesis explores the different perspectives of Saemien Sijte and the Meininger Museen on the Freavnantjahke gievrie, its value to their institutions and the affects that its repatriation could have on their respective communities. Through interviews with the museum directors, Dr. Birgitta Fossum and Dr. Philipp Adlung, their positions on repatriation, identity, traditional knowledge, colonization as well as decolonization in relation to museums are presented. The drum's contemporary value for the South Sami community is examined in context of Sami history, previous repatriation projects of Sami cultural heritage and research by non-Sami scholars.

Through the insight into the interest of both institutions in managing and displaying the drum this work seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities that the repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie entails and contribute to the debate.

Keywords: repatriation, Sami cultural heritage, museums, colonization, decolonization, traditional knowledge, identity, gievrie

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1. Introduction

“[Y]ou have written our history, then you have
[...] written us out of history [...]”¹

300 years ago, in 1723, the Freavnantjahke gievrie, a South Sami drum, was declared an artifact of witchcraft and confiscated in Nord-Trøndelag, Norway, by Norwegian priest and missionary Thomas von Westen.² During the intensified Christianization of the Sami people in Norway in the 17th and 18th century, the usage of drums was specifically persecuted. Many were destroyed or shipped to the missionary college in Copenhagen, Denmark. This was the case for the Freavnantjahke gievrie, too. After the documented interrogation of Bendix Andersen Frennings Fjeld and his companion Jon Torchelsen Fipling-Skov, who were in possession of the drum,³ von Westen had the Freavnantjahke gievrie sent to Copenhagen. There it became part of the Royal Danish Cabinet of Curiosities until it was gifted by the Danish King Frederick V. in 1757 to the duke of Saxony-Hildburghausen (today Thuringia, Germany), Frederick III., presumably as a wedding gift.⁴ The rearrangements of ducal territory in the 1825/1826 led to a disbanding of the natural history collection and resulted in unknown whereabouts of the drum.⁵ It was not until 1837 that Ludwig Bechstein, a librarian, archivist and writer by trade, donated the gievrie to the research association “Hennebergischer-altertumsforschender Verein” (HaV) which he had founded in 1832. How Bechstein came into possession of the drum remains yet unclear.⁶ The HaV was subject to structural changes and thereby became the “Hennebergisch-Fränkischer Geschichtsverein e.V.” (HFG) in 1935. In 1945 the HFG was affected by the occupation force’s ban of associations, though in 1947 its collections, including the drum, became the basis of the newly opened Meininger Museen.⁷ Since 1947 the drum has been continuously exhibited in Meiningen.

¹ Appendix Interview with Museum Director Birgitta Fossum. p. xix.

² Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. Zur Geschichte, Bedeutung und Funktion der Samen-Trommel, In: *Jahrbuch des Hennebergisch-Fränkischen Geschichtsvereins*, Kloster Veßra/Meiningen/Münnerstadt. p. 176.

³ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie*. Vol. 1: Die Trommel als Denkmal materieller Kultur, Stockholm. p. 600.

⁴ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 182.

⁵ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 183.

⁶ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 183.

⁷ HFG: *Geschichte und Tradition*: <http://www.geschichtsverein-henneberg.de/textseiten/geschichte.html>.

In 2017 the South Sami Museum Saemien Sijte made a request to borrow the Freavnantjahke gievrie for an exhibition in Trondheim under the title “Hvem eier historien?” [Who owns history?]. After initial hesitation due to the drum’s fragility,⁸ the Meininger Museen accepted. The exhibition was part of the celebration “Tråante 2017” in honor of the first Sami National Assembly on the 6th of February in 1917. Tråante is the South Sami name of Trondheim and the place where the Sami Assembly of 1917 was held. “Hvem eier historien?” was exhibited at the NTNU Science Museum and focused on unique South Sami objects.⁹ It was the first time in almost 300 years that the Freavnantjahke gievrie had been back on South Sami soil. According to Reidar Andersen, museum director of the NTNU Science Museum, the drum was loaned out for a five-figure sum.¹⁰ Maren Goltz, curator of the collection of music history at the



Figure 1 Maren Goltz, Meininger Museen, holding the Freavnantjahke gievrie at the exhibition in Trondheim 2017. Birgitta Fossum, Saemien Sijte, to the right. Photo: Håvard Haugseth Jensen

Meininger Museen, accompanied the drum to Trondheim and was the only one allowed to handle it.¹¹ The exhibition started in February 2017 and the gievrie could be seen there until Mid-May. This sparked the idea of repatriating the drum.

In June 2021 the director of Saemien Sijte, Dr. Birgitta Fossum, initiated contact with the Meininger Museen again. This time the intention was to talk about possibilities for a repatriation. At the time Saemien Sijte was in the process of a reconstruction, that was completed in June 2022. The reconstruction gave the museum the needed space to preserve and exhibit the Freavnantjahke gievrie. Fossum’s inquiry remained, however, unanswered until the

⁸ Appendix Interview with Museum Director Philipp Adlung. p. xxxix.

⁹ NTNU (2017): *Omvisning i utstillingen "Hvem eier historien? - Tråante 2017" - NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet*, <https://www.ntnu.no/kalender/detaljer/-/event/49509d46-132a-335a-a702-d223282d1930>.

¹⁰ Ramberg, I. (2017): *Stiller ut samisk tromme: Frøyningsfjelltromma er tilbake på norsk jord etter 300 år*. <https://www.adressa.no/nyheter/i/vO20eX/stiller-ut-samisk-tromme>.

¹¹ Trønde-Avisa (2019): *Sørsamene vil ta tilbake røvet runeбомme*. <https://www.t-a.no/sorsamene-vil-ta-tilbake-rovet-runeбомme/s/5-116-1009045>.

spring of 2022, after a change of management in Meiningen, where now Dr. Philipp Adlung holds the position of museum director.

Meiningen proposed that a meeting could be agreed upon after the summer, after the assembly of the umbrella foundation “Kulturstiftung Meiningen-Eisenach” on 22.06.2022.¹² There, further communication with Saemien Sijte and possibilities for repatriation of the gievrie were to be discussed.

In a statement two days later, Philipp Adlung told the Norwegian Newspaper KulturPlot that a dialogue with Saemien Sijte and Norwegian authorities, first the Norwegian embassy in Berlin, about a repatriation should be established.¹³ Even though it is expressed in the statement that these processes take time,¹⁴ Saemien Sijte is hoping to initiate a repatriation this year (2023), exactly 300 years after the confiscation of the drum.

Repatriation of Indigenous cultural heritage as a means “to protect sites and repatriate artifacts and human remains to sacred sites and graves”¹⁵ and thus to establish and secure Indigenous rights is a process that has been internationally discussed and enforced since the 80s. Since 1989 Sami organizations – with Sami museums playing a significant role – have debated repatriation and ownership of cultural heritage in several meetings and conferences.¹⁶ Cases of successful returns throughout the years and agreements between museums exemplify the impact these debates had and still have.

In 1982 a repatriation project of international importance started: The repatriation project between Denmark and Greenland called “Utimut” [Return]. “Utimut” ended in 2001 and its approach of dialogue and understanding¹⁷ paved the way for subsequent repatriation projects.

The conversations about repatriation in Europe continued in the 2000s. The first initiative in Saepmie was the EU-funded project “Recalling Ancestral Voices” (2006 – 2007) during which

¹² Balzter, S. (2022): *Ruf der Restitution*. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/rueckgabe-von-kulturguetern-schamanentrommel-im-meininger-museum-17776516-p3.html>.

¹³ Larsen, J.-E. (2022): *Tysk museum åpner for dialog om samisk tromme*. <https://samtiden.no/kunst-museum/2022/tysk-museum-apner-dialog-om-samisk-tromme>.

¹⁴ Larsen, J.-E. (2022): *Tysk museum åpner for dialog om samisk tromme*.

¹⁵ 1989 and 1990: ‘Sami Museums’ in Tana and Jokkmokk; 1997: “Historical Seminar: the Kautokeino Event in a Social, Religious and Research Historical Perspective” in Alta; 1999: ‘Sami Museums and Sami Social Development’ in Karasjok; 1999: ‘The Sami Drum in History and Today’ in Jokkmokk; 2000: ‘Who owns Cultural Heritage?’ in Jokkmokk; 2002: ‘Sami Prehistory’ in Lakselv; 2003: ‘Symposium on Landscape, Law, Customary Rights’ in Kautokeino; 2007: ‘Recalling Ancestral Voices’ in Inari; see Mulk, I.-M. (2009): Conflicts Over the Repatriation of Sami Cultural Heritage in Sweden, *Acta Borealia*, Vol. 26(2), pp. 194 – 215, DOI: 10.1080/08003830903372092, p. 202.

¹⁶ Mulk, I.-M. (2009): Conflicts Over the Repatriation of Sami Cultural Heritage in Sweden, p. 202.

¹⁷ Thorleifsen, D. (2008): Preface. In: *Utimut: Past Heritage – Future Partnerships – Discussions on Repatriation in the 21st Century*. p. 8.

Sami cultural heritage in Finland, Sweden and Norway was recorded. The knowledge was collected in a database and opened debates about repatriation.¹⁸ These debates sparked fruitful collaborations as can be seen for example in 2017, when the National Museum of Finland and the Sámi museum Siida in Inari agreed on repatriating the whole Sami collection¹⁹ as well as in the project “Bååstede”.

“Bååstede” (2012 – 2019) is the first repatriation project within Saepmie. The term is South Sami meaning “back” or “return” and the project was dedicated to the return of Sami cultural heritage from national museum institutions in Oslo and into Sami management. Over 1600 objects were transferred into the custody of six Sami institutions: Saemien Sijte, Árran Lule Sámi Centre, Várdobáiki Museum, the Centre for Northern Peoples, RiddoDuottar-Museat and Tana-Varanger Museumssiida.²⁰

However, many artifacts still remain outside of Saepmie and outside of Sami custodianship. They even remain outside of Northern Europe. The Museum Europäischer Kulturen [Museum of European Cultures (MEK)] in Berlin, Germany, for example, stores more than 1000 artifacts of Sami heritage in its holdings which have been mostly gathered by so called collectors in the 19th century. There is an endeavor to return some of the objects and to work together with Sami institutions as has been made clear during a visit of the former president of Norway’s Saemiedigkie [Sami Parliament], Aili Keskitalo, in 2019.²¹ At this occasion she and a delegation were led through the collection of Sami artifacts in the museum’s depositories by the director Elisabeth Tietmeyer. After this, both were engaged in discussions about possible cooperation. These discussions led to the start of the project “The Sámi Collection at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen – A multi-perspective approach to provenance research” in 2022.²²

The awareness of Indigenous peoples and their claims seems to grow. The German Government ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169) in 2021. The same year they ratified the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2021.

¹⁸ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums: Creating a Database for the People. In: Förster, L.; Edenheiser, I.; Fründt, S.; Hartmann, H. (eds.): *Provenienzforschung zu ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit – Positionen in der aktuellen Debatte*. München. p. 73.

¹⁹ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 81.

²⁰ Gaup, K. E.; Jensen, I.; Pareli, L. (2021): *Bååstede – The Return of Sámi Cultural Heritage*. Trondheim. p. 5.

²¹ Birkeland Olerud, M. (2021): *Tyske museer eier 13 av denne samiske rituelle gjenstanden. Samiske museer i Norge eier to*. <https://www.vl.no/kultur/2021/06/15/tyske-museer-eier-13-av-denne-samiske-rituelle-gjenstanden-samiske-museer-i-norge-eier-to/>.

²² Museum Europäischer Kulturen (2022): *The Sámi Collection at MEK. A Multiperspective Approach of Provenance Research*. <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-europaeischer-kulturen/collections-research/research/sami-collection-at-mek/>.

There repatriation claims find support in article 12 §1, which grants Indigenous peoples “the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects.”²³

This awareness for Indigenous rights and colonial structures is not limited, however, to governmental and academic scopes but spreads into pop culture, too. Through, for example, memes younger generations address the problematic collections of museums and their colonial legacy.²⁴ This simplistic means of communication may lead to the assumption, though, that repatriation is an easy and fast process: One party stole an object from another party and needs to give it back now.

So, when in 2021 Saemien Sijte asked for the Freavnantjahke gievrie to be returned from Meiningen the answer from an outside perspective might seem easy. This obvious answer masks many challenges of differing nature. They stretch from practical differences between the two countries and the varying organization styles of institutions to the lack of knowledge and experience in these matters.²⁵ They stretch from legal claims to missing resources. Eventually, the challenges stretch to a mismatching understanding of cultural heritage, as well as a different understanding of purposes and responsibilities of museums. Repatriation is a complex process that requires money, time, understanding and knowledge on many different levels.

1.1. Research Question and Interest of Knowledge

The introduction illustrates the momentum repatriation requests gained since the 2000s but also suggests that such processes are lengthy and based on cooperation.

The focus of this thesis is the current repatriation debate around the South Sami Freavnantjahke gievrie. The main questions in focus are:

- What are the perspectives Saemien Sijte and the Meininger Museen have on the repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie?
- How do Saemien Sijte and the Meininger Museen perceive the purpose of the drum for their respective communities?

This thesis depicts the differing interests through interviews with the directors of the museums as representatives of their communities and institutions as well as in the exhibitions at the two museums with their focus on the presence and absence of the Freavnantjahke gievrie. The

²³ United Nations (2007): *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. (UNDRIP). https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/migrated/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf.

²⁴ Memedrod (2022): *British Museum memes*. <https://www.memedroid.com/memes/tag/british+museum>.

²⁵ Gaup, K. E. (2021): Bååstede, the Return of Sámi Cultural Heritage: An Introduction. In: Gaup, K. E.; Jensen, I.; Pareli, L. (eds.): *Bååstede – The Return of Sámi Cultural Heritage*. Trondheim, p. 10.

perspectives of the museums shall not be presented merely as opposing positions but shall be considered as dialogue to work out needs and challenges of the communities and institutions involved. In this, the current work illustrates the interest of both institutions in displaying and managing the drum at their location and aims to function as a translator between the different perspectives. I will provide insight into what the gievrie means to the two institutions and the communities. Thus, I seek to identify the opportunities and challenges a repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie might entail.

The interviews form the basis of this process, however, knowledge about the Freavnantjahke gievrie will be gathered and presented by surveying the existing research. The previous research, which was published predominantly in German, will be outlined and thus in part made accessible to an English-speaking audience. This elaboration will be carried out with awareness and sensitization to the history, culture and issues of Sami communities and therefore add to a decolonized, Indigenous approach to research.

The goal of this work is to contribute to the debate about repatriation of Sami cultural heritage by contextualizing the value of the Freavnantjahke gievrie for the South Sami community and the German museum audience as well as making both perspectives accessible.

1.2. Methodology

The current work applies decolonizing theories to qualitative research methods to account for the criticism and skepticism towards Western research methods voiced by Indigenous communities.²⁶ Western ideologies which execute structural power within the academic sphere have excluded and distorted Indigenous perspectives. Research and academia have failed and abused Indigenous communities for centuries.²⁷ I attempt to move away from this paradigm by drawing upon Indigenous methodologies that are critical towards Western research premises.²⁸ By this I mean my own as well as the premises of my predecessors. Since I am not Indigenous myself (see chapter 1.3.) I intend to proceed sensitively to not appropriate Indigenous discourses. In accordance with the message of Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, I approach Indigenous research as “a humble and humbling activity.”²⁹ Nonetheless I hope to use my skills

²⁶ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (2nd Edition). Toronto. / Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies: research and Indigenous peoples* (2nd edition.). Zed Books.

²⁷ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 91.

²⁸ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 111.

²⁹ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 5.

to help unravel Western colonial paradigms and contribute to the debate on repatriation of Sami cultural heritage by generating reciprocity.

1.2.1. Primary Data: Qualitative Interviews – Visits of the Exhibitions

Scholar Margaret Kovach of Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry refers to the etymological root of the word ‘data’ as ‘gift’ and connects this to “[a]n Indigenous perspective on data collection.”³⁰ This perspective sees “collecting data [as] the gifting of another’s story to a researcher”³¹ which makes them “living connections animated through the exchange of story.”³² This work is supposed to function as a dialogue or exchange between the South Sami and the German perspective to generate understanding for the stances the involved parties take on the repatriation debate of the Freavnantjahke gievrie. Saemien Sijte requests a conversation on the repatriation of the drum that the Meininger Museen manages at the moment. Interviews – which are also the main data source for qualitative research³³ – with the museum directors appeared to be the best way to hear the individual stories of Samien Sijte and Meininger Museen while giving them the chance to highlight what is important to them in this process. In my academic career so far, I have never before conducted an interview. Entering this new field, I followed Svend Brinkmann’s layout of qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Choosing the semi-structured outline stems from it “allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee.”³⁴ I considered it important to get my questions answered³⁵ but did not want to tie Fossum or Adlung to the interview guide if other questions or aspects were more urgent in their opinion. Structuring the interview like this made it consequently subjective. Surely, an ideal outcome of this work is to set an example for further repatriation negotiations concerning Sami cultural heritage. However, this work is concerned with the repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie and “provid[ing] a first-order understanding through concrete description.”³⁶ Therefore, the subjective understandings of both parties involved need to be depicted. Firstly, repatriation is an emotional practice and secondly it is crucial to understand the subjective stances of the involved on a case-to-case bases to find solutions (see chapter 3).

³⁰ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 156.

³¹ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 156.

³² Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 156.

³³ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 155.

³⁴ Brinkmann, S. (2013): *Qualitative Interviewing. Understanding Qualitative Research*. New York. p. 21.

³⁵ Brinkmann, S. (2013): *Qualitative Interviewing*. p. 21.

³⁶ Brinkmann, S. (2013): *Qualitative Interviewing*. p. 23.

The decision to interview Fossum and Adlung individually was based on several considerations. The topicality of the request makes the Freavnantjahke gievrie a delicate issue. The interviews were not meant to create an arena to drag negotiations that may happen behind closed doors into the public. I do not follow a confrontational approach but rather that of understanding both sides to imagine solutions and contribute to the debate. I do not want to portray myself as mediator, especially when due to my lack of experience in terms of interviewing I am not skilled to lead a group interview with a potential for conflicts. It is easier to lead a one-on-one interview.³⁷ Despite that, the interviews were supposed to give both an equal amount of time (one hour) to express their thoughts. The purpose is to illustrate the positions in the current work.

This exchange may lay out differences but also point out similarities in their views and is not necessarily meant to picture the involved parties as two sides of a spectrum. With this, the current work tries to follow the Indigenous idea of stories and the possibilities of their exchange. As Kovach explains: “Story nurtures relationship. Story kindles reciprocity. Story compels responsibility. Story thrives where there is respect. Story is a gift. And in research, this changes everything.”³⁸

Nurturing the relationship between the museums and communities to ensure a beneficial outcome for both is a desired result of this work. Thus, the interviews with the directors of Saemien Sijte and Meiningen Museen are the primary data of the current work. To honor the Indigenous oral tradition the interviews shall be integrated whenever possible.

Additionally, I was able to visit the museums and see their exhibitions after the interviews. The experiences I had and the impressions I got from the on-site visits shape my understanding of the issue at hand, too, and will thus be drawn upon. During the visits the presence of the drum in Meiningen and absence of the drum in Snåsa could be observed firsthand. The conversations during these visits helped to gain additional insight into the different perspectives. In addition, it gave me a better understanding of the conditions and premises of the two locations. Statements about the exhibitions and the drum made during the interviews could be experienced first-hand and clarified and it became easier to understand the stance the two involved parties take. This opportunity was especially important since the interviews had been digitally. It was important in so far as to create a connection to the people and to the places.

³⁷ Brinkmann, S. (2013): *Qualitative Interviewing*. p. 27.

³⁸ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 156.

1.2.2. The Interviews with Museum Directors Fossum and Adlung

From the beginning of this project, it was imperative to involve the two museums, Saemien Sijte and Meiningen Museen, to get an understanding of the situation and hear their perspectives on the repatriation process of the Freavnantjahke gievrie. However, firstly it was crucial to get the confirmation by Saemien Sijte that this project does not interfere with their endeavors to have a conversation with Meiningen about a repatriation process. As a non-Indigenous researcher, I had to find out whether my research could be beneficial for the Indigenous community or if it could harm the cause. The intentions of the project might be to serve the case of repatriation, but Tuhiwai Smith points out that researchers can fall for the fallacy to consider “their particular research projects as serving a greater good”³⁹ for humanity. This stems from an understanding of research as inherently good. In this mindset, data collection is beneficial for a greater cause, wherefore the situation of and impact on Indigenous communities can be disregarded. Tuhiwai Smith explains that “the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices.”⁴⁰ Understanding that Western research approaches in themselves are cause for suspicion for many Indigenous people, as these approaches take away Indigenous knowledge, it became imperative to let Saemien Sijte’s voice set the directives of this project. Therefore, I sent an e-mail in April of 2021 to the director of Saemien Sijte, Dr. Birgitta Fossum. She is the museum director of Saemien Sijte since 2010, a renowned scholar specialized in Sami pre-history as well as Sami cultural heritage and contributed substantially to the Bååstede project (2012 – 2019). In my e-mail I presented my project idea and asked if she had any objections. Fossum expressed her interest in May 2021 and after further correspondence throughout the year agreed to an interview in February 2022 which was then conducted 15.03.2022.

It was to be expected that the conduct of the interviews would be delayed: The COVID-19 pandemic caused health risks and travel restrictions and created challenges especially for Sami communities.⁴¹ Additionally, many of Saemien Sijte’s resources had to be focused on the ongoing renovation/rebuilding of their museum buildings in context of the Bååstede project. Hence, Saemien Sijte had to prioritize other issues than this master thesis. However, I deemed it necessary to give the communication the time it needed and to wait as I wanted to hear the Sami side of the story first. My idea here was to counter any suspicion of being biased by talking

³⁹ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing Methodologies*. p.2.

⁴⁰ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing Methodologies*. p.2.

⁴¹ Arctic Council (2020): *The Impact of COVID-19 on Saami Communities*. <https://arctic-council.org/news/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-saami-communities/>.

to the Meininger Museen first as I am already culturally and educationally closer to their approaches. In retrospect the waiting period turned out to be a piece of luck because the Meininger Museen was engaged in rearrangements, too, and might not have had the capacities for a collaboration on this project sooner.

Dr. Philipp Adlung acceded to the position of the new director at the Meininger Museen in November of 2021. Thus, the musicologist and lawyer took on the legacy of the debates around the Freavnantjahke gievrie right from the start of his appointment. At this point Adlung had extensive experience in museum administration and legal supervision as well as communicating and teaching arts and culture. I contacted and introduced the project idea to him via e-mail in February 2022. The same month we agreed on a digital preliminary talk for me to give more details about my research endeavor and explain my expectations in conducting interviews.

The idea behind the interviews was to learn about the perspectives of Fossum and Adlung on the drum's location, the process of repatriation generally and specifically in terms of the Freavnantjahke gievrie, and their stance towards the terms ownership, identity, traditional knowledge and (de)colonization. This, including the listed terms, was communicated to both directors before the interviews.

The interview with Birgitta Fossum took place 15.03.2022 via Zoom and was conducted in Norwegian. Two days later, 17.03.2022, I was able to interview Philipp Adlung also via Zoom in German. An almost identical interview guide was used in both interviews to better spot different or similar understandings of the addressed topics. The approach to use Norwegian and German resulted from the idea to enable both to speak in their usual working language even though the interviews were to be translated into English afterwards. The interviewees should have the possibility to communicate using the accustomed terminologies practiced in their everyday work life.

To conduct the interviews, Zoom offered the possibility to keep a safe distance and to not put anyone through the troubles and dangers of traveling during a pandemic. Further, the interviewees were able to choose surroundings they felt comfortable and undisturbed in (both chose their offices at the museums). Another advantage was the possibility to record and save the interviews easily which helped in transcribing and translating them afterwards. The possibility to rehear the recordings aided to translate the notion of what was said as I was able to determine whether something was said in for example a joking, unsure or meaningful manner. Before the interview I asked the interviewees for their consent to record and store the recordings in a cloud provided by the Arctic University of Norway. Further I sent them a

consent form according to the guidelines of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) to inform them about the data storage and the possibility to revoke their consent for me to use their data at any time. Here it must also be mentioned that NSD has approved the project and that the interviewees were not anonymized despite of the usually recommended anonymization. Fossum and Adlung are, in their positions as museum directors, public figures.

Another part that was agreed upon beforehand was to send the transcribed English translations of the interviews before publication to let both interviewees check if their perspectives are portrayed correctly. In transcribing and translating the interviews I have sensitively made decisions to delete repetitions of words (for example “so so so so”) while an interviewee reflected on what to say. Sometimes I had to change the sentence structure to elevate the meaning. Changes were made when certain aspects of verbal communication did not translate well into text without being confusing.

Despite sound issues at the beginning of the interviews one main argument against using a digital tool to conduct the interviews was the lack of personal components. Sitting in front of a computer or phone, even when cameras are turned on, limits natural behaviorism such as eye contact and body language in general. In interviewing skills on a personal, social level are important.⁴² However, the exchange of stories between the two interviewees and me, the stories I came across during the process of writing this thesis and the connections made are what shapes this work. At this juncture I would like to express my gratitude for the stories gifted to me in this process.

1.2.3. Secondary Data: Text based Research

A textual analysis of contributions on the Freavnantjahke gievrie, Sami cultural heritage and repatriation was conducted in order to fully understand the perspectives of Birgitta Fossum and Philipp Adlung on the drum as well as to place this here work within these contributions.

I chose to rely heavily on Indigenous scholars like Finbog (2020), Johansen (2022), Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and Kovach (2021) for the methodological framework of this thesis.

The works of non-Indigenous scholars were especially consulted in terms of the history of the drum and its descriptions as for centuries Sami histories have been defined by non-Indigenous scholars. One example can be seen in the extensive works on Sami drums by Swedish ethnographer Ernst Manker (1938, 1950) or the thorough description of the drum’s journey to

⁴² Gill, P.; Stewart, K.; Treasure, E.; Chadwick B. (2008): Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. In: *British Dental Journal*, Vol. 204(6). p. 292.

Meiningen by German curator Maren Goltz (2006, 2012). The revision and reexamination of these contributions explain why the Freavnantjahke gievrie is in Meiningen today and why the debate on its repatriation is topical.

1.2.4. Critical Discourse Analysis

The critical discourse analysis has been chosen as method to evaluate the primary data as well as the secondary data. Discourse analysis in general centers “questions of power, knowledge and discourse”⁴³ while allowing interdisciplinary approaches. Critical discourse analysis specifically examines how discourses are “constructing social identities”⁴⁴ and “contribute to maintaining prevailing power structures.”⁴⁵ Due to the interdisciplinarity Indigenous theories can be applied smoothly and, further, ‘deficit theorizing of Indigenous lives’⁴⁶ can be circumvented because of the systemic contemplation. Thus, societal structures come into focus instead of individuals. Yet, the interviewees have used expressions to emphasize that certain thoughts are theirs and do not necessarily represent facts or other’s opinions. The interviewees’ perspectives may be subjective and focused only on the case of the Freavnantjahke gievrie. Nonetheless, their positions are related to their knowledge, their positions within their institutions and communities and other societal structures. Since power and knowledge are reoccurring, crucial concepts within the data, the method’s recognition of discourse as the system in power that “legitimizes certain knowledge”⁴⁷ fits the data’s emphasis.

1.3. Researcher Position and Ethics

*As a child, I was gifted a book by my grandparents, which was called “Rentiergeheimnisse” [Reindeer secrets]. The first sentences read: “High in the north of Europe lies the land of the Finns. In the north of Finland, we read on the map: Lapland. The land of the Lapps, who are actually called Sami.”*⁴⁸ *The children’s book tells firsthand stories the married, Eastern German couple Küchenmeister*⁴⁹ *experienced together with the Sami family Länsman in Finnish Lapland. It contains illustrations of Sami dwellings, gáktis [South Sami: gaeptie, gapta*

⁴³ Bergström, G; Ekström, L.; Boréus, K. (2017): *Analyzing Text and Discourse: Eight Approaches for the Social Sciences*. London: Sage. p. 212.

⁴⁴ Bergström, G; Ekström, L.; Boréus, K. (2017): *Analyzing Text and Discourse*. p. 222.

⁴⁵ Bergström, G; Ekström, L.; Boréus, K. (2017): *Analyzing Text and Discourse*. p. 222.

⁴⁶ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 238.

⁴⁷ Bergström, G; Ekström, L.; Boréus, K. (2017): *Analyzing Text and Discourse*. p. 212.

⁴⁸ Küchenmeister, W.; Küchenmeister, C. (1984): *Rentiergeheimnisse – Ein Buch über Lappland*. Kinderbuchverlag, Berlin.

⁴⁹ Both were informants of the Stasi and received state money for their Finland journeys; Walther, J. (1996): Im stinkenden Untergrund. <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/im-stinkenden-untergrund-a-82009dbd-0002-0001-0000-000009094479>.

or gáptoe], silverspoons, knives and much more. In 2021, when I was able to visit my family in Germany after the intensive lockdown due to COVID-19, this book fell back into my hands. I at that time was an Eastern German, History and Scandinavian Studies graduate with an emphasis on the Finnish language, who aspired to write a master thesis on repatriation of Sami cultural heritage.

This story is important to me, and to my research. It is important because one crucial aspect of research in the field of Indigenous studies is that “Indigenous methodologies require reflection on the self.”⁵⁰ Self-reflection creates accountability, trust, transparency, and reciprocity.⁵¹ In today’s world generally but in research specifically it is necessary to ‘check your privileges’. Being a non-Indigenous, white German cis-gendered woman from a middle-class family I need to constantly reflect biases, limits and abilities that stem from my personality. My experiences, my stories shape me and, thus, my research.⁵²

I was born in a small town in East Germany shortly before the GDR collapsed. Freedom, new beginnings but also loss and poverty characterized that time. Some never recovered from the dictatorship, some never recovered from the reunification. I became interested in the concepts of identity, borders, and cultural exchange. Mind you, identity, its loss and reconstruction were transformation processes my whole family had to go through, from my parents to my great-grandparents.

By the time I started my Northern European Studies I had forgotten about the book ‘Reindeer Secrets’. On the other hand, I had been to Finland as an Au Pair, finished my history degree and became interested in museums and how they represent identity. It was a lecture by Hans-Joachim Gruda about his experiences with Sami friends in Sweden that reminded me. Thanks to him, I was placed as an intern at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen in 2018 and was able to assist with the early steps of a project on their collection of Sami objects. Due to the provenance research, I understood how many objects in this collection and nationwide were taken and stolen from the Sami. The colonial legacy of museums, an institution I respected deeply, started to unravel and I felt that I wanted to actively participate in unraveling it. Little did I know how many layers of myself I had to unravel in the process.

⁵⁰ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 143.

⁵¹ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 142 – 143.

⁵² Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 142.

My motivation for this thesis is to function as a ‘translator’ to contribute to the dialogue about a possible repatriation of the South Sami drum, Freavnantjahke gievrie. By making myself familiar with repatriation of Sami cultural heritage I aim to translate the perspective Saemien Sijte’s request is based on to a German audience. Likewise, I want to explain the approach of the Meininger Museen to foster understanding of different starting points, but also to show points of connection for possible solutions. I hope, that through the experiences I made and keep on making on my journey of decolonizing my own worldview and research, I can provide approaches considering repatriation of South Sami cultural heritage.

1.4. Terminologies

The following chapter will focus on the terminologies used and define them, as well as explain why certain terms will not be used. It is important for this work to draw back on Indigenous methodologies which is why here expressions shall be used that represent the Sami communities’ understanding of themselves.

1.4.1. Gievrie, Drum or Object

I chose to use different terms next to Freavnantjahke gievrie such as drum as well as object. The latter especially can be criticized since it does move away from the Sami understanding of the gievrie as a living being – which will come up in the following chapters – and follows a Western narrative used in museums. However, this current work shall account for the perspectives of Saemien Sijte and Meininger Museen. At the beginning of the interviews both, Dr. Birgitta Fossum and Dr. Philipp Adlung, have been asked about the usage of the term “object” [Norwegian: “gjenstand”, German: “Objekt”] in connection with the drum.⁵³ Both agreed to the term, while Fossum pointed out to usually “use ‘gievrie’ consistently”⁵⁴. Adlung sees the Freavnantjahke gievrie more clearly as a museum object.⁵⁵ Since this work tries to translate the perspectives of both museums to the different communities, they originate from, it seemed necessary to start by using a term that is associated with museums by a majority. The Sami community might understand, not accept though, why the term “object” is used in a museum context. The idea of the drum as a living being, however, may be difficult to understand right from the start from a German standpoint. Therefore, this concept will be

⁵³ See Appendix Interview with Fossum; see Appendix Interview with Adlung.

⁵⁴ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xv.

⁵⁵ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

approached later (see chapter 3). The difficulty of the terminology reflects already the differing approaches the museums have but how museum methods are shaped by Western structures.

1.4.2. Shaman or Nãejtie

Since the 19th century it became a fairly common practice to use the word ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ in works on Sami spiritual beliefs. Konsta Kaikkonen explains “how the idea of shamanism [...] has been constructed”⁵⁶ in the 17th and 18th century by mostly Central European explorers and was then adopted into research on Sami beliefs in the 19th century by Norwegian linguist Jens Andreas Friis (1821 – 1896).⁵⁷

The word shaman has its roots in the Tungusic Evenki language and refers to “certain Siberian ritual specialists.”⁵⁸ They, however, became representatives of an imagined concept of ‘shamanism’ which was later taken out of the Siberian context and applied to other beliefs whose characteristics appear to show resemblance to Siberian traditions.⁵⁹ The terms ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ were normalized within the scholarly discourse of the 19th and were made popular in the 20th century by Romanian historian Mircea Eliade (1907 – 1986).⁶⁰ Even though his esoteric and romantic understanding of shamanism was neglected over the years Eliade gave the terminology popularity.⁶¹

According to Kaikkonen, “the more comparative scholarly interest in Saami Indigenous religion”⁶² increased in the 1870s which was picked up by Friis. His personal interest in Northern Norway and Sami culture led to him focusing his research on these topics.⁶³ Friis took his cue from Finnish linguist and ethnographer Matthias Alexander Castrén (1813 – 1852) and applied the terminology shamanism to the new research field of ‘Lappology’.⁶⁴

The words ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ are still used in the scholarly discourses today, also when it comes to Sami traditions. However, in this work, I will refrain from using these terms. Instead, I will refer to ‘nãejtie’ and the rather open phrasings “Sami worldviews” or “Sami beliefs”. The plural is intended for there are distinctions in worldview between the different Sami communities. One reason for choosing these terms is to give space to the South Sami language,

⁵⁶ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta: Saami ritual specialists in text written until 1871*. In: Gilhus, I. S.; Kraft, S. E.; Sundström, O. (eds.) *tidsskrift for religion og kultur*, Oslo. p. 36f.

⁵⁷ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 322f.

⁵⁸ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 36.

⁵⁹ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 36 – 37.

⁶⁰ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 37.

⁶¹ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 37.

⁶² Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 322.

⁶³ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 323.

⁶⁴ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 331.

Åarjelsaemiengiele. Another one is that I deem translations unnecessary if they do not precisely represent the original meaning when the original word can just as well be used and understood with an introduction as is presented here. Further, I do not wish to limit the understanding of Sami beliefs by binding them to closely to Western or Central European ideas of belief. Lastly and most importantly, the concept ‘shamanism’ is nowadays highly questioned by Indigenous communities and scholars.⁶⁵ The criticism towards the terminology is rooted in the criticism towards anthropological practices. When in the late 19th century anthropologists started to conduct research on native cultures, it was done to gain insight into human behavior by observing ‘primitive’ people.⁶⁶ Seen as ‘primitive’ were those cultures that under the premise of evolutionism have not passed certain stages of agriculture and societal as well as educational structures.⁶⁷ In this regard, Friis for example believed that the Sami cultures were “inferior to the Scandinavian”⁶⁸ and thought that they would eventually go extinct. To study the cultures of native people, that person became the most interesting that seemed to reflect the ‘primitive’ lifestyle best. In the eyes of the scholars the representative of the community, the presumed ‘most primitive’ person, was the shaman. Yet, ‘the shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ never existed. As already pointed out, they were merely ideas constructed by scholars who, due to certain similarities between traditions of different Indigenous communities and certain Siberian traditions, expanded the terms carelessly to “religious practitioners of Siberia, Lapland, the Himalayas, Australia, and most of the Americas.”⁶⁹ ‘Shaman’ became “a simple blanket word”⁷⁰ for numerous different practitioners.

1.4.3. Colonization

Following Linda Tuhiwai Smith “colonialism is but one expression of imperialism”⁷¹ and served to exert European control over Indigenous populations.⁷² She explains four usages of the term imperialism. First it is used as a means of expanding markets and reaching for capitalist gains.⁷³ Secondly it “focuses more upon the exploitation and subjugation of Indigenous peoples.”⁷⁴ Thirdly imperialism can be understood as a European set of ideas regarding

⁶⁵Beck Kehoe, A. (2000): *Shamans and Religion. An Anthropological Exploration in Critical Thinking*. Prospect Heights, Illinois. p. 2f.

⁶⁶ Beck Kehoe, A. (2000): *Shamans and Religion*. p. 37f.

⁶⁷ Beck Kehoe, A. (2000): *Shamans and Religion*. p. 14.

⁶⁸ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 323.

⁶⁹ Beck Kehoe, A. (2000): *Shamans and Religion*. p. 14.

⁷⁰ Beck Kehoe, A. (2000): *Shamans and Religion*. p. 53.

⁷¹ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 22.

⁷² Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 22.

⁷³ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 22.

⁷⁴ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 22 – 23.

“science, economic expansion and political practice.”⁷⁵ Lastly and in contrast to the other three, the term imperialism as well as colonialism is used by people who are members of colonized communities and their experiences.⁷⁶ Consequently, colonialism can be seen as a method to spread and represent imperialism, meaning European ideas, to secure the growth of the empire and to describe experiences of Indigenous peoples with imperialism.⁷⁷ Colonialism forced gendered and hierarchical conditions onto Indigenous societies while dehumanizing them in the name of ‘civilization’ and its proclaimed virtues.⁷⁸

The characteristics which these four usages of the term colonialism entail (spreading the empire’s power and control, capitalist exploitation, gender stereotypes and dehumanization of Indigenous peoples, etc.) can be recognized in Sami history as well. In her doctoral thesis Sami scholar Liisa-Rávná Finbog describes how the Sami were colonized and opens the possibility for colonial processes to have been in motion as early as in the Viking Age (793 – 1066) as documented “systems of gender discrimination and heteropatriarchy”⁷⁹ suggest. Another indication for colonization processes is the taxation of the Sami starting with the Treaty of Novgorod in 1326 which defined “which parts of the Sámi homelands [...] would pay tribute to which country.”⁸⁰ This led to exploitation and double, if not triple, taxation of the Sami. Further the conversion of Norse leaders to Christianity (8th – 12th century) and hence development of Christian kingdoms changed the power dynamics in the North of Scandinavia.⁸¹ This shift created a desire for more subordinates, who are loyal to the king, as well as more control over the Northern areas for which Christian missionizing of the Sami became a means. At the beginning of this process the church focused its efforts on Sami in the coastal regions while the missionaries directed their efforts towards “the Sámi that lived in close proximity to the newly established colonial settlements.”⁸² However, it was not until the 16th century that the Christianization of the Sami was acted out more uniformly and intensively.⁸³ In the 17th century practicing old beliefs was punished by “fines, flogging, imprisonment or [...] death”⁸⁴ and in this regard the gievrie as the presumed core of Sami beliefs came into focus. Under this

⁷⁵ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 23.

⁷⁶ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 24.

⁷⁷ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 24.

⁷⁸ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 26 – 27.

⁷⁹ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you: Making kin of people, duodji and stories in Sámi museums*. Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, Faculty of Humanities, Oslo, p. 24.

⁸⁰ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 28.

⁸¹ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 30.

⁸² Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 32.

⁸³ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 33.

⁸⁴ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 33.

context the Freavnantjahke gievrie was confiscated in 1723. Due to the suppression of drum usage the drums were hidden as well as the knowledge surrounding them, which Finbog calls “a colonial act of killing knowledge”⁸⁵ thus epistemicide. In our interview Fossum, too, describes the attempts of Christianization as “brutal in destroying Sami culture and Sami understanding of the world”⁸⁶ and though probably some continued using drums secretly Christianization changed Sami culture.⁸⁷

Next to the change in Sami traditions, the mentioned power shifts led to new settlers moving to Sami territory and ousting the Sami. This ultimately impacted the Sami system of community organization, the *sijte*.⁸⁸ The sustainable way to make a living, which was taught and managed by the *sijte*, became unfavorable for the Sami and “forced a structural change in Sámi society.”⁸⁹

Well after the intensive Christianization in the 17th century, colonialism led to “continuous abuses that have been going on right until our days.”⁹⁰ The inferiorization of Sami people aimed to justify “the annexing of lands and incapacitation of people”⁹¹ and stigmatized the Sami lastingly in such a way that their culture became shameful even to themselves.⁹² Since the 17th century the idea was to educate and guide the Sami to eventually assimilate them into the ‘civilized’ society.⁹³

As mentioned in the paragraph on ‘shamanism’, the research of the 18th century developed an interest in native peoples as ‘pure’ depictions of humankind and its origins.⁹⁴ Thus, the interest in Sami cultures and the understanding of them as ‘primitive’ arose.⁹⁵ However, the interest was limited to a prefabricated idea of native peoples as ‘nomadic’ which in case of the Sami meant that “the authentic Sámi”⁹⁶ was assumed to be a reindeer herder. Despite this interest in Sami cultures, or rather voyeurism, the understanding in the 18th, 19th and even 20th century was that ‘primitive’ cultures will go extinct or will be absorbed by ‘civilization’.⁹⁷ The proclaimed ‘primitivity’ and nomadic lifestyles of native cultures had scholars of the 19th

⁸⁵ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 34.

⁸⁶ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xx.

⁸⁷ See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

⁸⁸ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 38.

⁸⁹ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 38.

⁹⁰ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xviii.

⁹¹ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 40.

⁹² Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 17, 48.

⁹³ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 41 – 42.

⁹⁴ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 42.

⁹⁵ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 44 – 45.

⁹⁶ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 43.

⁹⁷ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 46.

century in doubt of formerly accepted achievements of these cultures.⁹⁸ Rooted in Evolutionism this created the idea of “the Sámi as lesser, and incapable of developing past their present state, far less being able to govern themselves.”⁹⁹ Consequently, the Sami were believed to be in need of assimilation into the ‘civilized’ societies. In fact, these methods were those of colonialism which was “clothed within an ideology of humanism and liberalism and the assertion of moral claims that related to a concept of civilized ‘man’.”¹⁰⁰ The ‘civilized’ Western Europeans spread racist and eugenic ideas in the 19th and 20th century and the Sami faced intensive assimilation policies due to their alleged biological inferiority.¹⁰¹

The assimilation policies rooted the notion of shame so deeply within the Sami culture that Sami themselves ignored, denied or even destroyed their Sami heritage.¹⁰² This circumstance caused a lot of the knowledge of the Sami to be lost or damaged.¹⁰³

To summarize, colonialism is a method to spread Western ideologies such as Western ideas of gender, hierarchy, religion and capitalist structures. It is a method to enforce power and control over Indigenous peoples leading to their exploitation and assimilation. The Sami were and are subjected to this method. Even though colonialism is based in the past and there is talk of ‘post-colonialism’ today, colonialist characteristics are still to be found today and are reinforced by practices of globalization while being justified by good intentions.¹⁰⁴ One example for this is Green Colonialism which stems from the intention of creating sustainable energy but exploits resources traditionally used by Indigenous peoples. Colonialism still exists, it just changed its looks and terminologies.¹⁰⁵

1.4.4. Decolonization

Decolonization is accounting for the processes of colonialism, also by acknowledging its continuous impact on societal structures. In the present case this concerns especially research practices and museum practices, which overlap significantly since museums are an expression of education and research. According to Tuhiwai Smith decolonization is “a process which

⁹⁸ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 44.

⁹⁹ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 45.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 27.

¹⁰¹ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*, p. 46.

¹⁰² Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*, p. 48.

¹⁰³ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*, p. 25 – 26.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*, p. 101.

engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels.”¹⁰⁶ These are of political, social, spiritual and psychological nature.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, this makes it a challenge to the status quo.

In terms of research, decolonization is about “having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, to understand that research categories in the past and today are based on Western ideas of the world and that research in itself is not objective are the first steps.

Considering research in the museum contexts, repatriation and the Freavnantjahke gievrie, history writing is a crucial aspect. History justifies claims as well as explains value and relevance of the gievrie to the communities who voice claims towards the drum. The history of the gievrie itself but also the histories the drum represents are essential (see chapter 3.3.) and need to be decolonized because:

[H]istory is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others.¹⁰⁹

Birgitta Fossum explains that Sami “history has been defined by others.”¹¹⁰ Others meaning non-Sami, non-Indigenous people. This circumstance continues by Sami objects being in custody of and exhibited by non-Sami institutions without active involvement of members of the Sami community. Therefore, these institutions are in power of defining Sami history and even Sami identity. To decolonize Freavnantjahke gievrie’s histories it is necessary to make Sami voices visible and especially South Sami voices. In this sense Fossum believes that reclaiming cultural heritage “is a start to take back not only power, but the power of definition and having the cultural heritage to write this own history.”¹¹¹ This, however, will be elaborated further at a later point (see chapter 3).

A possibility of decolonizing museums, which, however, also creates many challenges and paradoxes, is to indigenize them.¹¹² This means to not only present Indigenous voices but to apply Indigenous methodologies, to give Indigenous scholars access to Indigenous cultural heritage and to entrust them to manage their cultural heritage. It is paving the way to self-

¹⁰⁶ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 121.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 35

¹¹⁰ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xviii.

¹¹¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xviii.

¹¹² Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 272.

determination through a research agenda, that embraces “decolonization, healing, transformation and mobilization.”¹¹³

1.4.5. Traditional Knowledge and Identity

In Áarjesaemiengiele traditional knowledge is ‘aerpiemaahtoe’, which is a compositum consisting of ‘aerpie’ [inheritance / heritage] and ‘maahtoe’ [knowledge]. This can be understood as knowledge that is inherited by previous generations to the next.¹¹⁴ Sami scholars Jelena Porsanger and Gunvor Guttorm describe Sami traditional knowledge as follows:

Árbediehtu¹¹⁵ is the collective wisdom and skills of the Sami people used to enhance their livelihood for centuries. It has been passed down from generation to generation both orally and through work and practical experience. Through this continuity, the concept of árbediehtu ties the past, present and future together.¹¹⁶

According to Porsanger and Guttorm this definition of traditional knowledge is to be understood holistically which means it covers “language, culture, practices, spirituality, mythology, customs and habits, as well as the social organization of the community.”¹¹⁷ It is holistic as it depicts humans as indivisibly connected to their surroundings, their environment.¹¹⁸ Traditional knowledge is, thus, the system that combines every aspect of identity. With their definition Porsanger and Guttorm follow Jeannette Armstrong’s approach. She connects her indigeneity closely to the experiences she creates together with family on Syilx Okanagan’s land. These “for[m] the basis of [her] knowledge, [her] experience and therefore [her] identity and culture, as expressed through [her] Indigenous language.”¹¹⁹ She argues that understanding “indigeneity as a ‘whole system’ is the best real protection for maintaining Indigenous identity and knowledge from loss, erosion and exploitation.”¹²⁰

To summarize, traditional knowledge is the system that encompasses all facets of identity as experienced, reflected and passed on by generations in everyday life. Consequently, Saemie aerpiemaahtoe is Sami identity.

¹¹³ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 120.

¹¹⁴ Porsanger, J.; Guttorm, G. (2011): *DIEDUT – Working with Traditional Knowledge: Communities, Institutions, Information Systems, Law and Ethics*. Kautokeino, p. 17.

¹¹⁵ Árbediehtu is the North Sami term for traditional knowledge.

¹¹⁶ Porsanger, J.; Guttorm, G. (2011): *DIEDUT – Working with Traditional Knowledge*. p. 18.

¹¹⁷ Porsanger, J.; Guttorm, G. (2011): *DIEDUT – Working with Traditional Knowledge*. p. 103.

¹¹⁸ Porsanger, J.; Guttorm, G. (2011): *DIEDUT – Working with Traditional Knowledge*. p. 103.

¹¹⁹ Armstrong, Jeannette (2010): *The Heart of Development with Culture and Identity*. – V. Tauli-Corpus & L. Enkiwe-Abayo & R. de Chaves (eds.), *Towards an Alternative Development paradigm: Indigenous Peoples’ Self-Determined Development*, Baguio City: Tebtebba Foundation. p. 80.

¹²⁰ Armstrong, Jeannette (2010): *The Heart of Development with Culture and Identity*, p. 84.

1.5. Structure

In chapter 1, I give an introduction and lay out the research question and its relevance. I describe the theoretical framework, methodology and methods of data gathering and analyzing. After positioning myself as a researcher, I provide definitions of crucial terminologies.

In chapter 2, I provide the background to my research by presenting the gievrie's journey to Meiningen, its material properties as well as the drums role within Sami culture and previous research on the Freavnantjahke gievrie. Then I continue to describe the exhibition at the Meininger Museen, where the drum is currently exhibited as well as the exhibition at Saemien Sijte, where they hope to include the drum upon repatriation and return. Included in these descriptions is a history of the museums as well as their institutional structure.

Chapter 3 gives a definition of the term repatriation and depicts previous research on repatriation of South Sami cultural heritage in Germany. Further the chapter is devoted to contextualizing the primary data (interviews). The chapter depicts different possibilities and challenges of repatriation as brought up by the interviewees. Moreover, the role of the Freavnantjahke gievrie for the Sami community as well as the German community is laid out.

Chapter 4 provides a commentary on the central statements, which were recognized in chapter 3. The commentary on these statements are used to point out prospects for collaboration between the two museums.

In chapter 5 I summarize and conclude my findings.

2. The Freavnantjahke gievrie

2.1. From Trøndelag to Thuringia

Sami Bendix Andersen and, possibly, his companion Jon Torchelsen are the last known owners of the Freavnantjahke gievrie. In 1723, the confiscation of the gievrie and the interrogation of the owners was documented by Thomas von Westen (1682 – 1727). A handwritten copy of this manuscript from the 1720s still exists (today located at NTNU University Museum Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim), of which in turn a translation including comments was published in 1903 by Norwegian ethnographer and cultural historian Just Knud Qvigstad (1853 – 1957). According to this translated version of the manuscript Andersen is affiliated with the places Grong [Kråanke] and Frøyningfjellet [Freavnantjahke] in Trøndelag

[Trööndelag] while Torchelsen is linked to Vefsn [Vaapste].¹²¹ This locates the drum in two counties of contemporary Norway: The North of Trøndelag and the South of Nordland. Jon Torchelsen and Bendix Andersen are said to be old, when the drum was taken, and to belong to the parish of Brønnøy [Brïenne].¹²² The manuscript explains that the older a drum is, the more powerful it is and states in this context that this gievrie has been in Andersen's family for four generations.¹²³ The drum has thus been crafted approximately at the beginning of the 17th century. Further, the manuscript mentions that the surrender of this drum has been requested for two years, however, the owners did not follow this demand.¹²⁴ Not only can Andersen's name, as well as the name of his companion Torchelsen, be found in the records of the priest Thomas von Westen as the keepers of the drum but also an inscription on the inside of the drum states Bendix Andersen as the owner.¹²⁵ Thomas von Westen himself was born in Trondheim and received training as theologian in Copenhagen.¹²⁶ Being a leader of the 1713 founded pietistic group "Syvstjerne" in Romsdal he was one of the driving forces to spread the Christian beliefs among the Sami in Norway. Von Westen is considered a pioneer as he insisted on acting out his missionary work in Sami instead of Danish.¹²⁷ Considering this, Maren Goltz calls his position as missionary "ambivalent" ["zwiespältig"¹²⁸] as he on the one hand enforced his endeavors with violence but on the other hand was interested in documenting Sami traditions and their way of life. His documents report that he took the drum of Bendix Andersen in 1723.¹²⁹ The reason why the Sami drums played a key role in the missionary process is their usage as ceremonial objects in rituals. Sami beliefs were considered witchcraft and by decree of 1609 imposed by the King of Denmark and Norway, Christian IV., punishable by death. This association to witchcraft is still visible in the German name for the drum "Meininger Zaubertrommel" [Magic drum of Meiningen],¹³⁰ which gives the drum the appearance of belonging to Germany.

When taking the drum from Andersen, von Westen wanted the Sami to tell him the drum's purpose and explain the symbols to document it. Andersen did explain but the ethnographer

¹²¹ Qvigstad, J. (1903): Kildeskrifter til den lappiske Mythologi. In: *Det Kgl. Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter*. No. 1, Trondheim, p. 68.

¹²² Qvigstad, J. (1903): Kildeskrifter til den lappiske Mythologi. p. 68.

¹²³ Qvigstad, J. (1903): Kildeskrifter til den lappiske Mythologi. p. 67.

¹²⁴ Qvigstad, J. (1903): Kildeskrifter til den lappiske Mythologi. p. 67.

¹²⁵ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger "Zaubertrommel". p. 176.

¹²⁶ Store Norske Leksikon: *Thomas von Westen*, https://snl.no/Thomas_von_Westen.

¹²⁷ Store Norske Leksikon: *Thomas von Westen*.

¹²⁸ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger "Zaubertrommel". p. 176.

¹²⁹ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger "Zaubertrommel". p. 176.

¹³⁰ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger "Zaubertrommel".

Ernst Manker cast doubt about whether Andersen shared all his knowledge. In his comprehensive examination of the drum from 1950 he points out the forced nature of the statements as well as the complexity of the Sami religious beliefs.¹³¹ However, the explanation of Andersen remains one of the oldest written documents and one of few documented descriptions that have been given by the Sami owner.¹³² One other is that of Anders Poulsen (see chapter 3.2.). However, usually the descriptions are handed down by non-Sami, who give their own interpretation in their own wording while the owners remain unknown. Bendix Andersen described to von Westen the movements and body posture of the *nåejtieh* during a consultation of the drum.¹³³ Additionally, he gave an explanation of the symbols and their meaning as well as of the meaning of other characteristics like the tin nails.¹³⁴

The drum – including its hammer [golke or gålkoe] – was brought to Copenhagen, to the Royal Danish Cabinet of Curiosities, where it was noted down in an inventory in 1730. The *Freavnantjahke gievrie* was exhibited next to other drums as well as objects from different cultures. In 1757 King Frederik V. of Denmark gifted the drum to Duke Ernst Friedrich III. Carl von Sachsen-Hildburghausen. It was supposedly a gift for his second wedding since the duke was connected to the Danish royal family because of his first wife, the Danish princess Louise.¹³⁵

Due to structural changes within the aristocratic lines, the Sachsen-Hildburghausens relocated to Altenburg in 1826 but did not take their cabinet of curiosities with them. Documents (1828) state that they made donations including their library and cabinet of curiosities to the city they used to reside in, Hildburghausen (Thuringia). However, it is unclear whether the drum was part of this process. This is also the time the hammer must have disappeared.¹³⁶

In 1837 the drum was donated to the society „Hennebergischer altertumsforschender Verein zu Meiningen” [Henneberg antiquity research association (HaV)] by author and archivist Ludwig Bechstein – it is uncertain where he got the drum from – who added more information about it to the museum catalogue. Now it was made clear that it was a drum from ‘Lapland’ [Saepmie].

¹³¹ Manker, E. (1950): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie*. Vol. 2: Die Trommel als Urkunde geistigen Lebens. Stockholm. p. 307.

¹³² Porsanger, J. (2022): An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation of a Sámi Drum from the XVII Century. In: Guttorm, H.; Seurujärvi-Kari, I. (eds.), *Dutkansearvvi dieđalaš áigečála*, Vol(6)1, p. 79.

¹³³ Qvigstad, J. (1903): *Kildeskripter til den lappiske Mythologi*. p. 65.

¹³⁴ Qvigstad, J. (1903): *Kildeskripter til den lappiske Mythologi*. p. 67.

¹³⁵ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”, p. 182 – 183.

¹³⁶ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”, p. 183.

In the society the drum has been object of several papers throughout the years through which its value was recognized, and international interest was sparked.¹³⁷

The collection the HaV had gathered was given to the city of Meiningen in 1918 after which the objects became part of the Meininger Museen (see chapter 2.4.2.).

2.2. The symbolical Object

This current work focuses on contemporary debates about the Freavnantjahke gievrie and repatriation. The drum age and the time of Christianization will be referred to in order to explain the drum's value for the South Sami community today. Descriptions of the drum's purpose in its original use rely on the explanations of members of the Sami community.

The Freavnantjahke gievrie has been described, defined and classified by non-Sami scholars, who created categories and applied them to Sami drums as they saw fit (see chapter 2.3.). The Freavnantjahke gievrie was for example assigned to the frame drum category and more precisely to the span drums by Swedish ethnographer Ernst Manker.¹³⁸ He coined these terms in 1938 after considering the categories which Karl Bernhard Wiklund had introduced unfitting.¹³⁹ This thesis refrains from making such categorizations but shortly depicts the physical property of the drum according to Maren Goltz.

The oval frame (475 x 304 x 83-85 mm) and the handle are made of slow growing pine wood. The frame is covered in double seam with depilated reindeer skin, which has a small damage on the right edge repaired by the HaV with leather glued to the underside.¹⁴⁰ The symbols were applied to the yellow-brown membrane with alder bark paint. The drum has 50 pendants, 33 of which are attached to the frame and 17 to the cross band.¹⁴¹ The Freavnantjahke gievrie is in exceptionally good condition. Though it should be mentioned that presumably around the turn of the 20th century the drum intentionally had been damaged while in possession of the HaV. A hole has been drilled into the frame to present the drum standing on a wooden stick.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger "Zaubertrommel". p. 184 – 189.

¹³⁸ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie.* p. 86.

¹³⁹ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie.* p. 83f.

¹⁴⁰ The hole is already mentioned by Manker in 1938.

¹⁴¹ Goltz, M. (2012): *Die Musikinstrumenten-Sammlung der Meininger Museen – Vollständiges Bestandsverzeichnis mit ausführlicher Dokumentation,* Meiningen. p. 21.f / Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie,* p. 600ff.

¹⁴² Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger "Zaubertrommel". p. 187.

Over the centuries, the status of the drum in Sami society has changed. The drum in its spiritual origin and its intended use were an important part of Sami life during the drum time.¹⁴³ Birgitta Fossum says about the drum:

[I]f you need to find words – it has a sacred meaning. The drum has been a communication tool between forces, between the worlds in a way. In the South Sami area, many people, probably every family had drums, for it was also a tool for contact between the worlds [...].¹⁴⁴

The drum served as a guide and helper in people's everyday lives. The gievrie was a connector of "the spirits, other beings, and ancestors"¹⁴⁵, which are "present in everything surrounding a person."¹⁴⁶ The drums could be consulted when advice or "contact with the spirits"¹⁴⁷ was needed. Drums were an important aspect of the spiritual and everyday life.¹⁴⁸

Further the drum was made the central object of conflict and confrontation in the missionary processes between the Sami and the government represented by Christianity.¹⁴⁹ The Church considered the drum the embodiment of evil and paganism.¹⁵⁰ Fossum contemplates about the time when *nåejtieh* and *gievrieh* had to go into hiding,¹⁵¹ and how it changed Sami culture:

The fact that they were taken from them by force, that is Christianization, it was brutal in destroying Sami culture and Sami understanding of the world. Enough of them probably lived in secret, but still it was part of a way to destroy the Sami culture. Or not destroy Sami culture. It helped to change it perhaps.¹⁵²

Even though Sami beliefs were not fully destroyed and drums as wells as knowledge survived in hiding,¹⁵³ the intention of Christian priests was to destroy the Sami worldview.¹⁵⁴ The revival movement of Sami preacher Lars Levi Læstadius (1800 – 1861) in the 19th century found much favor among the Sami, since he preached to them in their own language. Læstadius transferred many aspects of Sami beliefs to the Christian religion¹⁵⁵ and also studied drums and

¹⁴³ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter in the 17th and 18th centuries. *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, 14, p. 28.

¹⁴⁴ Appendix Interview with Fossum, p. xix.

¹⁴⁵ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 34 – 35.

¹⁴⁶ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 34.

¹⁴⁷ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 34.

¹⁴⁸ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 34.

¹⁵⁰ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 33.

¹⁵¹ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 28.

¹⁵² Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xx.

¹⁵³ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 34 – 35.

¹⁵⁴ Joy, F. (2018): The disappearance of the sacred Swedish Sámi drum. p. 256.

¹⁵⁵ Joy, F. (2018): The disappearance of the sacred Swedish Sámi drum. p. 259.

their use extensively.¹⁵⁶ However, the old beliefs of the Sami and their symbols were considered witchcraft in Læstadianism, too. Today, many people in Saepmie have connections to Læstadianism.¹⁵⁷

While gievrieh and nãejtieh went into hiding in Saepmie in the 17th, 18th and 19th century, an interest in drums was sparked throughout Europe. The drums became a sought-after item for collections in curiosity chambers that focused on foreign cultures, which back then were understood as ‘exotic’.¹⁵⁸ Rumors spread through Europe that the Sami were skilled in witchcraft and therefore the curiosity in their pre-Christian beliefs and symbols arose.¹⁵⁹ Due to this interest Sami drums ended up in France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, etc.

In today’s debates about revitalization of culture, resilience and acknowledgment of Sami identity the drum plays a central role in reclaiming history and power. The 1970s and the 1980s marked a “process of awakening”¹⁶⁰ for Sami culture, in which for example the Saemiedigkie [Sami Parliament] in Norway (1989) was opened as well as several other Sami institutions such as museums.¹⁶¹ These two decades were the time of the world-renowned Alta conflict where Sami activists protested the construction of a hydroelectric power plant in the Alta River. The actions of the Norwegian government towards the Sami were met with criticism all over the world. From the 1970s on drums reappeared in the public sphere through posters, logos, movies and alike, pushed by artists, scholars and institutions.¹⁶² In this period, famous Sami artists such as Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943 – 2001), Hans Ragnar Mathisen (1945 –) and Iver Jåks (1932 – 2007) supported the awakening by showing the Sami perspective on history¹⁶³ and bringing “Sámi-ness into visible existence.”¹⁶⁴ The movie “Ofelaš“ [Pathfinder] from 1987 by Sami film maker Nils Gaup portrays drum usage by a nãejtie in a positive way.¹⁶⁵ The Sami flag, design by Sami artist Astrid Båhl (1959 –) in 1986, is said to be inspired by the drum. “[T]he flag features the circular shape of the drum, and the sun and moon-symbol.”¹⁶⁶ Drums were making their way back into the awareness of Sami identity and also “underwent a radical creative

¹⁵⁶ Læstadius, L. L., & Grundström, H. (1959): *Fragmenter i lappska mythologien*. Almqvist & Wiksell.

¹⁵⁷ Joy, F. (2014): What Influence Do the Old Sámi Noaidi Drums from Lapland Play in the Construction of New Shaman Drums by Sámi Persons Today? In: *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*. Vol. 56, p. 145.

¹⁵⁸ Joy, F. (2018): The disappearance of the sacred Swedish Sámi drum and the protection of Sámi cultural heritage. In: *Polar Record* Vol. 54(4), p. 262.

¹⁵⁹ Joy, F. (2018): The disappearance of the sacred Swedish Sámi drum. p. 262.

¹⁶⁰ Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Grounds*. London. p. 164

¹⁶¹ Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Grounds*. p. 163.

¹⁶² Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Grounds*. p. 165.

¹⁶³ Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Grounds*. p. 164.

¹⁶⁴ Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Grounds*. p.161.

¹⁶⁵ Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Grounds*. p. 165.

¹⁶⁶ Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Grounds*. p. 166.

refunctionalization [...]”¹⁶⁷ This means, even though it was not their original intent, drums became part of musical performances on stage in the context of revitalizing Sami traditions. The joik, too, was revitalized in the 1970s and 1980,¹⁶⁸ and the drums were used “to accompany” it.¹⁶⁹ One prominent example of drum usage on stage are the performances of the Sami musician Mari Boine (1956 –). Her drum shows the symbol of the sun.¹⁷⁰

After the turn of the 21st century, Sami artists, activists and scholars put drum usage back on the map.¹⁷¹ Aili Keskitalo said in a newspaper article in 2019: “[D]rums are [...] one of the most powerful symbols of Sami cultural heritage taken from us by force and put on display for others.”¹⁷²

The symbolical meaning of the drum stems from its original use, but also from its ability to survive the brutal persecution of Sami people and to have a revival. The drum embodies all these stories of worldview, colonialism, resistance and revitalization which are closely tied to Sami identity. Still, Freavnantjahke gievrie serves as a knowledge carrier: It provides traditional knowledge about Sami handicrafts¹⁷³ as well as about the culture and worldviews.¹⁷⁴ Further it carries symbolic value for the South Sami community which Birgitta Fossum explains:

I think a lot of people say that it is just really symbolically important. As I say, it is a symbol of abuse, the symbol of something being changed, something being destroyed, and getting it back.¹⁷⁵

The drum’s original use and the situation during the Christianization give explanations for the value of the Freavnantjahke gievrie for the Sami community but also show how much knowledge about the past the drum carries. This knowledge can create ripple effects for the Sami communities today. Not only has it an importance for Sami identity but it is proof that the Sami lived in the area (Trøndelag) and still do (see chapter 3.6.). The drum thus becomes important to justify claims today and correct misconceptions. Surely, certain objects have relevance for their source communities because only a few of them are left. Nonetheless, the

¹⁶⁷ Renzi, N. (2020): The Sami Drum from Oracular Rituality to Musical Performance. In: *Etnografie Sonore / Sound Ethnographies*, Vol. 3(1), p. 14.

¹⁶⁸ Renzi, N. (2020): The Sami Drum from Oracular Rituality to Musical Performance. p. 29.

¹⁶⁹ Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Ground.*, p. 166.

¹⁷⁰ Daiddadallu (2023): *Mari Boine*. <https://www.daiddadallu.com/medlemmer/mari-boine/>.

¹⁷¹ Kraft, S. E. (2021): *Indigenous Religion(s) in Sápmi: Reclaiming Sacred Grounds*. p.166.

¹⁷² Keskitalo, A. (2019): *Vi krever retten til å eie vår egen historie*.

<https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/70JR0B/vi-krever-retten-til-aa-eie-vaar-egen-historie-aili-keskitalo>.

¹⁷³ See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

¹⁷⁴ See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Fossum. p. xx.

history the objects have accumulated are significant for the value the object has for its source community. Fossum explains this situation regarding the Freavnantjahke gievrie as follows:

When we talk about repatriation, we talk a lot about drums and that is probably because it is one of the most symbol-heavy objects we have. It is also perhaps because these objects are the fewest in Sami society as well. And if we disregard all the symbolic meanings [...] there are other objects and we have quite a lot of objects that may not be equally important to return. Sometimes, it can be important to repatriate because of the stories that come along with an object. At the same time, I think that sometimes there may be other objects that can replace it. In that case with objects of which exist quite many.¹⁷⁶

The drum's status within the Sami community changed over time and its meaning for the community in the past cannot be one-to-one translated to today's relevance. Sami culture has changed and drums have played many different roles. Freavnantjahke gievrie remains a sacred object, but its purpose may have changed.

2.3. Previous Research – Freavnantjahke Gievrie

The first documented mentioning of a Sami drum dates back to the end of the 12th century by an anonymous author in “Chronicon Norvegicum”. The text indicates that drums of that time had figures on them just as the later, preserved ones of the 18th century do.¹⁷⁷ During the intensified Christianization of the Sami in the 17th and 18th century non-Sami clergymen documented the continued existence and use of the drums which were considered an instrument of the devil and of witchcraft.¹⁷⁸ Court documents and interrogations in this regard are witnesses of the drum's meaning to the Sami and that it had evolved into a symbol of resistance.¹⁷⁹ The Sami at this point had been Christianized for decades but continued with their traditional customs like using the drum.¹⁸⁰ In 1672 the clergyman Johannes Jonæ Tornæus († 1681) describes drums and their usage in Sami culture in his work “Berättelser om samerna I 1600-talets Sverige” [Stories of the Sami in 17th century Sweden] and shows that the tradition of drums is very much still alive. just one year later, in 1673, Johannes Scheffer, also known as Schefferus, (1621 – 1679), a Sweden based German scholar, published his “Lapponia”. Regarded as one of the most important works on the life and customs of Sami people at the time, his descriptions are based on texts such as that by Tornæus. Schefferus focused on a

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Fossum. p. xxi.

¹⁷⁷ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie.* p. 23.

¹⁷⁸ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 29.

¹⁷⁹ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 29.

¹⁸⁰ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 29.

detailed description of the usage of the drum by a nåejtie but gives also a description of its structure and some interpretations of symbols.¹⁸¹

Within Sami communities most stories about drums were passed on in oral form and often did not describe the drums themselves but spoke of the people who saw the drums and what experiences these people had with them.¹⁸² This can be explained by the need to hide drums from being confiscated and destroyed. Clergymen made Sami denunciate other Sami and spy on them to see if they practiced old customs.¹⁸³ The possession and use of a drum was punishable.¹⁸⁴ People have been imprisoned and flogged or even killed like the Pite Sami Lars Nilsson. He was sentenced to death in 1688, decapitated and burned to serve as a warning example.¹⁸⁵ Therefore it became a necessity to hide drums even from other Sami.¹⁸⁶ Thus, just seeing one became a rare and special occasion.

After Nilsson's death sentence in 1688 the Christianization was believed to have been successful and drums were not used anymore. Thomas von Westen, however, uncovered that this was not the case and the search for drums intensified in the first half of the 18th century.¹⁸⁷ The documented interrogations during this period display the drum as central part in the confrontations between Christianity and Sami people. Sami tried, though, to argue for the use of drums as not necessarily religious but more of a practical custom.¹⁸⁸ The court documents of that time are important as they are the closest that we get to hearing Sami voices of the 18th century. Most description stem from non-Sami people who did not craft or use the drums themselves. Over a hundred years later, though, in 1885, a story about drum use was partially written down by a Sami. It was Lars Olsen (1826 – ?) from Vefsn, who gave insight in consultations of drums in the context of reindeer herding.¹⁸⁹ He gave the descriptions of his uncle's¹⁹⁰ drum (Bindal's drum) to Qvigstad. Before publication these documents have been translated into German and only in the 1990s, they have been translated from German into Norwegian.¹⁹¹

¹⁸¹ Schefferus, J. (1956): *Lappland*. Gebers. p. 155ff.

¹⁸² Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 28

¹⁸³ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie*. P. 404.

¹⁸⁴ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 33.

¹⁸⁵ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 32.

¹⁸⁶ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 32.

¹⁸⁷ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 33.

¹⁸⁸ Rydving, H. (1991): The Saami drums and the religious encounter. p. 34.

¹⁸⁹ Berglund, B. (2005): Recently Discovered Gievrie (South- Saami Shaman Drums) – Contexts, Meanings and Narratives. In: *Acta Borealia: A Nordic Journal of Circumpolar Societies*, Vol. 22(2), pp. 145 – 146.

¹⁹⁰ Njaarke-Næjla or Nils Jonson (1795 - 1869).

¹⁹¹ Berglund, B. (2005): Recently Discovered Gievrie (South- Saami Shaman Drums) – Contexts, Meanings and Narratives. In: *Acta Borealia: A Nordic Journal of Circumpolar Societies*, 22(2), p. 145.

Thomas von Westen was highly interested in the usage and the symbols of the drums he confiscated which he asked the interrogated Sami about. In this context the manuscript describing the Freavnantjahke gievrie and its symbols was written down in 1723. Von Westen, as mentioned, valued and learned Sami languages in order to be more successful as a missionary.¹⁹² It can be thus assumed that the interrogation was held in South Sami, nonetheless, the interrogation document was written in Danish. The manuscript itself is not dated. Moreover, it was not brought to Copenhagen like the gievrie but to Trondheim (NTNU University Museum). Research concerning the Freavnantjahke gievrie until 1910 was therefore often conducted by only knowing about the manuscript or the gievrie as will be indicated later. Manuscript and gievrie have not been connected to each other before 1910, wherefore it was only possible to give an approximate date of origin of either one.¹⁹³ It was Swedish professor Karl Bernhard Wiklund (1868 – 1934) who connected the text and the drum in 1910 after the manuscript was published in 1903 by Qvigstad.¹⁹⁴ In doing so Wiklund pointed out the significance of the Freavnantjahke gievrie because of the existing descriptions of the symbols and their meaning by Bendix Andersen Frennings Fjeld and Jon Torchelsen Fipling-Skov.¹⁹⁵

Wiklund was one of the several, non-Sami, scholars in the 19th and 20th century who developed a strong interest in Sami cultures and especially in Sami religious beliefs.¹⁹⁶ Research devoted to Sami cultures usually included a description of drums and their usage. In this regard the Freavnantjahke gievrie was as well thoroughly discussed. German anthropologist Gustav Klemm (1802 – 1867) in 1844, Norwegian philologist and linguist Jens Andreas Friis (1821 – 1896) in 1871, Swedish author Valdemar Lindholm (1880 – 1947) in 1907 and German art historian Franz Weinitz (1855 – 1930) in 1910 are all scholars that have discussed the Freavnantjahke gievrie. Weinitz, however, explained that this gievrie was not special, had little value as a museum object and was probably a family drum rather than being used by a knowledgeable *nåejtie*.¹⁹⁷ According to him neither the drum's size nor its symbols are outstanding and since it is a frame drum "it does not have a beautifully carved and decorated back."¹⁹⁸ His findings stem from a visit at the HaV after he had been informed about the

¹⁹² Store Norske Leksikon: *Thomas von Westen*.

¹⁹³ Manker, E. (1950): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie*. p. 307.

¹⁹⁴ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie*. p. 597.

¹⁹⁵ Rydving, H. (2007): Ett metodiskt problem och dess lösning. Att tolka sydsamisk trumfigurer med hjälp av trumman från Freavnantjahke. In: Giesieakademije, H. (ed.) *Njaarke: Tjaalegh Harranen Giesieakademijeste = Skrifter Fra Sommerakademiet På Harran*. p. 40.

¹⁹⁶ Kaikkonen, K. I. (2020): *Contextualising descriptions of Noaidevuohta*. p. 322.

¹⁹⁷ Weinitz, F. (1910): Die lappische Zaubertrommel in Meiningen. In: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie (ZfE) / Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology (JSCA)*, Vol. 42(1), p. 8.

¹⁹⁸ Weinitz, F. (1910): Die lappische Zaubertrommel in Meiningen. p. 8.

existence and whereabouts of the drum by Hjalmar Stolpe, director of the ethnographical department of the national museum in Stockholm.¹⁹⁹ Stolpe himself worked on a study concerning all known drums.²⁰⁰ Weinitz came upon the inscription on the inside of the drum frame which he wrote down as “Bendix Andrei, J fordalenbox [?]”²⁰¹ and compared the drum with the drawings of the previously mentioned manuscript. He did not, however, have access to the manuscript but used the descriptions of the manuscript in Friis’ work. Weinitz acknowledges the similarities between the drum and the drum drawing in the manuscript but dismisses to link them together. His short comings have been discussed by K.B. Wiklund. He read the inscription as “Bendix Andrei J foldalen bon” and managed to connect the drum and the manuscript in which Bendix Andersen from “Frennings-Field”, at the Foldalenfjord in Nord-Trøndelag, has been mentioned.²⁰²

To date the drum and the manuscript, though, it was necessary to follow the traces of Jon Torchelsen in writings of Thomas von Westen.²⁰³ He has been mentioned in the manuscript as the companion of Bendix Andersen and was suspected to also be a keeper of the drum.²⁰⁴ He was believed to be “Jon Torkilson” who escaped Thomas von Westen in 1723 during his time in Grong. This escape has been documented in a letter by von Westen dated to 1723 and is mentioned in the manuscript as well, wherefore the drum and the manuscript finally got a time frame.²⁰⁵ Bendix Andersen’s whereabouts at that time are not mentioned, though. Because of the information within the manuscript, that the drum was inherited in the fourth generation,²⁰⁶ the Freavnantjahke gievrie’s origin was dated back to the beginning of the 17th century.²⁰⁷ This connection and dating was unknown to Friis who only examined the manuscript or to Klemm who only had access to the drum. Lindholm and Weinitz worked with the drum and knew about the manuscript due to the writings of Friis, however, they did not examine it themselves and were therefore limited to Friis’ interpretations. The Swedish ethnographer Ernst Manker not only collected the knowledge of his predecessors but examined Sami drums, drawings and manuscripts and published his findings in 1938 in the first volume of “Die lappische Zaubertrommel – eine ethnologische Monographie”. Manker’s second volume followed in

¹⁹⁹ Weinitz, F. (1910): *Die lappische Zaubertrommel in Meiningen*. p. 1.

²⁰⁰ Goltz, M. (2006): *Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”*. p. 186.

²⁰¹ Weinitz, F. (1910): *Die lappische Zaubertrommel in Meiningen*. p. 8.

²⁰² Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie*. p. 600.

²⁰³ Sámiid Vuorká Dávvirat (2022): *Ruoktot – Sámi rumbbuid máhcaheapmi*. Ávvočájáhus. Karasjok. p. 21.

²⁰⁴ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie*. p. 600.

²⁰⁵ Qvigstad, J. (1903): *Kildeskifter til den lappiske Mythologi*. p. 68.

²⁰⁶ Qvigstad, J. (1903): *Kildeskifter til den lappiske Mythologi*. p. 67.

²⁰⁷ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie*. p. 600.

1950. His detailed descriptions are fundamental contributions to the research on Sami drums. After Manker the drum could not be accessed until 1991 due to the political situation.²⁰⁸ The Iron Curtain prohibited research on the drum in East Germany.

Today, Manker's works are the basis for many scientists and their work on Sami drums in general and the Freavnantjahke gievrie in particular. This is also the case for the description of the Freavnantjahke gievrie by the current curator of the music collection at Meininger Museen, Maren Goltz. In her work from 2006²⁰⁹ on the drum, she endeavored to collect all previous research on the gievrie that had been conducted since the drum reappeared in 1837 as a donation to the HaV.²¹⁰ In her attempt to do so, Goltz tries to broaden the understanding of the drum's background by drawing on the work of Finnish professor Juha Pentikäinen. In 1995 Pentikäinen published an extensive essay on Sami mythology which was translated into German in 1997 and thereby more accessible to German scholars. Later, in 2002, Pentikäinen also published a translation of the work of Læstadius ("Fragments of Lappish Mythology"). Goltz consulted additionally the works of Danish curator Bente Gundestrup (1991), who researched the drum's history in Copenhagen, and Danish historian Birgitte Jørvik (2000). Despite the efforts to contextualize Freavnantjahke gievrie within the Sami belief system, Goltz's work follows the paths of the previous contributions by not including Sami voices and contemporary Sami perspectives. She only mentions the work of Sami author Odd Mathis Hætta (1994), which had been translated into German, in a footnote. Further, Goltz puts the drum in the context of shamanism, which Hætta did, too. However, the attempts of Hætta to paint a nuanced picture of the Sami and shamanism are not visible in Goltz's article.

It becomes apparent that the approaches of the previously mentioned scholars were that of Western, non-Sami, non-Indigenous researchers using anthropological, non-Indigenous research methods. Most of them who specifically mention the Freavnantjahke gievrie have emphasized its uniqueness and outstanding importance as a museum object for their research area. Many fail, however, to describe the still existing Sami culture and do not contextualize the drum's role in contemporary Sami life. This means that the Sami were subjected to the assimilation policies and racism while for example Ernst Manker published his renowned monographies on Sami drums in 1938 and 1950. These aspects are left out and the scholars

²⁰⁸ Sjöholm, B. (2023): *From Lapland to Sápmi : collecting and returning Sámi craft and culture*. University of Minnesota Press. p. 37.

²⁰⁹ Goltz's article has been translated into Norwegian in 2011 and published by Høylandet historielag including photographs and drawings of the drum.

²¹⁰ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger "Zaubertrommel". Pp. 171–196.

approach the drums as relics of the past instead of contextualizing them as well in contemporary Sami culture of the 20th century. The Christianization of the Sami including the confiscation and destruction of Sami drums are covered in the contributions. The assimilation policies of the Nordic countries – which continued until the 2nd half of the 20th century – on the other hand are almost never part of the examination. The oppression and everyday racism towards the Sami can be seen until today. Manker did criticize the limited approach by many of his predecessors when it came to interpreting the figures of the drums. He described their approaches as too European and too Nordic.²¹¹ Nevertheless, he himself fails to evaluate the drum's role in contemporary Sami culture or contemporary Sami culture in general.

2.4. At Meininger Museen

2.4.1. The Institutional Structure of the Meininger Museen

The Meininger Museen belongs to the Kulturstiftung Meiningen-Eisenach [Meiningen-Eisenach Cultural Foundation] which is a non-profit foundation under civil law based in Meiningen. The foundation was founded in 1997 as Kulturstiftung Meiningen and expanded in 2009 including the name change to Meiningen-Eisenach. In addition to the Meininger Museums, the Theatre Meiningen and the Regional Theatre Eisenach belong to the foundation. Its funding is shared by several parties: The district of Schmalkalden-Meiningen, the city of Meiningen, the city of Eisenach, the Wartburg district and the Free State of Thuringia. They all have voting rights within the foundation council, which are exercised by their respective representatives. A representative of the Free State of Thuringia holds the chairmanship of the foundation council.²¹² Not only is the council responsible for the preservation and restoration of cultural assets managed by the institutions under its authority, but also for the operation of these institutions. Thus, the foundation determines the senior appointments in the directorship of the cultural sites. The authority of the foundation council affects also repatriation claims as it is the council that decides whether an object can be repatriated. The repatriation claim is, however, a unique instance as the Meininger Museen has no other ethnological object than the Freavnantjahke gievrie that is from an Indigenous source community.²¹³ As museum director, Philipp Adlung has one vote within the foundation council.

²¹¹ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie.* p. 19.

²¹² Meininger Museen: *Kulturstiftung Meiningen-Eisenach*, <https://www.meiningermuseen.de/pages/ueber-uns/kulturstiftung.php>.

²¹³ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

2.4.2. The Exhibition at the Meininger Museen

On the 3rd of May 2022 I visited the permanent exhibition of the Meininger Museen in Meiningen, Thuringia in Germany. The Meininger Museen [Meiningen Museums] is a union of 3 museums: The Literature Museum “Baumbachhaus”, Theater Museum “Zauberwelt der Kulisse” and the Museum in the Castle. The Castle Elisabethenburg is the former residency of the ducal family Saxony-Meiningen who received the territories of Saxony-Hildburghausen in 1826. The Hildburghausen line was the one to which the Freavnantjahke gievrie was gifted in 1757. Today, the castle hosts the main part of the museum’s collection.

Since today the remaining belongings of the ducal family together with the collection of the HaV form the basis of the Meininger Museen,²¹⁴ it is important to elaborate on how this combination came to be.

As mentioned in the introduction, the natural history collection of the family Saxony-Hildburghausen, of which the gievrie was a part, was disbanded when territory rearrangements led to a relocation of the ducal family Saxony-Hildburghausen to Altenburg, Thuringia, in 1826.²¹⁵ Still it is unknown where the drum was in the time between 1826 and 1837. However, in 1837 Freavnantjahke gievrie was gifted by Ludwig Bechstein to the HaV, which Bechstein had founded 5 years prior. The drum’s hammer, though, had gone missing sometime between 1781 and 1837 and it is still unclear how Bechstein came into possession of the gievrie.²¹⁶

Considering that the HaV focused on regional history and the preservation of culture,²¹⁷ Freavnantjahke gievrie was an unusual addition to the collection.²¹⁸ Anyway, it is documented that the drum has been shown by the HaV in 1912.²¹⁹ The recognition of the drum as an ‘outstanding research object’ took several years and the association even considered selling Freavnantjahke gievrie, when in the beginning of the 20th century interested parties reached out.²²⁰ The drum, however, remained with the HaV due to disagreements about its monetary value and the turmoil of World War I, after which the drum was exhibited again (1920)²²¹. In 1935 the HaV was subdue to structural changes and thereby became the “Hennebergisch-Fränkischer Geschichtsverein e.V.” (HFG). The castle escaped destruction by bombs during

²¹⁴ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

²¹⁵ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 183.

²¹⁶ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 184.

²¹⁷ HFG: Geschichte und Tradition.

²¹⁸ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 184.

²¹⁹ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 188

²²⁰ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 185ff.

²²¹ Goltz, M. (2012): *Die Musikinstrumenten-Sammlung der Meininger*. p. 19.

the Second World War,²²² but the HFG was affected by the occupation force's ban of associations in 1945 which was effective throughout the GDR.²²³

The Meininger Museen has been established on 24.05.1947 based on two parts: The remaining belongings of the ducal family and the collection of the former HaV, which "is the most important part of [the] collection"²²⁴ at the Meininger Museen. As previously mentioned, the drum does not fit the usual catalogue of the exhibition, which displays the "courtly household with rococo furniture and a collection of paintings"²²⁵ of Italian and Dutch origin from the 18th century. Regardless, Freavnantjahke gievrie has been exhibited at the museum since 1947.²²⁶ Before that, it is mentioned that the drum has been shown in 1912 by the HaV.²²⁷

In the Meininger Museen there is an awareness that the uniqueness of the drum within the collection raises the question of where to exhibit it as they do not "have any other significant objects from the ethnological field."²²⁸ However, there was no doubt that the drum "has to be shown because it is an outstanding object."²²⁹ Today the drum has the catalogue number "M 85"²³⁰ and is exhibited since 2008 in room number 15, which is called "Green Library" [Grüne Bibliothek], as part of the music instrument exhibition with focus on woodwind instruments. It is the first object that visitors see when they enter the room, in which about 3 m high green stained bookcases host the music instruments and the gievrie.

Freavnantjahke gievrie is fixed in the center of the showcase. On the left below the drum are three images of the manuscript from the interrogation of Bendix Andersen Frennings Fjeld and Jon Torchelsen Fipling-Skov, including a drawing of the drumhead and the explanation of the symbols given by the two Sami. Parts of the pendants are displayed on a small plate at the bottom of the showcase.

On the right side of the drum there is also a drawing of the drumhead with numbers to the symbols. Below are the German and English translations of these from the manuscript. The drum is titled "Samische Schamanentrommel | Sami shaman drum" and its place of origin is mentioned as "Norwegen, Raum Trondheim, um 1620" [Norway, Trondheim area, around

²²² Sjöholm, B. (2023): *From Lapland to Sápmi*. p. 37.

²²³ HFG: Geschichte und Tradition.

²²⁴ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxi.

²²⁵ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxiv.

²²⁶ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

²²⁷ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger "Zaubertrommel". p. 188

²²⁸ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxiii.

²²⁹ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxiii.

²³⁰ Goltz, M. (2012): *Die Musikinstrumenten-Sammlung der Meininger*. p. 21.

1620]. A description of the drum is added beneath it in German and English. It ties the drum to shamanism, talks briefly about the confiscation of the drum in 1723 by Thomas von Westen during the Christianization of the Sami and gives a timeline until the drum came to the city of Meiningen.

English description of the drum at Meininger Museen:

“Shamanism, which is widespread in all parts of the world, is the oldest known religion. Up until the arrival of Christian missionaries in Scandinavia during the 18th century, shamanism was the center of culture for the Norwegian Sami people.

Shamans had various functions in the Sami community. They were priests and medicine men and sought out grazing pastures for the reindeer. However, they were also able to do harm.

The drum was the shamans’ most important instrument. Through drumming, singing and dancing, he induced a state of trance and entered the afterlife.

The drum of Sami shaman Bendix Andersen Frennings-Field was thought to

have great powers. It is believed to have aided in the successful hunt of 11 bears.

During the course of the Christian mission, the drum was confiscated by Thomas von Westen (1723), who was in charge of the Sami mission. Von Westen interviewed Andersen about the age of the drum as well as its paintings and their respective meanings.

The drum traveled from the missionary college and the Royal Danish Art Collection Copenhagen (1730) to the court of Hildburghausen (1757) and finally, to Meiningen (after 1826).

Worldwide, about 70 shaman drums are currently still in existence.”



Figure 2 Green Library, Meininger Museen. Photo: Sammlung Musikgeschichte der Meininger Museen / Michael Reichel

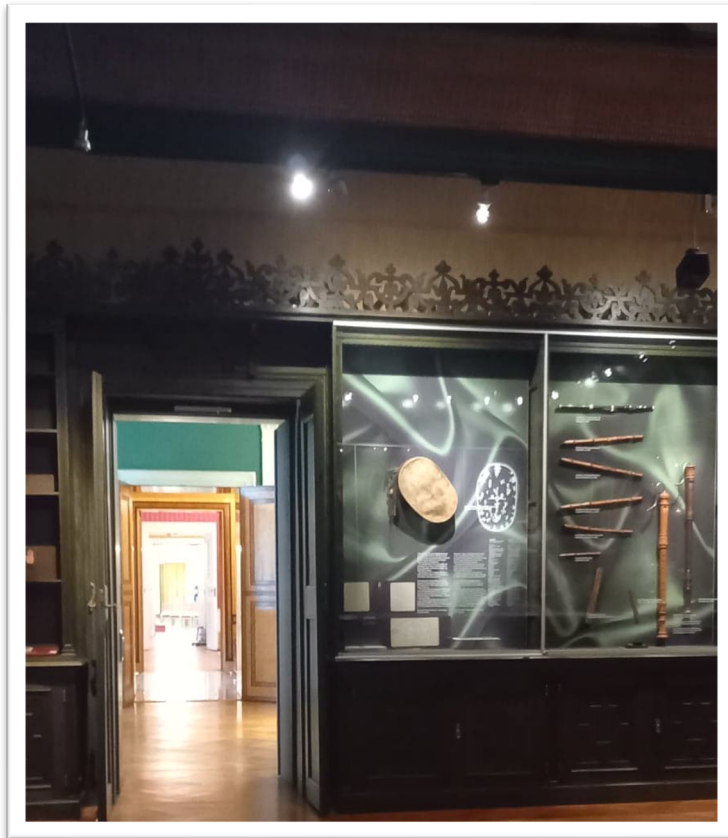


Figure 3 View when entering the Green Library, Meininger Museen.
Photo: Swantje Opitz

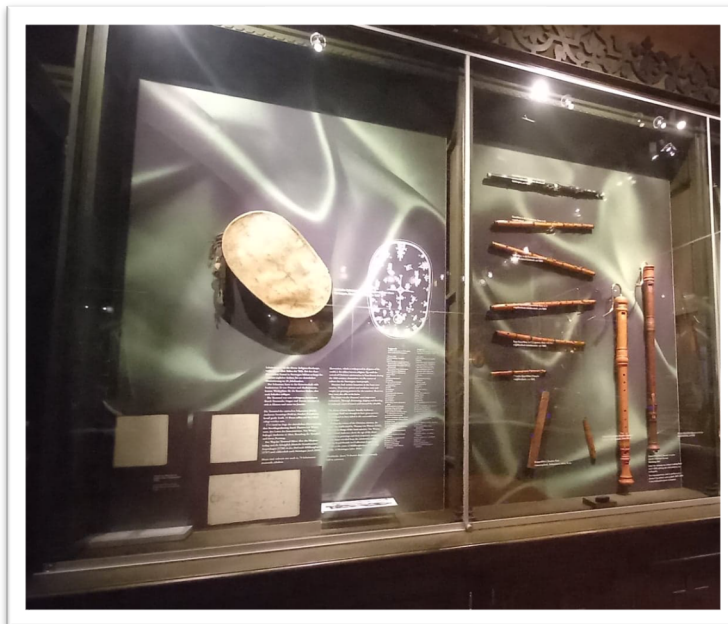


Figure 4 Freavnantjahke gievrie on display, Meininger Museen.
Photo: Swantje Opitz

The text mentions the former owner Bendix Andersen but does not show any remarks about contemporary Sami culture. When approaching the other objects within the music instrument collection, music begins to play. These songs were recorded playing the exhibited instruments. This effect does not happen when approaching the gievrie. This, if not the description about the usage of the drum as a ceremonial instrument, may point out to visitors that there is a difference between the gievrie and the music instruments. Freavnantjahke gievrie here remains silent. Its voice can be heard at the exhibition in Snåsa.

As I stepped into the Green Library, I was moved to see the gievrie I have only read about or seen pictures of so far. The green-blue background in the showcases is supposed to depict fabric. My first association, though, was Northern Lights since I had just traveled from Tromsø down South. The castle is an impressive

and large building which determines certain conditions for the exhibitions within it.

The rooms have high ceilings and especially the one with the gievrie is rather dark. However, this created a calm atmosphere which felt right considering the significance of the object. The drum being the first exhibit to see when entering the room gives it a prominent position. Anyway, I could understand what Philipp Adlung means when he talks about the drum not really connecting with the other objects.²³¹ He says about the connection between the drum and Meiningen: “We try to explain it, but it is not easy.”²³² Among the very impressive collection of music instruments the drum seemed lonely. However, Adlung explains the decision to place the gievrie in this collection. They decided according to the lowest common denominator:

We [...] have a very nice musical instrument department here, because Meiningen is traditionally a city of music and theater. I think that it was the best way to add [the drum] to the collection of musical instruments, because it is also, at least marginally, a ritual instrument [...]. It produces sounds, acoustic phenomena. Whether one considers them primarily as music or less so is the second question. That was the right place, where it is presented now very beautifully and safely in an air-conditioned showcase with all the explanations. I do not think you can present an object any more beautifully than we do.²³³

The descriptions explain how the drum came to Meiningen but give no introduction to Sami culture. Instead, the drum is introduced through the concept of shamanism. The choice to present the drum through spiritual worldviews of the 16th and 17th century could be explained by Meiningen's location and the associated connection to the Reformation movement. Central Germany is the heart of the Reformation in 1517 and German visitors could thus draw a connection between the spread of Protestantism and the Christianization of the Sami, as Adlung points out:

I would like to say once again that for me this question of shamanism in Northern Europe is connected with the topic of Christianization. I say this because we here in Central Germany are of course the heart of the Reformation movement.²³⁴

Nonetheless, I am uncertain if this connection is made by the audience and additionally shamanism is still a questionable term in this context. Further I was concerned others might understand that the drum's value is defined by its age and the small number of still existing Sami drums. I was missing the context of contemporary Sami culture and the drum's value in

²³¹ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

²³² See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

²³³ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxiii.

²³⁴ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxvii.

it. Anyway, the mentioning of Bendix Andersen was a positive contrast to usually nameless Indigenous people in museum exhibitions.

Birgitta Fossum knows about the drum being exhibited in the music collection and states her skepticism:

I am a bit skeptical about that. Well, I have to admit, I have not been to the Meininger Museen and seen how it is exhibited, but I have seen pictures from there, where it is exhibited in a music collection. I am very skeptical about that, because it is not a musical instrument. This is an object that was used by the owners to look into the future. It was also an object that could be used to have a spiritual connection between the worlds and suchlike. So, it was a sacred object and it had nothing to do with music. Therefore, I am a little critical of that.²³⁵

The Meininger Museen wants to exhibit the gievrie instead of leaving it in the archives,²³⁶ which means they have to ignore that it does not really fit anywhere. Seeing the rest of the exhibition the placement of the drum appears like a good decision. The gievrie has become the flagship of the museum and is depicted on several marketing tools as for example the banner outside of the building.²³⁷ The music instrument collection in general is a popular part of the Meininger Museen.²³⁸ After I had listened to the other instruments playing when being approached, I was nervous what I would hear when stepping towards the gievrie. I was relieved that it was silent.

2.5. At Saemien Sijte

2.5.1. The Institutional Structure of Saemien Sijte

Saemien Sijte is one of six museums or museum units in Norway that are managed by the Norwegian Sami Parliament.²³⁹ Administrative responsibility was transferred from the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equity to the Norwegian Sami Parliament in 2002 in line with the principle of Sami self-determination. In 2006 Saemien Sijte was reorganized to not only be a cultural association but also a foundation. The latter took over the responsibility of the running business, such as ownership over the facilities and functioning as employer to the

²³⁵ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvi.

²³⁶ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

²³⁷ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

²³⁸ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

²³⁹ The other museums are Tana and Varanger Museumsiida, RiddoDuottarMuseat, Várdobáiki Museum, Center of Northern Peoples and Árran Lule Sami Center.

staff. The cultural association, on the other hand, is the owner of the library books and exhibition objects which came into the collection before 2006.²⁴⁰

Saemien Sijte is part of the Sami museum society, which was established in 1989 and covers all Sami museums as well as Norwegian museums with a Sami collection. After a period of inactivity, the organization took up its work again in 1995. Since 2007 the formerly independent organization became part of the Norwegian Museums Association.

2.5.2. The Exhibition at Saemien Sijte

I had the chance to visit the new facilities of the center for South Sami culture, Saemien Sijte, in Snåsa [Snåase] on the 6th of December in 2022. Since this summer (2022) the museum for South Sami history and culture is located on Horjemstangen, a peninsula in Snåsavatnet [Snåasenjaevrie] ca. 5 km outside of Snåsa.

Previously, Saemien Sijte was located in Snåsa, where the building was inaugurated in October 1980, although the cultural association had already been founded in 1964. The idea was to create a Sami cultural center which manages a collection of Sami cultural heritage, hosts activities and serves a meeting place. Only six years after the building's opening, in 1986, bigger facilities were needed, therefore cabins and barracks were set up as a temporary solution. The construction of the new building on Horjemstangen started after the confirmation of fundings by the state in 2018. Saemien Sijte gave their input concerning the needs of their work as a museum and specifically a Sami museum. Further, they wished the building to represent Sami affiliation.²⁴¹

On Horjemstangen the museum is embedded in the context of nature with a view across lake Snåsavatnet. Under the title “Gïejide goerebe” [We follow the tracks] the main exhibition depicts with clear and modern measures Sami history and the development of Sami identity until today. The Freavnantjahke gievrie is addressed twice within the exhibition. Following the timeline on the wooden wall to the point of the intensified Christianization of the Sami in the 18th century, the visitor is met by the date 1723. Above this, a short text about “Gievrie Haajpene” [A lost Drum] can be found which mentions Bendix Andersen Frennings Fjeld and Jon Torchelsen Fipling-Skov as owners of the Freavnantjahke gievrie, the confiscation of it and its current location in Meiningen. Under the date, in a small rectangular chamber, is a slowly spinning hologram of the drum which enables a three-dimensional perception of it. (The drum

²⁴⁰ Saemien Sijte: *Historikk*. <https://saemiensijte.no/om-saemien-sijte/historikk/>.

²⁴¹ Saemien Sijte: *Historikk*.

has been digitalized in the fall of 2021.²⁴²) However, besides text and image making up for the gievrie not being part of the exhibition, the drum is represented through an audio installation. The Sami author Rawdna Carita Eira created the text which is written from the drum's perspective and can be listened to in Åarjelsaemiengiele, Norwegian and English. In this the drum reminisces about the days when it was a part of the family sitting in a gâetie [Sami hut] by the fire and expresses its longing to return home soon:

The drum of Freavnantjahke²⁴³

Sounds of morning. Crackling birch bark as my owner lights the fire. Humming. Softly. The woman rooting around the food chest. Laughing children under bed covers. There, furthest in the turf hut, was my place. Near people. Calmness and warmth where I rested on the white skin of a calf, in a prettily adorned chest. Always near my own people.

Hearing all their yoiks, all their breaths. From one generation to the next. Love's secret sighs. Crying babies. The old man's yoik as recalling his youth, missing a childhood friend, praising his life companion, comforted as death approaches.

Travelling together with them, the people. Generation after generation protecting them, helping them, providing strength. My sound rumbling in remote valleys, echoing between Njaarke's holy mountains. To the west rears Saajvevaerie, Skjolden, to the north mighty Bissege, to the east dear Aahka Saajve. I greeted mornings mists lifting over Freavnantjahke, Frøyningsfjellet, lightning over Honne-snjuthtje, Heilhornet, glittering starry skies, Galla's sons, a bitterly cold frost night on Tjåahkere, Tunnsjøguden.

Of course, I trembled, quivering, when a young Saajve girl offered her drinking vessel to my owner, the powerful spiritual

leader, letting him drink Saajve's nectar, letting him start his journey.

The hammer beating against the heart. Together finding a mighty current. Drumming. Drumming. Faster. Faster. Travelling. Giving. Taking. Travelling. Giving. Taking. The yoik from Saaraahka standing by our side. Strong women's voices resounding between cliffs, through time, through space. Yoik after yoik so the spiritual leader could find his way home. Travelling. Giving. Taking. Returning home. Reporting. Bringing news from another world.

Ancient tracks I kept open. Open new roads between worlds, between powers, between people. To Saaraahka's world. The world of the dead. To Saajve.

Following my masters, heling them communicate with the earth, with the sea, with sacred powers. Holding the goddess of birth, Saaraahka, holy.

Asking for help from the god of the wind, Biegkeålma. Negotiating with Vaaltoniere, she who guards the dead. Together consulting good powers, fighting evil forces, resisting enemies, interpreting visions.

²⁴² Balzter, S. (2022): *Dieser Schatz glitzert nicht*. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/menschen/ausstellung-in-der-finnmark-kultgegenstaende-der-samen-als-3-d-modelle-17933866-p2.html>.

²⁴³ Sámiid Vuorká Dávvirat (2022): *Ruoktot – Sámi rumbbuid máhcaheapmi*. Ávvočájáhus. Karasjok, pp. 33-34.; Written by Rawdna Carita Eira, translated into English by Martin Pope.

My master and I surveyed from heights. Searching and finding the right paths, the right time to harvest the wealth of valleys, forest lands, fjords, (and) seas. Leading lost reindeer herds home, lost people too. Warm hands twisting strings, braided ribbons, attached amulets for gratitude.

Helping people encircle the bear, *Boeltaajja*.

Steering the scared hunting spear. Calming a young hunter's temperament, giving new strength to an old hunter. So many times *Boeltaajja* gave its own life as a gift, having mercy on mankind, moving on to the other world. The humans yoiking with joy.

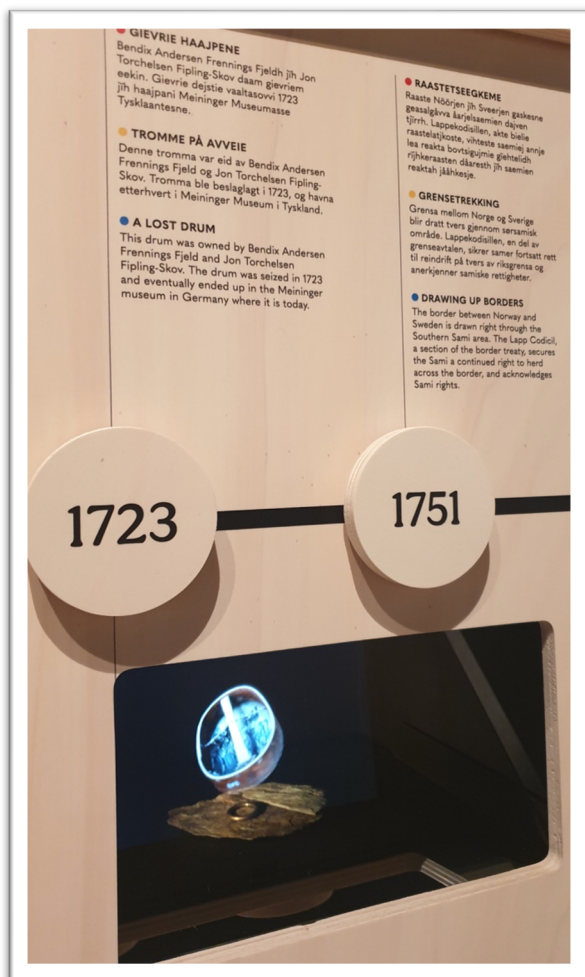


Figure 5 Hologram of the 'Lost Drum', Saemien Sijte. Photo: Swantje Opitz

Giving thanks. Strong minds. Strong voices. Strong hearts. They drew me *Boeltaajja*'s heart blood. Nailing tin crosses every time *Boeltaajja* passed over. From generation to generation.

- But, of course, I have also protected *Boeltaajja* from the greed of men, once or twice at sunrise.

I have seen so much. I also saw this time coming. But I never wanted to come here. To the powerless. As a means of exchange between alien men, robbers. What am I doing here? Confined in this glass cage. I am suffering in the hard light, in this dead silence. Strangers glancing with empty eyes. Floundering over trifles. Babbling empty words. Adorning themselves with jingling gold and silver. They themselves have no power.

I am old. Ancient, I am. Missing the wind, the rushing river. Longing for the living forest, the smell of spring, flocks of birds landing. Hearing reports from Ledtie-aahka, goddess of birds, exchanging news wishing Rananiejte, the spring goddess, welcome. Enjoying the soft, familiar language, the yoiks, the verses, the amusing stories. Hearing songs from beating hearts, from my own people, from future generations.

Where is everybody? Where have they gone? Do they no longer remember me? Do they not care?

Are they not coming for me? Now it is time.

Near my own people. Always close to my own people. Coming home again. Soon. Home.

In this text the drum is given a voice. The gievrie expresses its desire to return home and addresses the "robbers" to whom it became "a



Figure 6 Exhibition at Saemien Sijte. Photo: Swantje Opitz

means of exchange”. Through the text the repatriation of the gievrie becomes part of the exhibition. The timeline of Sami history on the wall, however, continues as of today without it.

At a later part in the exhibition, a glass cabinet is devoted to Freavnantjahke gievrie. On the glass is a depiction of the drum skin. To its right is a screen showing the manuscript of 1723 with the explanations of the symbols and by clicking on them the corresponding symbols on the skin to the left will illuminate. A short introduction to the manuscript is given in Åarjelsaemiengïele and English on the screen. The manuscript itself is written

in Danish and has not been translated into Åarjelsaemiengïele. During the tour of the exhibition, I was told by the guide, that reading the interrogation in the South Sami language would be too painful. The interrogation and the phrasing in the manuscript are disrespectful towards the Sami.

Seeing the exhibition at Saemien Sijte after I had already visited the drum in Meiningen was a gripping experience. Learning about Sami history and culture in a museum from a Sami perspective is still a rare occasion, which made everything feel new. Of course, the exhibition and the building had been opened just recently, however, the imparting of knowledge felt new, too. The knowledge was given from inside and I felt less like a spectator. The room was rather dark and atmospheric with clear outlines. Even though the exhibition was not centered around it, the absence of Freavnantjahke gievrie was palpable. The spaces dedicated to the gievrie emphasized its absence and left room to ask questions concerning its whereabouts. It seemed as if the drum could just move in if it came to Snåsa today. As Birgitta Fossum says: “[W]e have room for the drum. We already have stands set for it. It just has to come in.”²⁴⁴ The other drums, the information given on drums and the Sami history contextualize the Freavnantjahke

²⁴⁴ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxix.

gievrie in Sami culture and create understanding for the importance and value that these objects have.

Hearing Rawdna Carita Eira's interpretation of Freavnantjahke gievrie's voice was a moving experience which made it fathomable to understand the drum as alive or as a person.²⁴⁵ Listening to the drum wishing to come home, I remembered the silence when stepping towards the showcase in Meiningen. There Freavnantjahke gievrie remains silent. Its voice is perceptible in Snåsa.

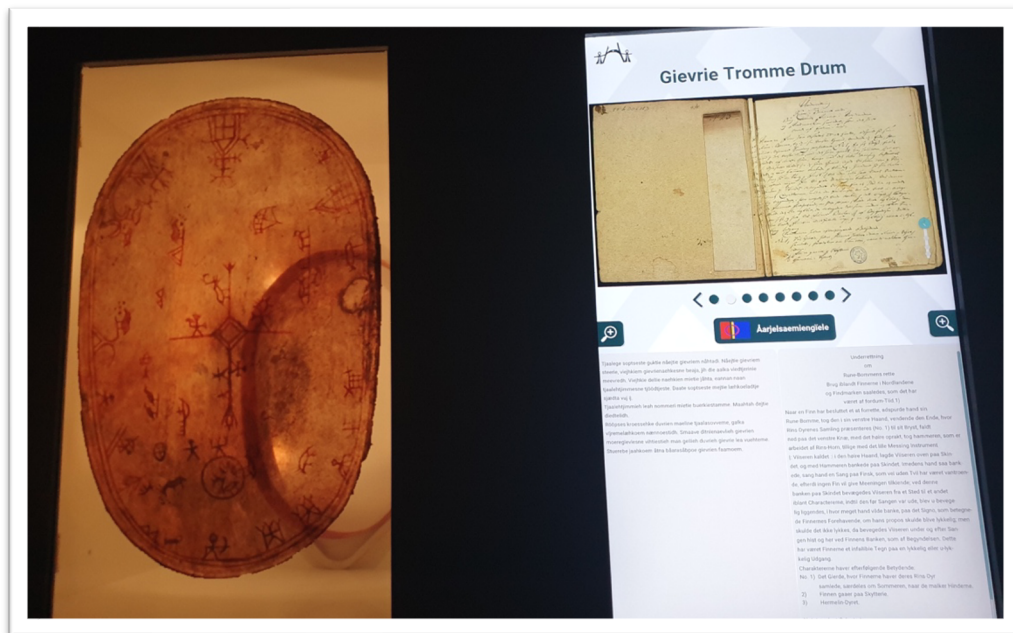


Figure 7 Depiction of Freavnantjahke gievrie and Manuscript of the Interrogation of Bendix Andersen and Jon Torchelsen. Photo: Swantje Opitz

3. Repatriation

This chapter lays out the process of repatriation by beginning with a definition as understood in this work, depicting previous research and later explore different aspects of repatriation to create a sharper outline of the reflections in context with the Freavnantjahke gievrie.

3.1. Definition

The word repatriation is composed of the prefix “re-“ and “patria”. The Latin word patria meaning “fatherland”, and the prefix indicates the return to the fatherland.²⁴⁶ In museum contexts this refers “to the return of human remains and cultural objects to Indigenous

²⁴⁵ See Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xx.

²⁴⁶ Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres – innvirkninger på lokalmuseum og samfunn i Altafjorden*, Sápmi. Oslo, p. 13.

communities,”²⁴⁷ which serves as a narrow definition. In a broader sense repatriation is one of many approaches to address Indigenous human remains and objects which due to colonial structures are today possessed by Western museums, foundations or associations. Finnish archeologist Eeva-Kristiina Nylander (formerly Harlin) explains that “[r]eturning objects back to the peoples they originally belong challenges the colonial legacy of museums.”²⁴⁸ It challenges the status quo by pushing for “consultation, collaboration, advisory panels and boards, and securing leadership roles”²⁴⁹ for Indigenous people to actively tell their own stories. In Germany debates about the return of museum objects are often connected to restitution instead of repatriation. Both practices seek to compensate for previous injustice. In terms of the Freavnantjahke gievrie, however, the debate concerns repatriation.

Different from restitution, repatriation does not seek to return an object to a legally recognized, original owner but to its “fatherland understood as a state”.²⁵⁰ The term ‘patria’ includes not solely nation states but also Indigenous communities and their territories. Birgitta Fossum “sent a request [to Meiningen] before summer of last year [2021]. Then [she] asked for a meeting to discuss a possible return of the drum.”²⁵¹ Thus, the Freavnantjahke gievrie is claimed by an institution representing the South Sami community, not by the last known South Sami owners Bendix Andersen Frennings Fjeld and Jon Torchelsen Fipling-Skov.

Indigenous communities more often choose the path of repatriation or private negotiations instead of restitution.²⁵² The latter poses several difficulties, especially when the object is in another state than that in which its source community resides,²⁵³ which is the case for the Freavnantjahke gievrie. Legal claims to the object by original owners or their legal heirs can expire when the object “is now in the hands of a third party, however it was removed.”²⁵⁴ In terms of the gievrie this means that regardless of the confiscation and its methods the long time that has passed poses difficulties to legally claiming the drum and also that it is in possession of a third party today. A legal claim in this circumstance is, therefore, rather challenging. Philipp Adlung thinks, too, that “a debate about legally evaluating all the processes that have

²⁴⁷ Nika Collison, J.; Bell, S. K. L.; Neel, L. (2019): *Indigenous Repatriation Handbook*, Canada, p. 1.

²⁴⁸ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home: the different ontologies of the Sámi collections. In: Hylland Eriksen, T.; Valkonen, S.; Valkonen, J. (eds.): *Knowing from the Indigenous North – Sámi Approaches to History, Politics and Belonging*. London, p. 48.

²⁴⁹ Bernstein, B. (1991): Repatriation and Collaboration: The Museum of New Mexico. In: *Museum Anthropology*, Vol. 15(3). p. 19.

²⁵⁰ Whitby-Last, K. (2010): Legal Impediments to the Repatriation of cultural Objects. p. 36.

²⁵¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvi.

²⁵² Whitby-Last, K. (2010): Legal Impediments to the Repatriation of cultural Objects. p. 41

²⁵³ Whitby-Last, K. (2010): Legal Impediments to the Repatriation of cultural Objects. p. 37.

²⁵⁴ Whitby-Last, K. (2010): Legal Impediments to the Repatriation of cultural Objects. p. 37.

taken place in the last 300 / 400 years will lead nowhere”²⁵⁵ and mentions that Meiningen is “only now the third instance, which came into possession [of the gievrie] later via donation, legal donation.”²⁵⁶ Here should be mentioned that this statement was made in the context of him considering the debate around the drum as “a completely different discussion than the one about colonial art and, of course, the Nazi-topic.”²⁵⁷ This aspect and Adlung’s approach will be addressed and explained later (see chapter 3.4.). Nonetheless, Saemien Sijte is a representative of the South Sami community, not the original owner of the drum, and Meiningen Museen is the third party in possession by legal donation, which makes the return of the Freavnantjahke gievrie a matter of repatriation and based on moral claims (see chapter 3.4.).

3.2. Previous Research and Repatriation of Sami Cultural Heritage

The first time I actively came into contact with repatriation of Sami cultural heritage was in spring of 2018 during an internship at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen in Berlin. Around 1000 objects of Sami origin are located at the museum, of which two are drums, and the idea back then was to start a collaboration with Sami institutions to clarify provenances, repatriate certain objects and create an exhibition. In December of 2022 the project “The Sámi Collection at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen – A multi-perspective approach to provenance research” began.²⁵⁸ This is the first time a project of long-term provenance research happens, that focusses on “Sámi artifacts held by a museum outside of Northern Europe.”²⁵⁹ This project exemplifies that repatriation and provenance are current topics in German museums, not least because of the active work of Sami institutions to find their cultural heritage. The claims raised by Sami museums are based on the lack of objects the Sami communities face, while there are museums outside of Northern Europe which have thousands of Sami objects.²⁶⁰ Birgitta Fossum points out that “Sami museums are [...] very young museums and [they] do not have much”²⁶¹ which is a result not only of collection practices but also of the German scorched-earth policy in WWII and “assimilation politics that have led to changes in material culture.”²⁶² Especially the highly

²⁵⁵ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxvi.

²⁵⁶ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxvi.

²⁵⁷ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxvi.

²⁵⁸ Museum Europäischer Kulturen (2022): *The Sámi Collection at MEK*.

²⁵⁹ Baglo, C. (2022): *The Sámi Collection*.

²⁶⁰ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 72.

²⁶¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxi.

²⁶² Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 72.

assimilated areas lack material culture and are dependent on objects from non-Sami museums.²⁶³

Attempts to counter the lack of objects in Sami museums in Norway started at the end of the 20th century. Norwegian Sami represented by Ole Henrik Magga (president of the Norwegian Saemiedigkie at the time) have thematized repatriation in the 1980s and have voiced their request to repatriate Sami cultural heritage in 1995 during the General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Norway.²⁶⁴ ICOM has acknowledged this request. Birgitta Fossum mentions that the responsibility of museums in possession of “objects that do not belong to their own culture [...] is laid out in ICOM’s guidelines”²⁶⁵ today.

In the 90s and early 2000s the efforts to repatriate were mainly directed towards Norway, Sweden and Finland²⁶⁶ but expanded then to the whole of Europe. Nylander and Olli say about Sami cultural heritage that “the vast majority of the older objects are to be found in museums and institutions outside the contemporary Sámi area.”²⁶⁷

However, to repatriate Sami cultural heritage from other European museums the knowledge of the objects’ existence and their whereabouts were needed.²⁶⁸ 2000 – 2004 the survey ‘Sámi Cultural Heritage in Collections’ was conducted by Àjtte, the Swedish Mountain and Sami Museum, to evaluate institutions throughout Europe.²⁶⁹ Next to human remains, ceremonial objects were in focus of the survey, while one goal was to evaluate the general possibility of the repatriation of Sami objects.²⁷⁰ During this process, German museums came into focus, too, and several other surveys initiated by Sami people followed (e.g. ‘Recalling Ancestral Voices’ 2006-2007, ‘Collecting Sápmi’ 2008). According to Nylander, surveys conducted over the span of 12 years (2003 – 2015) ascertained that far over 1700 objects of Sami origin are in possession of German museums.²⁷¹ In this context one object in Meiningen was noted,²⁷² which is the Freavnantjahke gievrie. However, Nylander does not specify the objects. Here it should be mentioned that back in 1938 Manker counted 18 drums of Sami origin as well as several, according to him, fake drums in Germany and 81 Sami drums in Europe in total.²⁷³ Two Sami

²⁶³ Harlin, E.-K.; Olli, A. M. (2014): Repatriation. p. 60.

²⁶⁴ Harlin, E.-K.; Olli, A. M. (2014): Repatriation. p. 57.

²⁶⁵ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxi.

²⁶⁶ Harlin, E.-K.; Olli, A. M. (2014): Repatriation. p. 57.

²⁶⁷ Harlin, E.-K.; Olli, A. M. (2014): Repatriation. p. 58.

²⁶⁸ Harlin, E.-K.; Olli, A. M. (2014): Repatriation. p. 59.

²⁶⁹ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 73.

²⁷⁰ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 73.

²⁷¹ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 82.

²⁷² Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums H. p. 82.

²⁷³ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie.* p. 73.

drums are located at the MEK²⁷⁴ and another six at the Grassimuseum in Leipzig.²⁷⁵ The fact that no drum from Germany has been repatriated so far makes Germany and the sheer number of drums remaining there especially pressing in terms of repatriation.

The 2000s provided the knowledge on the existence and number of objects with great value for the Sami community in German and other European museums. Nonetheless, repatriation of Sami cultural heritage and its conduct were a rather new field and needed points of orientation. “Utimit” published in 2008 by Mille Gabriel and Jens Dahl is one expression of the developments of the 2000s and generates great ideas of conducting repatriation in the 21st century. The name “Utimit” relates to the repatriation project between Denmark and Greenland which led to about 35,000 objects being repatriated (1982 – 2001)²⁷⁶. The approach of this project was to see repatriation as an opportunity and dialogue, which became a template for Sami repatriation projects.²⁷⁷ Further “Utimit” expresses the link between cultural heritage and “identity formation processes on both a local, national and global level”²⁷⁸ while assigning an important role to the museums in this process. One of the contributors of the book “Utimit” is the already quoted Finnish archeologist Eeva-Kristiina Nylander, who explored Sami cultural heritage and its repatriation from museums within and beyond Northern Europe. Her text on “Repatriation as Knowledge Sharing – Returning the Sámi Cultural Heritage” touches upon the collection activities by non-Sami scholars and the Western approaches behind these activities.²⁷⁹ Buying or stealing objects by “for example, priests, teachers or scholars”²⁸⁰ enriched collections of Western museums and were considered justifiable by research

²⁷⁴ Baglo, C. (2022): *The Sámi Collection at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen – A multi-perspective approach to provenance research*. Norges Museumsforbund. <https://museumsforbundet.no/nyheter/the-sami-collection-at-the-museum-europaischer-kulturen-a-multi-perspective-approach-to-provenance-research-pressemedling/>.

²⁷⁵ Messmer, S. (2023): *Rückgaben dürfen schmerzhaft sein*. <https://www.amnesty.de/informieren/amnesty-journal/deutschland-koloniale-raubkunst-rueckgaben-aufarbeitung-grassi-museum-leipzig>

²⁷⁶ Grønnow, B.; Lund Jensen, E. (2008): Utimit: Repatriation and Collaboration Between Denmark and Greenland. In: Gabriel, M.; Dahl, J. (eds.): *Utimit: Past Heritage – Future Partnerships, Discussions on Repatriation in the 21st Century*, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs and Greenland National Museum & Archives, p. 180.

²⁷⁷ Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres*. p. 57-58.

²⁷⁸ Gabriel, M. (2008): Introduction: From Conflict to Partnership. In: Dahl, J.; Gabriel, M. (eds.): *Utimit*. Copenhagen. p.12.

²⁷⁹ Harlin, E.-K. (2008): Repatriation as Knowledge Sharing: Returning the Sámi Cultural Heritage. In: Gabriel, M.; Dahl, J. (eds.), *Utimit: Past Heritage – Future Partnerships, Discussions on Repatriation in the 21st Century*, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs and Greenland National Museum & Archives, Copenhagen. pp. 193-194.

²⁸⁰ Harlin, E.-K. (2008): Repatriation as Knowledge Sharing. p. 193.

interest.²⁸¹ The same “Western scientific concepts”²⁸² were applied to justify brutal collecting and research on human remains.²⁸³

Nylander mentions the ties between material culture and Sami culture and expresses that “even nowadays, ethnicity is strongly expressed through material objects.”²⁸⁴ The growing wish to regain custody over these objects²⁸⁵ resulted in another big repatriation project: Bååstede (2012 – 2019). Next to Sami perspectives on repatriation and cultural heritage, Bååstede provides examples for future repatriation projects and prospects. Birgitta Fossum, as one of the partners of the project, writes about the Freavnantjahke gievrie in “Post-Bååstede: What happens next?”²⁸⁶ She addresses the brutal methods of von Westen and expresses the motivation to get not just the Freavnantjahke gievrie back into Sami custody.²⁸⁷ Due to the project, “two drums have recently come into the legal possession of Sámi museums in Norway.”²⁸⁸ These are the drum from Bindal, now at Saemien Sijte in Snåsa, and the drum from Hammarøy, now at the Lule Sami museum Árran – Julevsámi Centre in Drag. However, so far, many Sami drums remain in non-Sami museums. In the joint statement “Repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains” by the Sami Museums in Norway from April 2020 three South Sami drums are mentioned which are located in Germany (one at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, one at the Meininger Museen in Meiningen) and in Denmark (two at the National Museum in Copenhagen).²⁸⁹ Though, as mentioned earlier, further collaborations have located more drums, including South Sami drums, at for example the Grassmuseum in Leipzig.²⁹⁰

The latest, prominent repatriation case concerning Sami cultural heritage was that of the drum of Anders Poulsen. He was a Northern Sami who was persecuted for the accusation of witchcraft but was murdered before the execution in 1691 while in custody.²⁹¹ Poulsen was forced to give his drum to the local authorities.²⁹² His drum was from 1979 – 2022 as a loan part of the collection in the Sami museum in Karasjok but was in possession of the National

²⁸¹ Harlin, E.-K. (2008): Repatriation as Knowledge Sharing. p. 194.

²⁸² Harlin, E.-K. (2008): Repatriation as Knowledge Sharing. p. 193.

²⁸³ Harlin, E.-K. (2008): Repatriation as Knowledge Sharing. p. 194.

²⁸⁴ Harlin, E.-K. (2008): Repatriation as Knowledge Sharing. p. 194.

²⁸⁵ Harlin, E.-K. (2008): Repatriation as Knowledge Sharing. p. 196.

²⁸⁶ Fossum, B. (2021): Post-Bååstede. p. 144.

²⁸⁷ Fossum, B. (2021): Post-Bååstede. p. 144 – 146.

²⁸⁸ Porsanger, J. (2022): An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation. p. 75.

²⁸⁹ Sámi museums in Norway (2020): Repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains: Statement of the Sámi museums in Norway. EMRIP/202012b. p. 4 – 5.

²⁹⁰ Baglo, C. (2022): Studietur til Tyskland. <https://museumsforbundet.no/nyheter/fealadimmie-duiskkase-studietur-til-tyskland-09-10-14-10-2022/>.

²⁹¹ Porsanger, J. (2022): An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation. p. 72 – 73.

²⁹² Porsanger, J. (2022): An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation. p. 73.

Museum of Denmark.²⁹³ Jelena Porsanger evaluates the history of the drum, its property, the repatriation efforts of the Sami museum RiddoDuottarMuseat in Karasjok and explains the need to approach the issue from an Indigenous perspective using Indigenous methodologies.²⁹⁴ The symbols of the Northern Sami drum have been described by Poulsen himself in court during his trial, which makes this “one of just two written historical sources with explanations given by the drum owners themselves.”²⁹⁵ The manuscript of the Freavnantjahke gievrie being the other one. The Poulsen drum is part of the exhibition “RUOKTOT – Sámi rumbuid máhcaheapmi – Return of the Sámi Drums – Tilbakeføring av samiske trommer”, which was opened in spring of 2022.²⁹⁶ Even though they are not physically repatriated one Sami drum from the Grassmuseum in Leipzig as well as the Freavnantjahke gievrie in Meiningen have been digitalized in fall of 2021. They can be seen as 3-D-models at the museum in Karasjok.²⁹⁷ Referring back to the project Bååstede, the thorough work of Sami scholar Eva Dagny Johansen from 2022 should be mentioned. Her thesis ‘Sami cultural heritage is returning home – what happens next?’ examines the impact of the repatriation of Sami cultural heritage in the process of Bååstede and focuses on the role of local museums in this.²⁹⁸ Johansen emphasizes the connection between the objects and the local Sea Sami community,²⁹⁹ whereby she exposes Western museology and speaks of repatriation as a method of decolonization.³⁰⁰

As mentioned before, the debate about repatriation is a current one in German museums and the urgency of Indigenous peoples to get their cultural heritage back is felt by many.³⁰¹ However, interestingly enough, indigeneity for a long time was a rather unfamiliar term and concept in Germany. The German government just recently started to acknowledge its responsibility towards Indigenous communities, so the government for example did not ratify ILO 169 until 2021.³⁰² In April of the same year (2021) the German Bundestag published a document concerning “Colonial looted art – Possibilities of returning looted objects from a

²⁹³ Porsanger, J. (2022): An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation. p. 72 – 73.

²⁹⁴ Porsanger, J. (2022): An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation. p. 73 – 74.

²⁹⁵ Porsanger, J. (2022): An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation. p. 79.

²⁹⁶ RiddoDuottarMuseat (2022): Ruoktot. https://rdm.no/no/de_samiske_samlinger/ruoktot-50ars-jubileumsutstilling-til-de-samiske-samlinger/.

²⁹⁷ Balzter, S. (2022): *Dieser Schatz glitzert nicht*.

²⁹⁸ Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres*.

²⁹⁹ Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres*. p. 218.

³⁰⁰ Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres*. p. 13-14.

³⁰¹ Degen, N. (SWR) (2023): *Maori-Mumienköpfe werden von Mannheim nach Neuseeland zurückgegeben.* / Benz, W. (SZ) (2019): *Schuld, Raub und Rückgabe*.

³⁰² International Labour Organization (1989): ILO 169. https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/Indigenous-and-tribal-peoples/WCMS_807508/lang--en/index.htm.

colonial context.”³⁰³ It generates guidelines from the examples of cultural heritage of African origin and cases of Nazi looted art. A few months earlier, in February 2021 the German Museum Association published the third edition of the “Guidelines for German Museums – Care of Collections from Colonial contexts.”³⁰⁴ According to the guideline the Freavnantjahke gievrie would be classified under ‘Culturally sensitive collection items’ as it is a “religious and ceremonial collection ite[m]”³⁰⁵ That the guidelines include Sami issues, becomes apparent through a reference to an advertising poster. A poster for an ethnic show with Sami people is depicted under the headline of ‘Objects that reflect Colonialism’.³⁰⁶

At present, research on the repatriation of Sami cultural heritage from German museums is still in its early stages. Especially research on South Sami drums and repatriation shows a desideratum which is due to the small number of drums but also because the debate around repatriation of Indigenous cultural heritage only gained momentum in recent years in Germany.

3.3. “An object has many stories”³⁰⁷

Philipp Adlung explains that for museums “[o]bjects are at the center”³⁰⁸ when it comes to the imparting of knowledge. Museums “use objects to explain world history, world cultures, and basically our own existence.”³⁰⁹ Only based on text or pictures, an exhibition might not spark the same interest or leave the same impression. Specific objects are the reason for the audience to visit a museum. There is a certain need to see a physical object in person because there is an attachment to it. Adlung believes that the catastrophes humanity has recently faced as well as the ongoing, impactful digitalization cause “objects and therefore the ur-analog [to] become more and more important.”³¹⁰ Humans are emotional beings, as he points out when talking about the perception of museum objects, especially originals, by the audience: “We humans are simply particularly emotional beings. For us, a replica or a scan of an object is ultimately not comparable with an original.”³¹¹ Through this argument he emphasizes the attachment people feel towards objects and that this attachment is bigger when it comes to originals compared to replicas. In his opinion, objects help to give answers to questions such as: “Where do I really

³⁰³ Deutscher Bundestag (2021): *Koloniale Raubkunst - Möglichkeiten der Rückgabe verbrachter Objekte aus kolonialem Kontext*. WD 10 - 3000 - 005/21.

³⁰⁴ Deutscher Museumsbund (2021): *Guidelines for German Museums – Care of Collections from Colonial contexts*. Berlin.

³⁰⁵ Deutscher Museumsbund (2021): *Guidelines for German Museums*. p. 20.

³⁰⁶ Deutscher Museumsbund (2021): *Guidelines for German Museums* p. 40.

³⁰⁷ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxviii.

³⁰⁸ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxiv.

³⁰⁹ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxiv.

³¹⁰ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxiv.

³¹¹ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxv.

come from? Where do my people come from? What are their origins, how did they show themselves?”³¹² The ability to learn about our past through objects is, thus, a reason to feel attachment. The questions which Adlung raises can be emotional depending on people’s biographies. A mere educational value of an object does not explain why humans feel more attached to an original than a replica and does not explain why people feel strongly attached to an object altogether. To understand the emotionality of humans towards different objects, Descartes’ idea of complex thinking shall be consulted. This idea links external objects – which can be any physical or imagined object occupying the mind – to emotions. Since, according to Descartes, objects are not “good or evil”³¹³ in themselves it is the human that attributes them with different emotions depending on what role the object plays for the human. The human’s personal affiliation with an object takes shape through emotions. In the situation that the object is perceived “as beneficial to us, this makes us have love for it.”³¹⁴ The emotional response creates an attachment to the object and consequently gives meaning to it. The bond of the Meininger Museen to the Freavnantjahke gievrie for example finds expression in a statement of Adlung when he contemplates a possible repatriation:

No matter where the drum will be one day, to the collection history will always belong that it was here for a long time and that it was cherished, cared for, loved and that it is in great condition, researched like no other.³¹⁵

His statement connects the emotional attachment of the museum to the collection history of the Freavnantjahke gievrie which the museum, the staff and audience experienced. The experiences made while the drum was in custody of the Meininger Museen are what forms the emotional attachment, thus the meaning. This exemplifies that the meaning of the object is relational. Hence, museum objects have various meanings depending on the experience and relationship different people have with the object: They have a different meaning to each visitor, to the staff of the museum, researchers, to the community the museum belongs to and individuals of the source community of the object. According to Danish anthropologist Martin Skrydstrup “[o]bjects can take on very strange meanings intimately tied to personhood, memories, social relations and inalienability.”³¹⁶ Therefore, it is not about just the object in itself but what it embodies. The Freavnantjahke gievrie has a different meaning for the Meininger Museen than

³¹² Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxv.

³¹³ Descartes, R. (1985): The Passions of the Soul. In: Cottingham, J.; Stoothoff, R.; Murdoch, D. (eds.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Cambridge. p. 350.

³¹⁴ Descartes, R. (1985): The Passions of the Soul. p. 350.

³¹⁵ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlvi.

³¹⁶ Skrydstrup, M. (2010): What Might an Anthropology of Cultural Property Look Like? In: *The Long Way Home – The Meaning and Values of Repatriation*. Ed: Turnbull, P.; M. Pickering. p. 67.

it has for Saemien Sijte. Moreover, the drum may have a different meaning for Sami individuals than for the South Sami Museum. The important meaning of the drums and attachment to them are understandable through a story Birgitta Fossum shares, which another Sami woman told her. It is about the experiences she and her father had when seeing a Sami drum in Oslo: “[T]hey had a physical experience of grief. It was such a pain because [the drums] were not home in the Sami area.”³¹⁷ This emotional response shows the attachment to the drum and that the drum plays an important role for the two. The felt pain exemplifies the feeling of connection to drums. Further, as the explanation for the pain was that the drum was on foreign ground, it depicts that there is a felt connection between the drums and their place of origin. Australian scholar Moira Simpson elaborates on this local facet of museum objects. According to her, this non-material aspect of museum objects is interwoven with the place of origin.³¹⁸ This aspect cannot be experienced on territory that is foreign to the object or by people not having certain traditional knowledge. Thus, the source community and the object are linked. In turn, if the object is on foreign territory, the connection between the object and the community is hurt. Consequently, Freavnantjahke gievrie being in Meiningen and not in the South Sami area means that the South Sami community cannot use the drum in its original purpose. Further, they cannot use it to (re)connect with their culture, with their traditional knowledge.

As mentioned earlier (see chapter 2.2.) drums were used as tools to communicate and connect with different forces and between worlds. As a museum object, drums become connections to the Sami culture in different times, too. Fossum says:

[Th]ere are people today who use drums, they do, and in a way shape them in their own way. Also, it is very strongly felt in the Sami community here, that the drum has a power of its own, in itself. So, yes, it becomes in many ways a link between the past and the present, but I also think it becomes a link to the culture as it is today. I think it is very important. It is very symbolic in many ways.³¹⁹

The Freavnantjahke gievrie is a link between the past and the present because it holds the knowledge of South Sami worldviews in the 17th and 18th century and tells stories of the situation for the Sami during Christianization and colonization. In Fossum’s words:

[T]his object actually contains quite a few stories in a way. It holds the history of power and abuse. It holds the history of the Christianization process, about Thomas von

³¹⁷ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xx.

³¹⁸ Simpson, M. (2009): Museums and restorative justice: heritage, repatriation and cultural education. In: *Museum International*, Vol. 61(1-2). p. 122.

³¹⁹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xviii.

Westen, how it was taken from the Sami community. I think, this is quite an important object to show the old culture [...].³²⁰

The gievrie becomes the storyteller of the past but also represents contemporary endeavors, battles and customs of the South Sami community. Further, it teaches the knowledge of the craft used to create it. Nylander explains that “[o]bjects carry traditional knowledge and pass it on to the next generations”³²¹ and this way they sustain the culture. According to Eva Dagny Johansen, especially old objects can provide experience, insight and connection to previous generations.³²² Consequently, the Freavnantjahke gievrie is a very valuable communication tool between generations. The gievrie becomes the sum of the stories it can tell.

Martin Skrydstrup implies that museum objects of Indigenous heritage possess some kind of agency because of their biographies and their stories.³²³ He considers these stories a result of the accumulated history through past travels which are “a congruent feature of imperialism, colonialism, capitalism and scientific expeditions.”³²⁴ Due to all the stories, Skrydstrup indicates that these objects “come across more like persons than things.”³²⁵ This idea fits to the Sami understanding of drums as living beings, that hold power which Birgitta Fossum mentions when explaining the relationship people have to the drum today:

But still today, there are many who have a very strong relationship with drums. There are those who talk about drums as alive, and there are those who talk about drums as having such powers that... I know people who do not touch drums because they consider themselves not to be the right people to touch drums and get sick if they do touch them. There are those who, in a way, see almost the drum as a person. It is maybe a bit of a wrong expression but in Sami we have the concept of invisible forces that exist – I do not know how to explain it – but the drum is seen as a part of that. The drum has power. There are people who believe in that. The fact that they are taken from the Sami areas is helping to destroy that power.³²⁶

This quote illustrates the immense value the drum has for the Sami community to this day. Whether one wants to apply Skrydstrup’s idea of Indigenous objects or the Sami understanding of the drums, the Freavnantjahke gievrie is a living being far away from home and detached from its original use of helping the family. The drum embodies a great number of things such as the connection to the land, to the South Sami community, to the traditional knowledge and

³²⁰ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvii.

³²¹ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home. p. 53.

³²² Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres*. p. 57-58.

³²³ Skrydstrup, M. (2010): What Might an Anthropology. p. 67.

³²⁴ Skrydstrup, M. (2010): What Might an Anthropology. p. 67.

³²⁵ Skrydstrup, M. (2010): What Might an Anthropology. p. 67.

³²⁶ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xx.

thus culture, to the spiritual powers and the South Sami worldviews. Moreover, it represents the suppression and survival of the South Sami community. The drum tells us about the past, present and future. It becomes clear that the Freavnantjahke gievrie is more than the pine wood and reindeer skin it is made of. The gievrie is a storyteller.

In the interviews, Philipp Adlung and Birgitta Fossum express an emotional attachment of their museums and communities to the Freavnantjahke gievrie. The felt attachment provides an argument on both sides to claim it. However, the drum does not speak to the same experiences, and it does not speak in the same way, or the same language, to all involved (see chapter 3.6.). The relationship and connection to the Freavnantjahke gievrie is depending on the shared experience and history the people and the drum have. The shared history between the gievrie and the South Sami community concerns the core of the culture: Sami identity. The German history part of the drum on the other hand does not touch German identity. It speaks to regionalism, research, museum practices and their history, knowledge about different cultures, exoticism and colonialism. Besides this, the connection that the drum has to its community, the South Sami, and its home territory is lost or damaged when exhibited abroad. The Meininger Museen seems to be sensitive as well as perceptive of this hurt and disconnect through the feeling and awareness that the drum is foreign in the collection and does not really fit in. As Adlung describes the exhibition of the music instruments he contemplates how the museum tries to connect the gievrie to the other objects:

[B]ut that does not change the fact: It remains a bit forced. It is really difficult and that is also the whole reason why the debate is taken absolutely seriously and taken up by us. Everyone somehow feels that this is not ideal. It is just difficult.³²⁷

The drum does not resonate with the surroundings. The many stories which the gievrie has to tell do not translate to the audience. Therefore, the drum is silent about many aspects of its history. This silence finds, interestingly, expression in the exhibition at Meiningen. As mentioned before (see chapter 2.4.) when stepping towards the showcases the music instruments can be heard playing. When stepping towards the Freavnantjahke gievrie, it remains silent.

3.4. Repatriation: From Moral Practice to Self-Determination

The many and various attachments to the drum form its value, however, to weigh these attachments and values against each other includes that the involved museums apply the same

³²⁷ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlvi.

moral standards. Whitby-Last addresses the problem of “a discrepancy between the value attached to objects by those who currently possess them and their claimants”³²⁸ and, thus, raises the question of whose position should be decisive. Whose attachment to the object has more value? Whose moral compass is to be applied? The majority society is usually the one with legislative power and the power to define. This puts, consequently, institutions representing their culture in a more powerful position in negotiations about repatriation.³²⁹ Moreover, these institutions generally have more resources available than their Indigenous counterparts. It is within this imbalance that the emotional attachment towards a claimed object needs to be morally evaluated.

Repatriation is a means which “is often applied where the claim is perceived as being moral rather than legal.”³³⁰ Moral assessments are, however, not fixed and change over the course of history. Whether an action is perceived as good or bad outside of legal evaluations shifted especially after World War II. The increasing human rights movement led among other things to the recognition of Indigenous peoples’ rights and resulted in an Indigenous peoples’ movement.³³¹ Racism towards Indigenous peoples and disrespect of their cultural heritage were addressed and assessed as morally wrong. In the issue, collecting methods of museums came into focus and were questioned as immoral. However, the damage, that for example theft of objects can cause to Indigenous communities in the future, was not assessable then.

For the Sami, the theft of the drums and absence of those are part of their painful colonial history as “[t]he gathering of the drums was done under duress, and they were taken from the Sámi by force.”³³² The managing of the drums by non-Sami institutions is the legacy of the inflicted suffering. This situation needs to be revised to grant Sami communities “greater control over Sámi heritage”.³³³ By challenging the legacy of colonialism the pain could be healed or lessened, however, this implies as well to return objects to their source communities.

Philipp Adlung does not place the debate about the Freavnantjahke gievrie within the scope of debates on colonialism: “I think this [...] is really a completely different discussion than the one about colonial art [...]”³³⁴ Though I understand and see potential in his approach to locate

³²⁸ Whitby-Last, K. (2010): Legal Impediments to the Repatriation of cultural Objects to Indigenous Peoples. In: Turnbull, P.; Pickering, M. (eds.) *The Long Way Home – The Meaning and Values of Repatriation*. p. 35.

³²⁹ Whitby-Last, K. (2010): Legal Impediments to the Repatriation of cultural Objects. p. 41-42.

³³⁰ Whitby-Last, K. (2010): Legal Impediments to the Repatriation of cultural Objects. p. 36.

³³¹ Niezen, R. (2003): *The origins of Indigenism: Human rights and politics of identity*. California. p. 40.

³³² Fossum, B. (2021): Post-Bååstede: What happens next? In: Gaup, K. E.; Jensen, I.; Pareli, L. (eds.): *Bååstede – The Return of Sámi Cultural Heritage*. Trondheim. p. 146.

³³³ Fossum, B. (2021): Post-Bååstede. p. 147.

³³⁴ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxvi.

the case of this gievrie within reconsiderations of collection methodology³³⁵ (see chapter 4.), I support the understanding of the Freavnantjahke gievrie as part of the colonial or decolonization debate. From a German perspective colonialism is often associated with German colonies in Africa and therefore closely tied to the African continent. At first, the colonial practices applied through the Northern European politics in Saepmie might seem detached from German responsibility. However, Germany has many links to enforcing or capitalizing on colonial practices in Saepmie, for example through collectors and scholars. The Freavnantjahke gievrie is a very tight link to colonialism in Northern Europe. It has been taken by force and is now part of an exhibition which is completely outside of the control of the Sami. Even though they were not the ones to take it, the Meininger Museen holds the power over the administration of the drum and thus over its definition, history and its communication. Consequently, since the drum is an immensely important part and expression of the Sami cultures, the museum holds power over the definition of Saminess. To be defined by others is an issue the Sami community fights against to this day. As Fossum puts it: “[Y]ou have written our history, then you have also written us out of history by making [us] invisible.”³³⁶ Non-Sami scholars who have written about the Freavnantjahke gievrie have failed to include the Sami perspectives. Research was conducted for the sake of serving Western ideology without considering benefits or disadvantages for the Sami community. This has supported the power imbalance between Sami communities and the majority society. By writing their own history, the Sami community can disprove false assumptions, confront prejudices as well as highlight what is important from a Sami perspective and for the Sami community. It is an attempt to equalize the power imbalance. Cultural heritage objects support this process as Fossum explains:

All the cultural objects here help to show a long history in the area. Also, I think for me, for us, it is about the right to define who we are as a people, and to be allowed to tell our story from our perspective and get to manage that cultural heritage ourselves.³³⁷

Having the power to write one’s own history is a crucial part of decolonization. The power of definition allows self-definition or self-determination, instead of being defined by others. Repatriation processes are an important method for these endeavors. Repatriation is a means to ensure the management of Indigenous cultural heritage by their respective source communities, which is, as Birgitta Fossum states, an issue concerning Indigenous peoples worldwide:

³³⁵ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

³³⁶ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xix.

³³⁷ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xix.

It is about a political mobilization, and it is about regaining the right to define oneself as a people and define oneself as culture and define one's own history. It is about the right to manage one's own cultural heritage and history. This is happening all over the world among Indigenous peoples.³³⁸

However, to gain this power of self-determination, the people and institutions currently in power must understand that they hold it, recognize the power structures and find means to collaborate with the Sami communities. Repatriation is such a method according to Johansen:

Repatriation and reconciliation processes are an extension of collaboration in museums, and an outcome of postcolonial theories that have recognized the power structures that museums are part of and influence and are influenced by.³³⁹

In terms of the Freavnantjahke gievrie this means that the Meininger Museen would have to affirm that they reinforce colonial power structures by managing the drum. Additionally, if agreeing to repatriation of the gievrie, they have to accept the claims of the South Sami community as more substantial than their own and thus decide against their own attachment to and interest in the drum. Philipp Adlung summarizes the role of the drum at Meininger Museen and contemplates about its possible leaving as follows:

The object is very important for us. It is on almost all the museum flyers. Even our big banner outside the castle has the Sami drum on it. It is a well-known and popular object and, in this respect, it is an object that we would miss, because it was simply associated with our collection, also through research, scientific contributions and many debates which were held.³⁴⁰

Repatriation is a rather complex and time-consuming process that is individually shaped by each object, the involved and their attachments. Since it is so closely tied to the objects, it becomes a matter of emotions. In this regard, the monetary aspect is not the primary focus of museums, audiences or the communities the objects originated from. Rather, “[r]epatriation [...] is premised upon the culturally specific value of the object”,³⁴¹ which can be seen in the endeavors of Saemien Sijte. Their efforts are directed towards the drum itself and its cultural value.

The theft of objects separates Indigenous communities from their cultural heritage. This eventually leads to the destruction of culture and knowledge as it hinders Indigenous communities to connect with and act out theirs. Henry Atkinson, of the Yorta Yorta Nation in

³³⁸ Appendix Interview with Fossum, p. xviii.

³³⁹ Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres*. p. 58.

³⁴⁰ Appendix Interview with Adlung, p. xxxvi.

³⁴¹ Whitby-Last, K. (2010): *Legal Impediments to the Repatriation of cultural Objects*. p. 36.

what we now call Australia, describes “[t]he theft of ancestral remains and secret sacred ceremonial objects [...] as a form of genocide.”³⁴² His choice of words indicates the impact and hurt which the theft of objects and ancestral remains cause until today. Finbog, too, refers to the term of ‘genocide’ in consideration of assimilation policies, which made not only Sami knowledge invisible but their language and worldviews, too.³⁴³ Finbog admits that “the wording is dramatic”³⁴⁴ but concludes it as the truth: “It is in essence, the complete erasure of people and of their civilization.”³⁴⁵ Therefore, it needs to be addressed whether the attachments of the Meininger Museen and their audience to the Freavnantjahke gievrie outweigh the separation of the South Sami community from their cultural heritage and their identity. The Meininger Museen received the drum through a donation and were, hence, not responsible for the drum being taken from the South Sami community. However, right now, they reinforce the colonial legacy. The absence of the drum and the separation can implicate the invisibility and eventually vanishing of an important part of South Sami identity.

There is awareness at the Meininger Museen for the special relationship of the South Sami community to the Freavnantjahke gievrie. Philipp Adlung sees the connection of the drum to the questions of origins and identity when speaking about the importance of the original. He expresses his understanding that due to the small number of objects from the time before the Christianization, the value of the gievrie exceeds the museum sphere:

Then this emotional dimension takes on a completely different meaning beyond what also constitutes a museum. That explains a lot to people and in this respect, I am also of the opinion that the original is particularly unique.³⁴⁶

The special attachment of the South Sami community to the gievrie seems to be felt. However, one emerging concern is that this could lead to a misconception about the value for the German audience. The idea could be that this outstanding relationship makes the drum also more special for the German audience (including scholars). Interested in Sami cultures, one might find an object, which is as special to the source community as this, particularly fascinating. Nonetheless, the attachment is not the same and this would mean that, again, (research) interest in the Sami community causes harm to exactly that community. Further, this raises the question if the value of the gievrie to non-Sami people is generated through the value the drum has for

³⁴² Atkinson, H. (2010): The Meanings and Values of Repatriation. In: Turnbull, P.; Pickering, M. (eds.), *The Long Way Home – The Meaning and Values of Repatriation*. p. 15.

³⁴³ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 41.

³⁴⁴ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 41.

³⁴⁵ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 41.

³⁴⁶ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxv.

the South Sami community. Either way, giving more weight to the attachment of the German audience to the Freavnantjahke gievrie ignores the wish of the Sami community to connect with their Sami identity through this special object and their wish for self-determination. Fossum sums up why claiming the gievrie is of importance to the Sami community:

So, I think it is a little bit about being allowed to take back what has been robbed of us back then. We see it nowadays that defining history and writing history is quite important for rights today. So, I think, there is a connection. It is a global awakening that we want to own our own cultural heritage, and a another thought I have is very much connected to the fact that internally it is about pride and identity, and then it is about rights.³⁴⁷

The repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie is one form of collaboration that could lead to the reestablishing of the connection to Sami identity and self-determination.

3.5. Freavnantjahke Gievrie: A Museum Object?

Curator Maren Goltz writes in 2006 that through the confiscation the drum has not only lost its surroundings but also its powers and so the “magic device”³⁴⁸, as she calls it, became eventually a museum object.³⁴⁹ The current work by this author cannot determine whether the gievrie has actually lost its powers or, if that was the case, whether such a process is irreversible. Following the stories Birgitta Fossum shares (see chapter 3.3.) during the interview, removing the drum from its home area does its part to destroy the power of the gievrie. The question that shall be raised, however, is: Is the Freavnantjahke gievrie a museum object or is the museum the right place for the stories to be told? The repatriation request implies that the Freavnantjahke gievrie would transfer from the custody of the Meininger Museen to the South Sami Museum Saemien Sijte. There are, nevertheless, other options such as seeking out descendants of the former owners or returning the drum back to nature, as other Indigenous peoples do with certain objects or as some Sami have formerly done with drums.³⁵⁰ The first option has been already touched upon (see chapter 3.1.) and explained in so far that the claims of former owners or their descendants present themselves as difficult to legally follow through. Additionally, the drum cannot reconnect with its ceremonial use because these traditions were disrupted due to the brutal missionary processes.

³⁴⁷ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xix.

³⁴⁸ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 182.

³⁴⁹ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”. p. 182.

³⁵⁰ Viridi Kroik, Å. (2022): *Dihte gievrie – det vi möter i respekt. Berättelser om en sydsamisk trumma*. Uppsala, p.175 – 176.

Ultimately, when giving the gievrie to individuals instead of an institution like a museum the knowledge and the stories of the drum might not be accessible to the whole Sami community or others. This is also a reason for not returning the Freavnantjahke gievrie to nature. Birgitta Fossum is aware of the idea to lay out the drum but also explains why they want to exhibit the drum at Saemien Sijte:

Within the Sami community it is a bit two-minded, actually. There are those who believe that when the drums are not being used anymore and are laid out in nature, then they should be allowed to return to nature. But of course, we have also gotten to the point, that we do not get to put back the museum pieces, that have been collected, anyway. We do not. We want to tell this part of the cultural heritage to the Sami community in particular, but of course to others as well.³⁵¹

Within the Sami museum the traditional knowledge that the drum has could be presented to the Sami community and its (colonial) history to others who are interested in Sami culture. Fossum explains why this task falls to Saemien Sijte and no other museum: “We are the only South Sami Museum, so we have a museum responsibility for the entire South Sami area. This drum is from the South Sami area, this is a South Sami drum.”³⁵² Serving as representative for the South Sami community, Saemien Sijte regards itself as the institution to manage this object for their community. Nonetheless, Fossum is not completely against the idea of returning other objects to nature:

So, I think that it is important to us, and it is important for the Sami community that we get to show that part of the old cultural heritage. It is perhaps reasonable that some of these objects should go back to nature.³⁵³

It becomes apparent that this specific gievrie has a different value than some other objects or even other drums, which is one of the reasons to make it accessible to the South Sami community. This gievrie is one of the oldest, best documented and preserved drums to which an explanation by the former Sami owner exists (see chapter 2.1.). Another argument to not return it to nature but exhibit it at Saemien Sijte, according to Fossum, lies in the fact that Bendix Andersen Frennings Fjeld and Jon Torchelsen Fipling-Skov were not out to return the drum to nature but to hide it from the authorities:

They were two people from whom [the] drum was taken. They have been on their way to flee with the drum. They have not been on their way to put it back into nature. That was not the case when they were caught. There are slightly different perspectives on it

³⁵¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvii.

³⁵² Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvii.

³⁵³ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvii.

and, we as a museum, our mission is to safeguard and manage the South Sami cultural heritage. Well, this is part of the Sami cultural heritage.³⁵⁴

Bendix Andersen Frennings Fjeld and Jon Torchelsen Fipling-Skov tried to save the drum from confiscation. The flight was an attempt to preserve the drum for the future. This is an argument for preserving it in an institution that has the means to do so. Further, a museum offers the possibility to communicate the drum's stories to many people and put it into context. This way the gievrie is accessible to everybody and knowledge can be passed on to future generations.

Both Adlung and Fossum describe the drum as a fragile object when talking about its travels to the exhibition in Trondheim in 2017. The concern about the drum getting damaged by traveling and being exhibited in another museum leaves room to assume that the gievrie is in no condition to be used. Philipp Adlung talks about the evaluation in 2017 if the Freavnantjahke gievrie can be sent to Trondheim:

It is a very complex and special object with a very high ideal value, probably also a material value, but an ideal value. It is simply a question of conservation that every museum person has to ask themselves: Can I justify packing up such an object, taking it out of the safe climate control, with all the stress of a box, of packaging, of climate changes, of movements? There is no transport that does not mean stress for an object. You must weigh that up.³⁵⁵

These considerations were the reason why the Meininger Museen initially refused to lend the gievrie to Saemien Sijte and Birgitta Fossum confirms that “[i]t is fragile.”³⁵⁶ Drums did, however, originally travel with their families. Nonetheless, if the Freavnantjahke gievrie is so fragile that travels, in secure boxing when taken care of by museums, are a threat to it, secure storage and preservation of skilled experts is needed. This can be provided in a museum.

3.6. “It is about our future generations”

For a long time, the false depiction of Sami cultural heritage and Sami history has led to misinformation among the non-Sami population but also among the Sami themselves. The impacts of this were particularly felt by the South Sami community from the end of the 19th century. After conflicts between farmers and Sami had peaked in the 1870s and 1880s, historian and geographer Yngvar Nielsen (1843 – 1916) published an article in 1889 containing the “Fremrykkingsteori” [Advancement theory].³⁵⁷ He claimed that Sami had immigrated in the

³⁵⁴ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvii.

³⁵⁵ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxii.

³⁵⁶ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvi.

³⁵⁷ Store Norske Leksikon: *Yngvar Nielsen*. https://snl.no/Yngvar_Nielsen.

17th and 18th century from the North of Norway to central Norway, which led to impactful misconceptions about Sami origins and fueled conflicts further.

Being able to show Sami history through repatriated, valuable objects like the drum, misconceptions about the Sami, such as their origins, can be countered. As Birgitta Fossum explains, compared to for example Indigenous peoples in the Americas, the Sami cannot pin down the arrival of settlers in Sami areas to a certain date which can lead to problems:

There you have the history when the Western Europeans came to America, and everything you find that is older than that is by definition Indigenous material, while we have lived side by side. What people do today is to try to use all archaeological material against us in a way [...]. [...] sometimes we have to work more to prove our existence here over a long period of time.³⁵⁸

Cultural heritage can provide the needed proof to correct false narratives about Sami existence.³⁵⁹ Sami history and culture can be traced through cultural heritage. The Freavnantjahke gievrie can provide knowledge about the handicraft [duedtie] used in the 17th century, about differences to other Sami communities and the majority population in handicraft but also worldview. However, to do so, Sami experts are needed, who have the respective understanding and background to read the traditional knowledge the drum provides. According to Nylander and Olli duedtie can bear some sort of ‘sign language’ which is not readable for outsiders.³⁶⁰ Required are insiders to translate and communicate this knowledge. Fossum is sure that Saemien Sijte “can help to provide knowledge about it. [They] can help to tell the next generation about the history of things.” In this regard, the South Sami youth may be inspired to learn about their culture, to learn about duedtie, so that they are able to craft themselves and to connect with their own Saminess. In exhibiting the drum and the knowledge connected to it, Fossum hopes to create recognition for young Sami. “It is about showing it so that the Sami youth can recognize themselves when they come and see their history.”³⁶¹ Recognition may lead to a different understanding of their own culture. While the older generations were taught to see Saminess as something shameful – which many did believe as is demonstrated impressively by an experience of Liisa-Rávná Finbog³⁶² – the younger generations may find

³⁵⁸ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxiii.

³⁵⁹ See Storm, D.; Fonneland, T. (2022): Indigenous Religions in the Sixth Missionary District: Th Case of the Hilsa Drum. In: Rydving, H.; Kaikkonen, K. (eds.), *Religions around the Arctic: Source Criticism and Comparisons*. pp. 113 – 138.

³⁶⁰ Harlin, E.-K.; Olli, A. M. (2014): Repatriation: Political Will and Museum Facilities. In: Tythacott, L.; Arvanitis, K. (eds.), *Museums and Restitution*. London. p. 60.

³⁶¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxvii.

³⁶² Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 17 – 18.

pride in their heritage. “[F]eeling safe and feeling at home in your culture is part of creating pride; being able to come and see that here is a museum that actually shows [your] culture”³⁶³ is according to Fossum, what Saemien Sijte aims to create for the next South Sami generations. By depicting Sami traditional knowledge from a Sami perspective and so that Sami people themselves can highlight what is important to them,³⁶⁴ Sami have the chance to write their own history. Birgitta Fossum points out how so far outsiders have defined Sami history and culture:

[O]ur history was told by everyone else. What we are is defined by everyone else. They all have the answer to how the Sami history in this area was from their perspective and from an outside perspective.³⁶⁵

This is problematic because “from the outside, you do not understand everything that goes on within that culture.”³⁶⁶ Situations, traditions and customs are misinterpreted and evaluated based on the norms, worldviews and values that non-Sami, Western societies had and have. Western, outsider misconceptions can be harmful to the Sami communities because “as long as that is what the Sami youth reads, that is what they learn, and that is what Norwegian society learns, and that in turn creates conflicts, for example racism.”³⁶⁷ By means of an object like the drum, false ideas can be cleared up, such as the misconceptions regarding shamanism. Further distinctions to other cultures can be shown. Fossum says that “[I]t is about our future generations learning about Sami history in the right way.”³⁶⁸ Further she thinks that Saemien Sijte is the right place for preserving traditional knowledge, like that of *duedtie* and that it is “[Saemien Sijte’s] responsibility to pass it on to the next generation.”³⁶⁹

Philipp Adlung, too, puts an emphasis on future generations and on battling alarming developments in society through the exhibition of cultural heritage:

I still believe that world cultures are the answer to narrow-mindedness and also to certain national developments that unfortunately more and more spread. We have to make it more and more clear that this world community is multifaceted.³⁷⁰

Depicting this multifacetedness can be achieved, according to Adlung, through ethnological collections which show “that we are not alone in the world, but we are part of a larger whole.”³⁷¹

³⁶³ Interview with Fossum. p. xxvii.

³⁶⁴ See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

³⁶⁵ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxii.

³⁶⁶ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxii.

³⁶⁷ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxiii.

³⁶⁸ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxxiii.

³⁶⁹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxvii.

³⁷⁰ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlv.

³⁷¹ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxii.

Museum objects, thus, can contextualize different communities and put them in connection with each other. They provide the possibility to address foreign ideas and worldviews, which can broaden perspectives. Adlung explains:

Therefore, it is very important to learn something about foreign cultures. For us, [the drum] is also an object about which and through which we can tell a lot, about things that otherwise do not affect us so directly here.³⁷²

The Fravnantjahke gievrie, hence, opens the possibility to talk about Sami cultures and can put Sami issues in focus where they otherwise may be unknown or seem less relevant to people. The gievrie “is an important anchor [...] to learn about Sami culture and traditions in Central Germany,”³⁷³ which means the drum provides a starting point for educating the German audience about the Sami. One concern of Adlung is that without cultural heritage from other source communities the access to these cultures could vanish. “[I]f there are no longer ethnological testimonies [in Germany], then it cannot be shown to young people [...] that there is something besides Germany.”³⁷⁴ Museums and museum objects specifically provide a basis to engage with other cultures to which the museum audience otherwise may have no relation or access. Adlung is further especially concerned about younger generations that may lack the possibility to “travel all over the world to experience or to look at things at that young age.”³⁷⁵ Their chances to learn about other cultures are usually limited to the educational institutions around them, like schools or museums. Schools, however, do not provide the vividness of museums as the latter can rely on physical objects. The objects of a foreign culture and the museum audience are temporarily placed in the same room which can create connection (see chapter 3.3.)

Both Fossum’s and Adlung’s perspectives are directed towards the future generations and how they can benefit from exhibiting Sami cultural heritage generally and the Freavnantjahke gievrie specifically. However, certain aspects come into play which need to be addressed. Philipp Adlung explains that in his eyes a “cultural asset in general is, if it has outstanding meaning, always property of mankind.”³⁷⁶ Surely the drum provides certain values for the world community, though it has to be considered that this, at the moment, happens to the disadvantage of the South Sami community. The exhibition of Freavnantjahke gievrie in Meiningen does not meet the needs the South Sami community has. Consequently, the South

³⁷² Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxii.

³⁷³ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxii.

³⁷⁴ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlii.

³⁷⁵ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xliii.

³⁷⁶ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xliv.

Sami community does not benefit from the exhibition of the drum in Germany. In her criticism of Western research, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains: “[The] belief in the ideal that benefiting mankind is indeed a primary outcome of scientific research is as much a reflection of ideology as it is of academic training.”³⁷⁷ The Western approach to serve humankind often neglects the particular needs of Indigenous peoples. Their cultural heritage is used but not used in the source community’s interest. Further it must be asked whether the German museum audience understands the actual ideal value of the drum without knowing the South Sami attachment to it. At the Meininger Museen, and as Meiningen is aware of, the drum is not represented in its original context and is alienated (see chapter 2.4.). The drum there is understood as a Shaman drum which does not reflect Sami beliefs (see chapter 1.4.2.) and is not connected to the contemporary South Sami community. It can be assumed that the knowledge the museum audience gains from this experience is rather incomplete if not false. This defeats the purpose of informing about the other culture to counter prejudices as it reproduces false narratives about the Sami. Instead, perpetuating false narratives can reinforce wrong ideas about their community and their lifestyle which could make the German audience less understanding towards struggles the Sami face. Lacking depictions of contemporary Sami culture and not putting the drum in the context of colonialism can reinforce the image of the Sami as being stuck in the past, ‘primitive’ or even extinct (see chapter 1.4.2., 14.3.). The good intention behind exhibiting the drum in Germany can hence backfire. Fossum expresses skepticism, too, and assumes that “ordinary people who go to museums do not understand”³⁷⁸ but rather think of the gievrie as “‘exciting’ and then you do not think about all that what is behind it and what it means.”³⁷⁹ The question therefore is, whether the German audience grasps the magnitude of the Freavnantjahke gievrie. Do they understand that the drum for the Sami is a living being far from home? Is there understanding for how few drums are left and that the Freavnantjahke gievrie is special not only because of that but because it is one of few whose symbols were explained by Sami and not by non-Sami? The multiple layers of the Freavnantjahke gievrie (see chapter 3.3.) make it a difficult object to be exhibited by non-Sami people. The traditional knowledge which cannot be read and translated by non-Sami, the value of the drum in its origin as well as a symbol for Sami culture (see chapter 3.3.) are just a few aspects that need covering. The scope of these alone to be handled and shown in a sensitive way is barely manageable within an exhibition that does not focus on Sami culture. Further, the colonial legacy of the

³⁷⁷ Smith, L. T. (2012): *Decolonizing methodologies*. p. 2

³⁷⁸ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxi.

³⁷⁹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxi.

theft in 1723 continues, even though the Meininger Museen had no active part in this. The gievrie is, thus, not the right object to represent South Sami culture exhibited by non-Sami outside of South Sami territory. However, Fossum explains:

Of course, a success is to get the drum back with any stories around it. Nevertheless, I also think it is not the case that we do not want other museums both in Norway and abroad to talk about Sami culture. We certainly want them to. Therefore, I think that a repatriation, where you also give knowledge back and stories back can be a great way.³⁸⁰

The exchange of stories and knowledge may even include “other objects that can replace [the gievrie]. In that case objects of which exist quite many.”³⁸¹ Another object may serve the purpose of educating about Sami culture, specifically South Sami culture, just as well, providing the Sami experts are included in the process and can share their stories and knowledge. This way the German youth would gain the possibility of experiencing other culture’s expressions and heritage,³⁸² while providing the South Sami youth with the possibility of gaining knowledge about their own culture. Repatriation does not mean for one institution to be left with nothing.

3.7. Access and Healing

Questions about repatriation are always questions about access to knowledge. Knowledge is power and creates the ability for agency. As has been pointed out before (see chapter 3.6.), the Freavnantjahke gievrie holds traditional knowledge which requires experts to decode it. However, even if understood by everybody, the question remains to whom this knowledge should be accessible. Birgitta Fossum thinks “that many people would benefit from learning some of the traditional knowledge that [the Sami] have in [their] society”³⁸³ but Indigenous knowledge has been abused and appropriated by non-Indigenous people.³⁸⁴ Therefore, the idea is to let the Sami community decide what to share, explains Fossum:

Traditional knowledge should be available to its own people. We say now that Sami traditional knowledge should only be available to the Sami community and then from there, the Sami community must define what it is they want to tell others.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁰ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xx.

³⁸¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxi.

³⁸² See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

³⁸³ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxiv.

³⁸⁴ See Kramvig, B.; Flemmen A. B. (2018): Turbulent Indigenous objects: Controversies around cultural appropriation and recognition of difference. In: *Journal of Material Culture*. Vol. 24(1), pp. 64 – 82.

³⁸⁵ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxiv.

To grant the Sami community the sovereignty of their knowledge, which has been taken from them, is according to Nylander beneficial for the Sami community but also for non-Sami people. She argues that “[o]ften, objects carry false terms”³⁸⁶ and that “origin or place names are incorrectly written, or objects are photographed upside down or adverse”³⁸⁷ – which happened to the Freavnantjahke gievrie by being named “Lappische Zaubertrommel”³⁸⁸ or “Meininger Zaubertrommel” and being displayed/depicted the wrong way around³⁸⁹ – because the museums do not have the respective knowledge. The used research skills are insufficient, and the knowledge which is imparted at Western museums is therefore unreliable. However, the needed skills and knowledge exist within the Sami community and reconnecting them with the objects makes the objects more than just a thing.³⁹⁰ Further, the inadequate information non-Indigenous museums give is harmful for the society in general but also to the source communities that consult the exhibitions to learn about themselves. They get a false idea about their culture. Nylander writes that this can be battled through collaboration with the source communities and especially through repatriation. In our interview, Birgitta Fossum, too, addresses the need for connecting the gievrie with the community and their knowledge:

It is part of a story of power and abuse, while the drum itself has a strength. It has an immense symbolic meaning. I think there are many who still see them as sacred objects and consider it extremely important that they are in Sami holdings, in a Sami context and a Sami area instead of being for example exhibited in the music collection in Meiningen; where it does not belong, while in the Sami community, even though the drums have not been used for a long time, you have an idea of what they are and what they mean.³⁹¹

Her point of view is that the Sami community has a different approach to the object as well as a different understanding of and for the gievrie than the German museum due to their relation to it. Anyway, she sees benefits also for a German audience in exhibiting the drum in Snåsa:

I think that maybe instead of seeing the drum in Germany, maybe you can come to Norway and see the drum where it belongs and learn more about Sami culture in general. [...] [C]ome to us, and you will hear the other story about how this was a helper through life. [...] It is about having a support in life, to find out how to deal with things.³⁹²

³⁸⁶ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 75.

³⁸⁷ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums p. 75.

³⁸⁸ Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel. Eine ethnologische Monographie.*

³⁸⁹ Goltz, M. (2006): Die Meininger “Zaubertrommel”, p.187. / Lilie, G.; Pusch, H. (1912): *Führer durch das Museum des Hennebergischen altertumsforschenden Vereins.* Keyßner, Meiningen 1912.

³⁹⁰ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 75.

³⁹¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xvii-xviii.

³⁹² Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxvii.

Learning about how the drum was consulted in everyday life questions holds value for Sami people today and may also help a non-Sami audience to find and locate themselves in the world. The challenges of our time increase the need for different approaches and worldviews to find solutions. As Birgitta Fossum argues, traditional Sami knowledge “could help to increase the understanding for the Sami community, but perhaps also increase the understanding of nature and the understanding of the world.”³⁹³ There lie possibilities for many people in the knowledge that the drum can provide. This is also Philipp Adlung’s view when speaking about the German audience accessing the knowledge of the drum:

It is a way of thinking which is somewhat foreign to us at first. One is quickly inclined to see everything that was before Christianization as quite primitive and inferior. However, there were ways of thinking and mechanisms behind it, which can teach us, perhaps, a lot.³⁹⁴

Especially in terms of a spiritual search the drum may hold guidance for people who seek to broaden their perspective through and about other worldviews and the relation to nature. Here, Adlung addresses the secularization in Germany and that the drum shows a Sami approach of dealing with human questions of everyday life:

Profanation has progressed very strongly, and we do not know where it will lead. That means that such starting points might as well be welcomed by many people, who might even make up the majority. It is another way of thinking. [The Sami], too, dealt with the basics of being human and why should one not be able to find ways in this for today's life?³⁹⁵

The hope of making the knowledge of the drum available in Germany is certainly resonant here. However, Philipp Adlung is aware of the importance of the drum for the Sami community and says: “I am personally of the opinion that the object is better off in Norway than with us. Even if that would be very, very difficult for us, because it is simply a great object, a very special one.”³⁹⁶

An argument for exhibiting objects of other resource communities can be seen when Adlung emphasizes his understanding of culture in today’s world as “culture of humankind [which] does not end at national borders.”³⁹⁷ Surely, nationality, nation-states, borders and their reinforcement are concepts in question and critique today. The idea of othering people with a

³⁹³ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxiv.

³⁹⁴ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlv.

³⁹⁵ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlv.

³⁹⁶ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxviii.

³⁹⁷ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxviii.

different cultural background is highly problematic as it leaves room for racism. Further, it is in the interest of Indigenous communities to educate non-Indigenous peoples about their cultures and share certain aspects of it across borders. Nonetheless, Indigenous cultures were not able to continue their traditional customs and culture in nation states as they would have without the colonial power structures. The Sami had to face severe assimilation policies, due to their ‘otherness’, and are now confronted with the idea of them not having a different culture from the majority society. The Sami community needs to demonstrate their distinction as proof of existence (see chapter 3.6.), as proof they were subdued to colonialism and additionally for themselves to develop a feeling of pride in their own culture. Fossum says: “We want to get to have our cultural peculiarities.”³⁹⁸

While the Sami want to have their distinctiveness, Western museums tend to misrepresent them and make them instead curiosities.³⁹⁹ This is one of the problems in the context of Indigenous cultural heritage in exhibitions of Western museums, even though this might not be the intention of the museums. However, Eeva-Kristiina Nylander points out that museums as “a Western phenomenon”⁴⁰⁰ are shaped by “the Western worldview and way of thinking.”⁴⁰¹ For centuries museology consisted of “practices and purposes based on ideas of heritage as evidence of the past”⁴⁰² as Moira Simpson explains. Nylander elaborates that the methods of Western museums are rooted in the ideas of “preserving, guarding, registering, classifying and presenting collections”⁴⁰³ whereby contemporary, existing Sami culture was ignored.⁴⁰⁴ The impact of the collections on the Sami community was therefore neglected, too. The Western museums, their methods for collecting and exhibiting as being part of the problem were disregarded. Western museums, thus, tend to continue the traumatic legacy of colonialism.

The gievrie being in non-Sami custody is a result of colonial methods and a reminder of the “historical trauma”⁴⁰⁵ as Finbog calls it. It describes “the cumulative emotional harm caused by traumatic experiences or events”⁴⁰⁶ which can entail feelings of pain and shame and lead to denying Sami heritage all together. Birgitta Fossum explains the situation for the Sami

³⁹⁸ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxvi.

³⁹⁹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. / Nordin, J. M.; Ojala, C. (2017): Collecting, connecting, constructing: Early modern commodification and globalization of Sámi material culture. In: *Journal of Culture*, Vol. 23(1), p. 60.

⁴⁰⁰ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home. p. 47.

⁴⁰¹ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home. p. 47.

⁴⁰² Simpson, M. (2009): Museums and restorative justice. p. 122.

⁴⁰³ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home. p. 47.

⁴⁰⁴ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home. p. 48.

⁴⁰⁵ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 151.

⁴⁰⁶ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 151.

throughout history as follows: “We were robbed of the culture, we were robbed of cultural heritage, we were robbed of the language, we are still deprived of the areas where we are making our living.”⁴⁰⁷ The distancing from the painful experiences and denial of Saminess may result in an absence of language, cultural heritage and culture which affects the next generations.⁴⁰⁸ Some Sami grow up without knowing about their roots, are disconnected from it and have to reclaim their Sami culture. This not knowing and feeling detached can be a painful experience. Finbog defines this as “trauma of absence”⁴⁰⁹. Therefore, colonialism causes generations of Sami until today to deal with pain. This is an important aspect in terms of access to objects of Sami origin as they can, according to Nylander, heal trauma when repatriated: “They are a source of inspiration for new handicrafts, but they also carry a spiritual meaning and are a connection to the ancestors. Seeing them and being inspired by them can heal colonial traumata.”⁴¹⁰ Birgitta Fossum considers the repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie as a chance to amend history:

I believe with the drum being returned to the Sami community and the Sami area, and then to a Sami museum, it is a form of redress also for the abuses that were actually done to the Sami people back then. Also, I think that – this is nothing I know but what I think – why it is so important today may also have to do with the fact that the abuse here has been going on for so long.⁴¹¹

Through repatriation the results of the injustice can be addressed and possibly healed. The “museum objects are made by ancestors and they are products of the past generations”⁴¹², Nylander continues, which makes them a bridge for new generations to connect with their ancestors. This way continuity can be felt as well as identity which means consequently that objects “keep the culture alive today and for the future.”⁴¹³ Being able to learn about and recreate duedtie can bring forth a feeling of security.⁴¹⁴ Simpson emphasizes additionally the role of ceremonial objects in repatriation processes and says it “involves the re-socialization of the object”⁴¹⁵, meaning the object is reconnected with its place of origin, the immaterial aspects of its culture, community and former meaning. This, according to Simpson, can lead to an increased well-being of Indigenous communities.⁴¹⁶ Repatriation is thus a means of healing for

⁴⁰⁷ Appendix Interview with Fossum, xviii.

⁴⁰⁸ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 151.

⁴⁰⁹ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*. p. 150 – 151.

⁴¹⁰ Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 76.

⁴¹¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xviii.

⁴¹² Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home. p. 55 – 56.

⁴¹³ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home. p. 55 – 56.

⁴¹⁴ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home. p. 56 – 57.

⁴¹⁵ Simpson, M. (2009): Museums and restorative justice. p. 122.

⁴¹⁶ Simpson, M. (2009): Museums and restorative justice. p. 122.

the Sami community. Additionally, it is a way to address and counter the paternalistic, colonial approaches of Western museums who told stories about the Sami instead of including the Sami's own perspective. Birgitta Fossum considers repatriation as a form of settlement and says it shows that Sami people "are actually seen as capable and competent of managing [the objects] [themselves]."⁴¹⁷ She says about the Freavnantjahke gievrie: "I really just think that it still holds a power in Sami society, a symbolic power at least, for a redress perhaps or at least the start of a redress."⁴¹⁸

The repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie could help to heal trauma in the Sami community by creating a connection to the ancestors and thus historical continuity. Nonetheless, the abuses themselves cannot be undone by repatriation which otherwise can be misunderstood as an easy way out of responsibility for past injustices. Philipp Adlung, too, considers repatriation as "part of the process of coming to terms with history: Injustice that is to be redressed as best as possible."⁴¹⁹ He adds that "it must also be said quite clearly that past crimes can never be undone."⁴²⁰ In this context he addresses the historical situation in Germany, due to which Germans tend to seek redemption for example through repatriation, restitution or in other financial ways.⁴²¹ Adlung says, however, that "[y]ou can never undo that. The stain on history simply remains. That is why it will always be about things that soften the blow a bit today, that show goodwill."⁴²² Repatriation is about creating a different situation for the future, disrupt cycles of trauma and give chances of healing through connection.

4. Commentary and Prospects

The course of this chapter shall depict the prospects of a collaboration through repatriation between Saemien Sijte and the Meininger Museen.

As Inuit historian and director of the Greenlandic National Museum Daniel Thorleifsen explains: "[Y]ou cannot achieve a peaceful world without respect for other cultures."⁴²³ Respect for other cultures is the foundation of a fruitful collaboration between different cultures, which in turn is or should be the goal of repatriation.⁴²⁴ Repatriation is a future

⁴¹⁷ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xix.

⁴¹⁸ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xx.

⁴¹⁹ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxix.

⁴²⁰ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxix.

⁴²¹ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

⁴²² Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xl.

⁴²³ Thorleifsen, D. (2008): Preface. In: *Utimut: Past Heritage*. p. 8.

⁴²⁴ Thorleifsen, D. (2008): Preface. In: *Utimut: Past Heritage*. p. 11.

oriented collaboration practice that relies on understanding as well as respect for each other.⁴²⁵ However, repatriation is not one fixed practice but can vary as it should be adjusted to the needs of the source community, first and foremost, but also consider the prerequisites of the museum in possession of the object or collection in question. The Freavnantjahke gievrie has different meaning for the different parties involved and so its repatriation has different meanings and demands.

According to Philipp Adlung and Birgitta Fossum today the Freavnantjahke gievrie is a museum object and the museum is the best institution to take on the responsibility for the gievrie. Transferring an object or collection means transferring responsibilities. Both, Adlung and Fossum, explain that it is not about ownership but being responsible for the preservation and dissemination of an object. Adlung points out that “[i]t is a matter of researching the objects, preserving them, taking care of them in terms of restoration.”⁴²⁶ He adds that “[s]omeone simply has to be made responsible for preserving the objects. You cannot just leave it to the UN or UNESCO.”⁴²⁷ Fossum says about the responsibility for and ownership of the drum that “it is the Sami community that owns it and [Saemien Sijte] as a museum administrate[s] it.”⁴²⁸ The community can benefit from the possibilities which the institution museum provides. The possibilities reach from resources and abilities of preservation to education. In a Sami museum the gievrie can be preserved for the future. New knowledge about and through it can be created and communicated through the perspectives, skills and knowledge of Sami people. This enhances and corrects the knowledge for everybody. At Saemien Sijte in Snåsa, the drum is accessible to Sami and non-Sami alike, and the museum can create the space needed for Sami to reconnect with their cultural heritage. This means, Saemien Sijte can give space for rematriation. Repatriation, according to Nylander, is the first phase and a process of decolonization in which two museums confront “a ‘shared’ unpleasant history, which is a process that is greatly influenced by the nature of the practice in majority museums.”⁴²⁹ Rematriation is the next phase and “is indigenisation, the continuation of repatriation in Sámi society, which brings life back to the objects.”⁴³⁰ This way continuity can be created. The lost connection of the object to land and community could be restored through rematriation. Sami

⁴²⁵ Thorleifsen, D. (2008): Preface. In: *Utimut: Past Heritage*. p. 8.

⁴²⁶ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlv.

⁴²⁷ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlv.

⁴²⁸ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xviii.

⁴²⁹ Nylander, E.-K. (2023): *From Repatriation to Rematriation: Dismantling the Attitudes and Potentials Behind the Repatriation of Sámi Heritage*. Oulu. p. 3

⁴³⁰ Nylander, E.-K. (2023): *From Repatriation to Rematriation*. p. 3.

handcrafters could be given access to the drum and thus its *duedtie*, so that they can learn the traditional craft, learn about the role within Sami society, used materials and the connection to the land and shape new interpretations of their Sami heritage and culture. Especially future Sami generations benefit from the *Freavnantjahke gievrie* being well preserved and accessible. These are tasks and responsibilities a Sami museum could take on. Additionally, a museum possesses a certain authority in terms of advocating for the claims and wishes of a community. The knowledge created through the drum can support Sami demands and therefore provide arguments which Saemien Sijte as a representative of the South Sami community can use “to contribute to the public debate.”⁴³¹

Museums are spaces where people can experience objects that might otherwise be inaccessible to them. As pointed out earlier, this experience is important to many as there is an emotional attachment to objects. Objects are the foundation of museum work and to impart knowledge. Therefore, one option of repatriation is to exchange an object with another one to still create the possibility of educating the audience about the object’s source community. To “enhance [the] collection in other parts”⁴³² seems as well to be a preferred option for the Meiningen Museen, if it came to a repatriation, according to Philipp Adlung. In this context he recalls the “principle of collection preservation”⁴³³ which demands museums to keep their collections together instead of acting as an art dealer. In this statement the wish is implied to exchange the *gievrie*. Even if it is not directly said that the drum is to be replaced by another object, this can be assumed. The drum, however, is not being ‘dealt’ if repatriated and in negotiations about enhancing the collection, the Meiningen Museen needs to make sure not to give the impression of holding the *gievrie* for ransom. Not only objects can be exchanged but knowledge and stories in others forms which can be exhibited and enhance the collection, such as the story about the repatriation of the *gievrie* itself. Through explaining their desire to still show participation in the world community and specifically address Sami culture after a repatriation of the drum, the Meiningen Museen and Saemien Sijte could agree on exhibiting an object or story in Meiningen with a less conflict-ridden background. Answering to the need for an analog experience in museums, this could be an object that could be interacted with. The exchange of objects could be accompanied by establishing a collaboration with Sami artists who are experienced in *duedtie*. Adlung and Fossum have stated that they do not necessarily consider a replica of the

⁴³¹ Appendix Interview with Fossum. p. xxiv.

⁴³² Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxviii.

⁴³³ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xxxviii.

Freavnantjahke gievrie being made⁴³⁴, nonetheless, another object or a newly made music drum, crafted by a contemporary vytnesjæjja [duedtie practitioner] could be the center of a workshop. The exchange for another object, however, can be a desire, but should not be made a condition. Repatriation being a moral practice should not depend on a reward. Collaboration and repatriation itself can be the anchor to exhibit on the topic of the gievrie.

By funding an event to relearn duedtie, the Meininger Museen could create the possibility for Sami to learn about what the creation process of an object might have looked like back in the days and how or if it is used today. The difference between a drum as a music instrument and the Freavnantjahke gievrie as a ceremonial tool could be addressed. Sami handicrafts could not only be presented but demonstrated and some aspects perhaps taught to a German audience. A duedtie workshop at the Meininger Museen would not only fit the image of Meiningen as culture and art city but also use the drum as a starting point to disseminate knowledge about aspects of South Sami culture. This follows Adlung's idea of the drum as an anchor to connect with Sami culture in Central Germany,⁴³⁵ and it answers to the wish of the Sami communities that non-Sami museums talk about Sami culture.⁴³⁶ By creating an interactive way of experiencing Sami duedtie, the audience may form a stronger understanding of and bond to the Sami culture. As a consequence, the Meininger Museen holds the potential of becoming a meeting place where different cultures can learn from each other. Interaction results in stories being told, exchanged and new stories being created. Storytelling is a crucial part of Indigenous oral traditions as it is a depiction of generation-spanning aspirations,⁴³⁷ and here it could become a culture-spanning aspiration. This could be Freavnantjahke gievrie's legacy in Meiningen.

Of course, endeavors like this need appropriate funding and lead to an intensive workload for the involved parties. However, collaborations which present cultures as alive, depict their unique characteristics as well as shape understanding and respect for each other are necessary to become a peaceful global community. Considering the challenges which the world faces a peaceful global community has better chances to find solutions. Collaborations in the form of interactive workshops may also activate younger generations to frequent museums.⁴³⁸ They are the future global community and crucial participants in battling crisis. The interaction with

⁴³⁴ See Appendix Interview with Adlung. / See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

⁴³⁵ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

⁴³⁶ See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

⁴³⁷ Kovach, M. (2021): *Indigenous Methodologies*. p. 156.

⁴³⁸ Müller, R. (2020): *Museumsbesuche in der Generation Z – überhaupt noch ein Thema?*

<https://www.ankevonheyhl.de/museumsbesuche-in-der-generation-z-ueberhaupt-noch-ein-thema/>.

people from other cultures can educate them about differences in cultural exchange and cultural appropriation and give them the opportunity to learn from and with other cultures. In presenting the issue of identity, loss of identity and reshaping identity by means of cultural heritage, museums can help young people gain understanding for their own identity formation. Additionally inner German cultural differences based for example on spirituality can be addressed this way and different German identities understood. Birgitta Fossum explains that asking questions about repatriation creates awareness of others that certain objects hold value in the Sami community. At the same time, it leads to awareness in the Sami community itself by asking why an object is important to them.⁴³⁹ This inward reflection is a helpful skill to learn for younger generations when finding their place within complicated societies. Thus, involving young people in the collaboration is helpful in gaining new perspectives on the world, but involving them helps moreover to create lasting bonds between Saepmie and Germany.

Collaborations offer the possibility for Meiningen to tell the story of the drum's repatriation and of its value to the South Sami community. This way, the drum's story stays a part of the Meininger Museen and can still be told there. Adlung states his impression that "the topic of 'Indigenous peoples' is generally under-represented and has to be shown more in the collections."⁴⁴⁰ Through the collaboration visibility of an Indigenous community would be achieved while granting that community a voice in what and how to exhibit.

Contemporary Sami culture could be made visible and thus counter the static image that museums often present of Indigenous cultures.⁴⁴¹ Further, the South Sami community could provide knowledge about *duedtie* that otherwise might not be accessible to a German audience. As mentioned before, the drum cannot be understood by non-Sami in the same way as it can be understood within the South Sami community. The traditional knowledge, *aerpiemaahoe*, is dependent on Sami perspectives. This concept of having a different entryway to knowledge based on background is known in Germany as Adlung compares it to iconography.⁴⁴² He speaks about the ability to make sense of symbols and expressions by connecting them with existing knowledge, which at the same time means that associations cannot be made if the knowledge is gone and "[t]he stories are no longer known."⁴⁴³ When the stories are no longer known, the knowledge vanishes. Repatriating the *Freavnantjahke gievrie* to the South Sami community

⁴³⁹ See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

⁴⁴⁰ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlv.

⁴⁴¹ Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres*. p. 60.

⁴⁴² See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

⁴⁴³ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlii.

helps preventing further loss of knowledge and opens bonds between past and present. This is an important aspect as preserving Indigenous knowledge and knowledge systems means preserving the survival of Indigenous peoples.⁴⁴⁴

The knowledge and stories the Freavnantjahke gievrie shares do not resonate in Meiningen and Philipp Adlung expresses that it is complicated for the museum to explain the connection of the gievrie to the other collection objects.⁴⁴⁵ I argue that, ironically, the Meininger Museen could create a connection of the gievrie to their other objects through repatriation and addressing the collection methods and collection history of museums. By being an active part of the repatriation process, the Meininger Museen would give themselves an important role in the drum's history and link the gievrie, therefore, directly to the museum. In explaining why the drum is not in Meiningen anymore, the disconnection between the gievrie and the other objects will be addressed, which in turn presents the reasoning for the museum to join a collaboration with Saemien Sijte. This links as well with Adlung's stance "to relate the debate to the issue of collections generally, regardless of questions of guilt or crimes of the past."⁴⁴⁶ This could be an argument for reconsidering museum objects that have been traded in the past or willingly given to be part of collections but have significance now, due to for example small numbers being left. Here, is a leverage point for collaboration between different museums. Rethinking collections and their composition and evaluating where an object serves the greatest purpose internationally⁴⁴⁷ answers in this case to the disconnection between the gievrie and the other objects. Here, the value the drum has in the South Sami community is considered as well and leads the debate to the same understanding: The gievrie should return home to Snåsa, where it serves the greater purpose in reconnecting with and shaping Sami identity. Further it makes more sense collection-wise as the drum's stories resonate there.

The repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie would give the South Sami community the ability to connect with their ancestors and duedtie, show proof of them living in this area, as well as proof of having their own distinct culture, create continuity and have the possibility to write their own history. The repatriation would be a big step towards self-determination. Regarding these aspects and weighing them against the claims of the Meininger Museen are moral considerations which makes them somewhat ambiguous. Moral standards change over time and differ culturally. However, it can be assumed that the German government and German

⁴⁴⁴ Armstrong, Jeannette (2010): *The Heart of Development with Culture and Identity*. p. 84.

⁴⁴⁵ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

⁴⁴⁶ Appendix Interview with Adlung. p. xlvii.

⁴⁴⁷ See Appendix Interview with Adlung.

museums strive to do justice to the moral evaluations of Indigenous peoples. In 2021 the German government ratified UNDRIP as well as the ILO convention 169 and sends therefore the message of supporting Indigenous communities in their fight for self-determination. The same year, the German Bundestag published a statement called “Colonial looted Art - Possibilities of Restitution of looted Objects from a Colonial Context”⁴⁴⁸ and clarifies the legal basis for claims. The German Museum Foundation issued their 3rd edition of “Guidelines for German Museums – Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts” as well in 2021.⁴⁴⁹ The moral standard is set in a governmental and museum scope. In any case, it is up to the individual actors to apply the moral standard. Through the repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie, Meiningen would do so, support the South Sami community and take a step towards the decolonization of German museums. They would set an example for German accountability as the scorched earth strategy (1944-1945) in Lapland and collection practices of museums in the 18th and 19th century contributed to the circumstance that a lot of Sami cultural heritage was destroyed or brought to Germany. “Legally [governments] are the successor and therefore also take on responsibility”⁴⁵⁰ of the previous government, as Adlung points out. This can be extended to museums. German museums are an expression of German culture and history and therefore also inherit responsibility.

Taking on responsibility entails the recognition and acknowledgment of the Freavnantjahke gievrie as a most valuable object for the South Sami community. The wish to show different cultures and especially Sami culture to the (younger) museum audience – based on the connection through the gievrie – requires the collaboration with the Sami community. The way the situation is now for the Sami, a collaboration between Meininger Museen and the Sami community seems impossible as long as the Freavnantjahke gievrie is still in Meiningen. An collection and exhibition on Sami culture has to be based on collaboration with the Sami community and respect towards their claims. To exhibit Sami culture in an educated and informed way is not compatible with exhibiting the drum in Meiningen. As has been pointed out already, the drum has to be exhibited in its area of origin and interpreted from a Sami perspective to tell all the stories it contains. Further, the drum might be too layered to be adequately exhibited by a non-Sami institution without the focus on Sami culture and identity. Through repatriation Meiningen would support the Sami community in their endeavors to gain the power of definition. They would recognize the damage and pain that exists in the

⁴⁴⁸ Deutscher Bundestag (2021): *Koloniale Raubkunst*.

⁴⁴⁹ Deutscher Museumsbund (2021): *Guidelines for German Museums*.

⁴⁵⁰ Appendix Interview with Adlung, p. xlii.

community and help to counter the vanishing of Sami culture. The repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie means bolstering the Sami identity and battling the colonial legacy of museums.

While the South Sami community loses a part of their identity as long as the drum is in Meiningen, the German audience would not lose their identity or a part of their history if the drum were repatriated. They may lose a connecting object to a different culture, but they do not lose themselves. Moreover, the connector could be replaced with another one as has been suggested earlier. In collaboration with Sami scholars another object can be prepared for an exhibition, “[i]nformation can be complemented and corrected”⁴⁵¹ because of the knowledge within the Sami community. That way people in Germany can learn about Sami culture in a way that respects and represents Sami culture properly. The connection to the South Sami community is damaged when the drum is exhibited in Meiningen. Through repatriation the connection between the Meininger Museen and the drum will not be lost but rather improved as Meiningen would become part of the healing process.

The Sami community could get the chance to reconnect with their identity, history, past and cultural heritage through the repatriated drum. Repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie could start a process of rematriation and it is suggested that it could not only address trauma but even be part of healing it.⁴⁵² The Sami could regain pride and feel safe in their own culture by experiencing continuity. Johansen addresses the painful impacts of assimilation policies and states that these communities “can use the museum both to redeem the past and to create new solutions today.”⁴⁵³ Reclaiming cultural heritage and being able to write their own story is important to correct false perceptions non-Sami scholars have spread through their works. Provenance research in mainstream museums has shown that “[c]ollectors, whoever they were, generally made quite poor recordings of the items they collected.”⁴⁵⁴ Consequently, the information given by mainstream museums can be false and incomplete,⁴⁵⁵ which can be mended by repatriating the objects to the experts. The Sami community holds knowledge and understanding of their objects. One example to mention is the narrative that drums were only used by men while women were forbidden to use them as, among others, Manker explained.⁴⁵⁶ This seems like an interpretation based on heteropatriarchal norms which dominated and still

⁴⁵¹ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home: p. 59.

⁴⁵² Harlin, E.-K. (2017): Recording Sámi Heritage in European Museums. p. 76.

⁴⁵³ Johansen, E. D. (2022): *Samisk kulturarv tilbakeføres*, p. 213 – 214.

⁴⁵⁴ Harlin, E.-K. (2018): Returning home: p. 59.

⁴⁵⁵ Harlin, E.-K.; Olli, A. M. (2014): Repatriation: p. 59.

⁴⁵⁶ See Manker, E. (1938): *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel*. p. 382f.

dominate the academic sphere.⁴⁵⁷ The narrative has been reproduced multiple times even though the Sami Anders Poulsen explained that he learned to use the drum from his mother.⁴⁵⁸ A reevaluation of the drum, its use and its handicraft by Sami could paint a more multifaceted picture of Sami culture and lead to a more inclusive society in terms of gender. The false ideas and limited understandings of Sami culture can be corrected. Fossum believes that Saemien Sijte can contribute to this:

We have a responsibility to bring back the South Sami cultural heritage. [...] We have a responsibility to communicate the South Sami cultural heritage in the right way: Both within the Sami community, but also outwards to others.⁴⁵⁹

Saemien Sijte, as the custodian in case of a repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie, could offer the access as well as resources to research, exhibit and communicate the drum.

The repatriation of the drum may not only have a beneficial impact on the Sami community. Learning about the Indigenous approaches to life, nature or communication can help to find ways through hardships and maybe help to reevaluate the direction the Western world is headed towards. Sami and Indigenous approaches generally may help think differently about how to use nature in a way that is not exploitative. Some Indigenous communities have proven that their lifestyles and knowledge increased the biodiversity around them.⁴⁶⁰ The mass extinction of species and the destruction of biodiversity are the biggest problems humanity faces. There are those advocating that the planet can only be saved by giving Indigenous peoples their land back. This stems from the understanding that Indigenous knowledge is a counter draft to exploitative, colonial Western approaches.

These colonial legacies which are part of Western museums are being challenged through collaborations like repatriation. Thus, repatriation is a means to as well free the German society from colonial power structures and give them a possibility to address their past and history in a constructive, healing way which enhances their knowledge about other cultures. In the case of the Freavnantjahke gievrie, its German history would become part of a repatriation process and be told at the exhibition in Snåsa.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁷ Finbog, L.-R. (2020): *It speaks to you*: p. 24.

⁴⁵⁸ Porsanger, J. (2022): An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation. p. 77

⁴⁵⁹ Appendix Interview with Fossum p. xxiv.

⁴⁶⁰ Gadgil, M.; Berkes, F.; and Folke, C. (1993): Source: Indigenous Knowledge for Biodiversity Conservation. In: *Ambio*. Vol. 22(2/3), p. 152.

⁴⁶¹ See Appendix Interview with Fossum.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis I have presented the different perspectives of Saemien Sijte and the Meininger Museen in terms of the Freavnantjahke gievrie and how their respective communities would be affected by its repatriation. In order to be able to present the differing perspectives, I conducted interviews with the directors of Saemien Sijte, Dr. Birgitta Fossum, and the Meininger Museen, Dr. Philipp Adlung. The interviews were intended to highlight the interviewees' positions on repatriation, colonization and decolonization in relation to museums, identity, traditional knowledge and the value of the drum for the museum's respective communities.

I explored the gievrie in the context of Sami history, previous repatriation projects of Sami cultural heritage and research by non-Sami scholars to explain the value of the gievrie for the South Sami community today.

The status of the drum within the Sami community has changed throughout the centuries. First it was a divination tool and a helper in everyday life. Then, in the 17th and 18th century, the gievrie became a banned and persecuted object during the Christianization of the Sami. Drums and the knowledge about them had to be hidden for centuries. Later, in the 1970s, the gievrie became a symbol of resistance and revitalization. Now the drum is a connector between past, present and future generations of the South Sami community and material proof of their existence in the 17th century and today.

The Freavnantjahke gievrie is a special object since it is one of few Sami drums which are this well preserved additionally to being so thoroughly documented. Due to the significance of the drum, Fossum and Adlung agree that the object needs to be exhibited in a museum to be accessible to the public.

The arguments for and against the repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie can be found in the attachment the Meininger Museen and Samien Sijte express towards the object. These attachments have to be weighed against each other and contextualized in order to understanding how they are formed. The attachment to the object stems from the shared history between the drum and the communities but is also connected to the stories that the drum represents in itself. The gievrie is the embodiment of stories about worldview, knowledge sharing, colonialism, resistance and revitalization. The drum is a storyteller. It can share knowledge about the past which can aid people in their everyday lives today. Both, Adlung and Fossum express the possibility of expanding worldviews and perspectives through learning about and from the gievrie. However, these stories are not accessible to every community in the same way since

certain knowledge and connections are required to be able to translate the drum's stories. This knowledge can be found in the Sami community. Thus, important parts of the drum's stories cannot be accessed without the Sami perspective. Further, some aspects of the knowledge only resonate within the surroundings the drum originates from. This means that the drum being exhibited outside of Saepmie and without involvement of the Sami community leads to inaccessible and even false knowledge. The missing information and false assumptions which non-Sami scholars made about the drum remain therefore uncorrected. This is problematic as it causes not only the persistence but the reinforcement of misinformation, stereotypes, misunderstandings and therefore conflicts between non-Sami and Sami but also among the Sami themselves. Corrected and completed knowledge about Sami culture and history can contribute to the debates about Sami rights in Norway and strengthen their cases. Repatriation becomes a step on the way to self-determination.

The absence of Sami cultural heritage is the legacy of colonialism which has been harmful to their traditions and consequently to their self-perception. For centuries the Sami have been defined by outsiders, which pictured them as "exotic" and "the other" or left them out of the historical narrative all together. Until today, many Sami struggle to connect with their Sami heritage and battle historical trauma and trauma of a lost identity. Seamien Sijte can offer access to repatriated objects and create space for rematriation. Reconnecting with cultural heritage of such significance gives the Sami the opportunity to write their own history. It provides historical continuity and thus can lead to a feeling of safety within their culture. Even though past injustice cannot be undone through repatriation, it can be addressed and colonial legacies challenged. This supports next generations in their search for identity and belonging and further may create a sense of pride.

The interviews have shown that especially the future generations are in focus of the considerations about repatriation. Their access to the drum seems important to create understanding and respect for different cultures as well as their own, their identities and origins. The problems, which humanity faces and will face in the future, create the need for new perspectives and collaborations and challenge especially generations to come. Indigenous approaches to life, nature and collaboration can provide alternatives to Western worldviews.

The analysis of the perspectives of Saemien Sijte and the Meininger Museen have shown that there are different understandings when it comes to colonialism and the role of Freavnantjahke gievrie. From the Sami perspective it was clear that the absence of Sami cultural heritage is a result of colonial policies. Adlung on the other hand expressed that he does not tie the

Freavnantjahke gievrie and the colonial art debate together. His approach is to reevaluate collections and collection methods. This way, an objects connection to the other exhibits would be reconsidered. Also, the purpose of the object and the location where it serves the greatest purpose would come into focus. With the caveat of not neglecting the oppression done to the Sami, this approach can be helpful under certain conditions. In the case of the Freavnantjahke gievrie it highlights the disconnection between the drum and the music instruments in the exhibition. The accidental nature of the drum's current location poses challenges in creating a connection to the museum and the exhibition. The drum does not fit in. The colonial history of the drum, nonetheless, is what explains the drum's whereabouts and becomes the link to Meiningen. A repatriation could make exceed this by making the Meininger Museen not only part of a colonial history but part of the healing process of the Sami community.

Though the access to the Freavnantjahke gievrie holds advantages for the Sami audience as well as the German audience, they do not share the same magnitude. As mentioned, the knowledge provided in Germany is and will be incomplete if not false due to the lack of preexisting knowledge and understanding of the drum. The imparted knowledge in a German setting is consequently always insufficient. The ideas created about the Sami culture are therefore superficial and questionable.

The drum being exhibited in Meiningen without Sami collaboration is a continuation of the colonial legacy and disadvantageous for both communities. Considering the importance of Sami community and area to understand and translate the knowledge which the drum holds it becomes impossible to establish a fruitful collaboration while the drum is exhibited in Meiningen. This work argues therefore that the repatriation of the Freavnantjahke gievrie is imperative. However, it has also been pointed out that repatriation is only one form of collaboration and can be accompanied by other means of knowledge sharing.

The interviews have shown that the Meininger Museen is sensitive and receptive towards the request of Saemien Sijte and hope to develop a collaboration. Since the repatriation of Sami cultural heritage from German museums is a young and developing field, the Meininger Museen and Saemien Sijte could create a pioneering example for future repatriations. The way they negotiate the process, their successes and challenges as well as discrepancies and agreements will set a model for other institutions. Saemien Sijte and the Meininger Museen will shape future collaborations between the Sami community and German museums.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Guide Interview with Dr. Birgitta Fossum

1. First, I would like to ask you what term you would prefer when referring to the drum instead of object: duodji or belonging?
2. Why is object not a good term for the drum? What is the difference between the drum and a static object?

In 2017, Samien Sijte asked to transfer the drum into their ownership. The Meininger Museum refused.

3. When did the process start for your institution? And what was the background for the process?
4. (What happened?) How was the process? And who was involved?
5. What were Meiningen's arguments for keeping the drum. What reasons were/are there for keeping the drum in Meiningen?
6. What are the reasons for giving the drum to Snåsa?
7. What is your perspective on how the drum is displayed and stored at the Meininger Museum?

The Sami artist, Iver Jåks, mentioned that his art should go back to nature after his death. This may be an example that there are different approaches on how to handle cultural heritage.

8. What arguments are there to keep the drum in an institution like a museum?
9. Is the drum a museum object?
10. Why a museum? (What kind of possibilities lies in a museum institution?)

Since there are only a few drums from the time before the Christianization of the Sami, the so-called drum age, and not all of them are well documented, the Freavnantjahke gievrieh is a special object.

11. What makes the drum special for your location, community and/or museum?
12. What does/would the absence of the drum mean for your location, museum/community?
13. What connections do you see between the past and the present through the drum?

Often researchers, like Ernst Manker, were and are interested in Sami drums and their symbols as religious artefacts to understand Sami religious beliefs. The drum as a center piece in confiscation processes has not been discussed as intensively.

14. Why are repatriation and provenance, however, so prominent today?
15. What is your perspective on repatriation?

16. In your opinion, what is the drum a symbol of?
17. Rematriation is a term that has recently emerged as a concept in relation to repatriation. Is this a concept that you think is relevant in terms of drum return? And in what way?
18. What is your approach to this concept of rematriation?
19. In your opinion - When is repatriation/rematriation successful? (And does it involve more than a return?)

Repatriation involves necessarily collaboration between at least two institutions.

20. When does/should the collaboration start and end?
21. How would you describe the collaboration with Meininger museum?
22. What other forms of collaboration are imaginable?
23. Do you consider these upcoming collaborations and repatriation specifically part of decolonization processes?
24. How is decolonization part of the work of your museum?
25. How is colonization (still) part of the work of your museum?

Indigenous communities all over the world share similar stories of colonization. Therefore, they also share similar problems, needs and claims today. However, each story is still unique.

26. What differentiates the repatriation of Sami cultural heritage from cultural heritage of other indigenous groups?
27. What do you associate with the term traditional knowledge?
28. In what way does the drum communicate traditional knowledge?
29. To whom should traditional knowledge be available?

In my work, when discussing decolonization, I often come across the term responsibility.

30. Which responsibilities do you see in the process of decolonization?
31. Where do you see the responsibility of your museum considering decolonization, identity and traditional knowledge?
32. Where lies the responsibility of the nation state?
33. Where do you see especially Germany's part in decolonization and repatriation? (In the past and today?)

Sami sometimes have been described as non-European in the sense that they were colonized and that they were seen as different from the majority. They have been compared to native

Americans throughout the centuries. This plays into perceiving a group of people as “The Others”.

34. In your opinion, how has the display of drums in museum exhibitions created an understanding of the Sami as "the others"?
35. How does the perception of Otherness shape identity?
36. Do you think the idea of Otherness has changed today?
37. How can identity be defined in a colonized and globalized world?
38. How can the repatriation of the drum help substantiate strong Sámi identities?

Identity seems to have been shaped by the thought of “us and them”, by depicting differences. It is documented that Sami identity has sparked curiosity and interest in Western cultures since the renaissance.

39. In what ways can a museum depict and shape identity using duodji?
40. Which role play (static) objects in depicting and shaping identity?
41. Which role does the drum play in depicting identity?
42. How does the German audience benefit from accessing the drum in terms of identity building?
43. How does the Sami audience benefit from accessing the drum in terms of identity building?

The different names just as Freavnantjahke gievrieh and Meininger Zaubertrommel connect the drum to different places and create an idea of belonging.

44. What is your perspective on ownership in relation to the drum?
45. Is there a German part to the drum’s history now?

The Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus had a Sami drum in his possession, which is now part of the Linnaeus Museum in Uppsala. This creates the idea of the drum being part of his history.

46. Can something, like a drum, belong to more than one person or to more than one community?
47. Can an object, and if so, when does an object transfer into the ownership of somebody else?
48. To whom’s history does an object belong?
49. What is the plan for the drum at your museum?
50. Is there anything we did not discuss but should be mentioned?

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide Interview with Dr. Philipp Adlung

1. First, I would like to know what terms you associate with the drum. Is it an object? A museum object? How do you refer to it?
2. Is there a difference between the drum and other objects in the museum?
3. Why is object not a good term for the drum? What is the difference between the drum and a static object?

In 2017, Samien Sijte asked to loan the drum for the exhibition “Hvem eier historien?” /Wem gehört die Geschichte? in Trondheim. The Meininger Museum refused at first.

4. How was the process? And who was involved? When did it start? (When did this process start for your institution? And what was the background for the process?)
5. What were the arguments to not lend the drum?
6. What were the reasons for lending the drum to Saemien Sijte, eventually?
7. What is your perspective on how the drum is displayed and stored at the Meininger Museum?
8. What is your perspective on how the drum was displayed and stored at the exhibition in Trondheim?

The Sami artist, Iver Jåks, mentioned that his art should go back to nature after his death. This may be an example that there are different approaches on how to handle cultural heritage.

9. How important are objects for an institution like a museum?
10. What arguments are there to keep especially the drum in a museum in general? (What kind of possibilities lie in a museum institution?)

Since there are only a few drums from the time before the Christianization of the Sami, the so-called drum age, and not all of them are well documented, the Freavnantjahke gievrieh is a special object for the Sami community.

11. What makes the drum special for your location, community and/or museum?
12. What does/would the absence of the drum mean for your location, museum/community?
13. What connections do you see between the past and the present through the drum?

Often researchers, like Ernst Manker, were and are interested in Sami drums and their symbols as religious artefacts to understand Sami religious beliefs. The drum as a center piece in confiscation processes has not been discussed as intensively.

14. Why are aspects as repatriation and provenance, however, so prominent today?

15. What is your perspective on repatriation?
16. In your opinion, what is the drum a symbol of?
17. Rematriation is a term that has recently emerged as a concept in relation to repatriation. Is this a concept that you think is relevant in terms of drum return? And in what way?
18. What is your approach to this concept of rematriation?
19. In your opinion - When is repatriation/rematriation successful? (And does it involve more than a return?)
20. When does/should the collaboration start and end?
21. How would you describe the collaboration with Saemien Sijte?
22. What other forms of collaboration are imaginable?
23. Do you consider these upcoming collaborations and repatriation specifically part of decolonization processes?
24. How is decolonization part of the work of your museum?
25. How is colonization (still) part of the work of your museum?

Indigenous communities all over the world share similar stories of colonization. Therefore, they also share similar problems, needs and claims today. However, each story is still unique.

26. What differentiates, in your opinion, the repatriation of Sami cultural heritage from cultural heritage of other indigenous groups?
27. What do you associate with the term traditional knowledge? What does traditional knowledge mean for a German audience?
28. In what way does the drum communicate traditional knowledge?
29. To whom should traditional knowledge be available?

In my work, when discussing decolonization, I often come across the term responsibility.

30. Which responsibilities do you see in the process of decolonization?
31. Where do you see the responsibility of your museum considering decolonization, identity and traditional knowledge?
32. Where lies the responsibility of the nation state?
33. Where do you see especially Germany's part in decolonization and repatriation? (In the past and today?)

Sami sometimes have been described as non-European in the sense that they were colonized and that they were seen as different from the majority. They have been compared to native

Americans throughout the centuries. This plays into perceiving a group of people as “The Others”.

34. In your opinion, how has the display of their cultural heritage in museums created an understanding of the Sami as "the others"?
35. How does the perception of Otherness shape identity?
36. Do you think the idea of Otherness has changed today?
37. How can identity be defined in a colonized and globalized world?
38. How could the repatriation of the drum help substantiate strong Sámi identities?
39. In what ways can a German museum depict and shape identity using duodji?
40. Which role play (static) objects in depicting and shaping identity?
41. Which role does the drum play in depicting identity?
42. How does the German audience benefit from accessing the drum in terms of identity building?
43. How does the Sami audience benefit from accessing the drum in terms of identity building?

The different names just as Freavnantjahke gievrieh and Meininger Zaubertrommel connect the drum to different places and create an idea of belonging.

44. What is your perspective on ownership in relation to the drum?
45. Is there a German part to the drum's history now?

The Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus had a Sami drum in his possession, which is now part of the Linnaeus Museum in Uppsala. This creates the idea of the drum being part of his history.

46. Can something, like a drum, belong to more than one person or to more than one community?
47. Can an object, and if so, when does an object transfer into the ownership of somebody else?
48. To whom's history does an object belong?
49. What is the plan for the drum at your museum at the moment?
50. Is there anything we did not discuss but should be mentioned?

Appendix 3- Interview with Museum Director Birgitta Fossum (15.03.2022)

00:00:02 SWANTJE OPITZ

As mentioned beforehand, we will talk about the South Sami Freavnantjahke gievrieh, which is currently located in Meiningen, Germany. In this context, concepts such as ownership, identity, traditional knowledge and decolonization or colonization will be discussed.

But first I wanted to ask you, which term you prefer when referring to the drum rather than object, maybe "duodji" or "belonging"? I think that object could be difficult term.

00:00:53 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

We use "gievrie" consistently, but otherwise yes – I do not really know – object perhaps. I have not thought about it.

00:01:09 SWANTJE OPITZ

Okay, so object is just fine, yes?

In 2017, Saemien Sijte asked to transfer the drum to their ownership and the Meininger Museen refused. When did the process start for your institution? What was the background of the process?

00:01:32 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

We did not ask for it to be returned. We asked for it to be lend to an exhibition that was in Trondheim called "Who owns history?" [engl. Hvem eier historien?]. At first, they refused, but afterwards they agreed. The drum was in Trondheim for 3 months, I think, from February to May or June. I am a little unsure of how long it was there, but it was in Trondheim for a few months at least. We have not asked for it to be returned. We have asked for a meeting now. But that was this year. Well, I sent a request before the summer of last year. Then I asked for a meeting to discuss the possible return of the drum. So, Meininger Museen has not said no to repatriation. They have not said that. They have said that they do not have the opportunity to meet now, but nothing more.

12:02:38 SWANTJE OPITZ

Okay, and what were Meiningen's arguments for not borrowing the drum?

00:02:49 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

At first it was that it is a very fragile object. It is. It is fragile. So, it was probably a little bit that consideration. However, eventually, when we talked to them and arranged the transport and such, they agreed. Then the drum came to Trondheim in 2017.

00:03:12 SWANTJE OPITZ

So, they were just a little worried that it might not go so well to transport the drum?

00:03:20 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, I would think so. Otherwise, there is no explanation for why they said no.

12:03:26 SWANTJE OPITZ

Now, what is the reason to request the drum this year?

00:03:43 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

For us? It is that we are opening a new museum this summer.

00:03:48 SWANTJE OPITZ

Yes, congratulations to that! I saw it on Instagram.

00:03:53 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

We will open the new museum on June 17th, and of course we had a small hope that it would be possible to get the drum back until then. Yet, of course, we realize, that there are some processes that need to be reviewed. I sent a request last summer, in June 2021, if we could arrange a meeting and such, but then I did not hear much more from the Meininger Museen. I contacted them again this spring. They have had a change of directors in the meantime, which was certainly the cause. Now, they have said, they cannot have a meeting this spring and that we will get back to it this summer. I do not know why, though. Anyway, I think it is certain that we will arrange this meeting. Maybe in the fall, I hope.

00:04:53 SWANTJE OPITZ

What is your perspective on how the drum is displayed and kept at the Meininger Museen?

00:05:04 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

I am a bit skeptical about that. Well, I have to admit, I have not been to the Meininger Museen and seen how it is exhibited, but I have seen pictures from there, where it is exhibited in a music collection. I am very skeptical about that, because it is not a musical instrument. This is an

object that was used by the owners to look into the future. It was also an object that could be used to have a spiritual connection between the worlds and suchlike. So, it was a sacred object and it had nothing to do with music. Therefore, I am a little critical of that.

00:05:42 SWANTJE OPITZ

The Sami artist Iver Jåks mentioned that his works should return to nature after his death. This is an example that there are different approaches of how to deal with cultural heritage. I was wondering, what arguments are there for keeping the drum in an institution like a museum.

00:06:18 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, this is a cultural heritage that has a history. It is a cultural heritage that may not be as vibrant in Sami society today, but which, nonetheless, the Sami community wants knowledge about. It still exists. Within the Sami community it is a bit two-minded, actually. There are those who believe that when the drums are not being used anymore and are laid out in nature, then they should be allowed to return to nature. But of course, we have also gotten to the point, that we do not get to put back the museum objects, that have been collected, anyway. We do not. We want to tell this part of the cultural heritage to the Sami community in particular, but of course to others as well. Moreover, this object actually contains quite a few stories in a way. It holds the history of power and abuse. It holds the history of the Christianization process, about Thomas von Westen, how it was taken from the Sami community. I think, this is quite an important object to show the old culture or the old beliefs back then. Of course, it is a bit tricky with the term here, but we will maybe try to adjust it afterwards. So, I think that it is important to us, and it is important for the Sami community that we get to show that part of the old cultural heritage. It is perhaps reasonable that some of these objects should go back to nature.

They were two people from whom this here drum was taken. They have been on their way to flee with the drum. They have not been on their way to put it back into nature. That was not the case when they were caught. There are slightly different perspectives on it and, we as a museum, our mission is to safeguard and manage the South Sami cultural heritage. Well, this is part of the Sami cultural heritage.

00:08:53 SWANTJE OPITZ

There are only a few drums from the time before the Christianization of the Sami, the so-called drum age, and not all of them are well documented. You talked about how this drum is important for Sami communities. What, however, makes the drum special for your place, for the Snåsa area, for the South Sami area?

00:09:34 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

We are the only South Sami museum, so we have a museum responsibility for the entire South Sami area. This drum is from the South Sami area, this is a South Sami drum. It is, like I said earlier, part of a lot of stories. It is part of a story of Christianization. It is part of a story of

power and abuse, while the drum itself has a strength. It has an immense symbolic meaning. I think there are many who still see them as sacred objects and consider it extremely important that they are in Sami holdings, in a Sami context and a Sami area instead of being for example exhibited in the music collection in Meiningen, where it does not belong. While in the Sami community, even though the drums have not been used for a long time, you have an idea of what they are and what they mean. I believe with the drum being returned to the Sami community and the Sami area, and then to a Sami museum, it is a form of redress also for the abuses that were actually done to the Sami people back then. Also, I think that – this is nothing I know but what I think – why it is so important today may also have to do with the fact that the abuse here has been going on for so long. Even if you have the Christianization in the 17th century, there are continuous abuses that have been going on right until our days. We were robbed of the culture, we were robbed of cultural heritage, we were robbed of the language, we are still deprived of the areas where we are making our living. So, I think it is a start to take back not only power, but the power of definition and having the cultural heritage to write this own history. Since that is another thing: Our history has been defined by others. It was others who have said what Sami is, but by getting the objects back in our administration – ownership is the wrong word. It is all about administration. After all, it is the Sami community that owns it and we as a museum administrate it. It is part of writing our own story.

00:12:12 SWANTJE OPITZ

Could you say that this is how the drum symbolizes connections between the past and the present?

00:12:27 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, you could say that. What we do represents that, and there are people today who use drums, they do, and in a way shape them in their own way. Also, it is very strongly felt in the Sami community here that the drum has a power of its own, in itself. So, yes, it becomes in many ways a link between the past and the present, but I also think it becomes a link to the culture as it is today. I think it is very important. It is very symbolic in many ways.

00:13:12 SWANTJE OPITZ

Often, researchers such as Ernst Manker were and are interested in Sami drums and their symbols as religious objects, and more interested in understanding Sami religious beliefs. However, the drum as the centerpiece of confiscation processes has not been discussed as intensely. What do you think? Why are repatriation and ancestry so prominent today?

00:13:46 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

It is about a political mobilization and it is about regaining the right to define oneself as a people, define oneself as culture and define one's own history. It is about the right to manage one's own cultural heritage and history. This is happening all over the world among Indigenous

peoples. We have been robbed. If you are a little blunt, the British Museum is one of the world's largest [?]. They have taken from colonial states and just picked up lots of objects. So, I think it is a little bit about being allowed to take back what has been robbed of us back then. We see it nowadays that defining history and writing history is quite important for rights today. So, I think, there is a connection. It is a global awakening that we want to own our own cultural heritage, and another thought I have is very much connected to the fact that internally it is about pride and identity, and then it is about rights.

00:15:02 SWANTJE OPITZ

What is your perspective on repatriation, also in the context of global developments?

00:15:17 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

My perspective is that all peoples have the right to manage their own cultural heritage. That is my starting point. I think that we as an Indigenous people we have the right to manage our cultural heritage. We have the right to have a reckoning with history. There have been a number of processes going on, for example in Sweden. It happened that the church apologized for the behavior they have had. I think that is pretty important. We have, in Norway, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that will look at some of the abuses that have been going on against Sami in connection with the Norwegianization policy, but I think that this goes further back in time, right until the Christianization. I think there is something about getting a settlement, and kind of getting a resolution that you get the objects back, that we are actually seen as capable and competent of managing them ourselves. For me, it is very much about being allowed to write your own story, right? For example, you have written our history, then you have also written us out of history by making invisible, so that when you talk about the history of, for example, Trøndelag or so you have talked only about the Norwegian side. All the cultural objects here help to show a long history in the area. Also, I think for me, for us, it is about the right to define who we are as a people, and to be allowed to tell our story from our perspective and get to manage that cultural heritage ourselves. Both as a museum person and as an archaeologist, that is the perspective I might have in that case.

00:17:17 SWANTJE OPITZ

What role does the drum play in repatriation? I read that you wrote in "Bååstede - The Return of Sami Cultural Heritage", that the donating museums must understand that there are objects where one cannot accept that they are not home, like a drum. What is so special about a gievrie and what is the symbol of the drum in your opinion?

00:17:57 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Well, as I said earlier, the drum has – again, here is the thing with terminology but if you need to find words – it has a sacred meaning. The drum has been a communication tool between forces, between the worlds in a way. In the South Sami area, many people, probably every

family had drums, for it was also a tool for contact between the worlds and things like that. The fact that they were taken from them by force, that is Christianization, it was brutal in destroying Sami culture and Sami understanding of the world. Enough of them probably lived in secret, but still it was part of a way to destroy the Sami culture. Or not destroy Sami culture. It helped to change it perhaps. That is a better word. But still today, there are many who have a very strong relationship with drums. There are those who talk about drums as alive, and there are those who talk about drums as having such powers that... I know people who do not touch drums because they consider themselves not to be the right people to touch drums and get sick if they do touch them. There are those who, in a way, see almost the drum as a person. It is maybe a bit of a wrong expression but in Sami we have the concept of invisible forces that exist – I do not know how to explain it – but the drum is seen as a part of that. The drum has power. There are people who believe in that. The fact that they are taken from the Sami areas is helping to destroy that power. But then also – now I feel like I am just rattling on – I think a lot of people say that it is just really symbolically important. As I say, it is a symbol of abuse, the symbol of something being changed, something being destroyed, and getting it back. I think this will have implications for that very redress. It is to get to feel pride within your spine, and feeling like “Yes, it is actually ours.” I have talked to a lady who told me something on the drum that was in Oslo earlier. Together with her father they had a physical experience of grief. It was such a pain because they were not home in the Sami area. I really just think that it still holds a power in Sami society, a symbolic power at least, for a redress perhaps or at least the start of a redress.

00:21:15 SWANTJE OPITZ

And the repatriation of the drum means returning the power as well?

00:21:20 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, maybe.

00:21:24 SWANTJE OPITZ

I read what a successful repatriation is for the Bååstede project. However, in your opinion: When is repatriation successful? Does it involve more than a return? For example, if Meiningen agrees to giving the drum back, is that all?

00:22:08 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

No, not necessarily. Of course, a success is to get the drum back with any stories around it. Nevertheless, I also think it is not the case that we do not want other museums both in Norway and abroad to talk about Sami culture. We certainly want them to. Therefore, I think that a repatriation, where you also give knowledge back and stories back can be a great way. I do not necessarily think you should make copies of drums. I do not think so, but maybe you can tell the story of how the drum ended up in Germany in a different way, and maybe also tell the

story of what it means to give it back to the Sami community, for the Sami community. Since I think that creating that awareness among people around the world may have a bearing on future processes, a significance for the future. That is very easy, right. When we talk about repatriation, we talk a lot about drums and that is probably because it is one of the most symbol-heavy objects we have. It is also perhaps because these objects are the fewest in Sami society as well. And if we disregard all the symbolic meanings – I do not know how to say it, but – there are other objects and we have quite a lot of objects that may not be equally important to return. Sometimes, it can be important to repatriate because of the stories that come along with an object. At the same time, I think that sometimes there may be other objects that can replace it. In that case with objects of which exist quite many. However, the Sami museums are also very young museums and we do not have much. We do not have much of the older objects ourselves at all.

Well, I believe it is the exchange of knowledge, because I think it is telling the Sami story. For Meiningen's part, and well I cannot say what they shall do, but it could be nice to talk about the history: How the drum ended up in Meiningen and how long it has been there and what has been done during the time it has been there. Then you can tell the story of why it was repatriated and what that meant within Sápmi.

I think so. I think that should be part of it. I think ordinary people who go to museums do not understand, do not think like that. It is more: “Yes, that object is from there, exciting.” and then you do not think about all that what is behind it and what it means. I think, if we get people to start understanding that maybe we will get – I will not say that I want to contribute to a better society, but – that we may be able to gain a greater understanding for each other.

00:25:22 SWANTJE OPITZ

I also think that in Germany it happens that people think of a Sami drum as “exotic” and therefore it is interesting. If we talk further about repatriation: When should cooperation begin and end? Often it is that a museum asks: "Can we have it back?" Maybe you think that it has to start sooner or that the other museum has a responsibility?

00:26:06 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, of course. I think that all museums that have objects that do not belong to their own culture have a responsibility. Because it is laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is laid out in ICOM's guidelines which one has to take that into consideration. So, everyone has a responsibility, of course.

Often, I think that the collaborations might start with that... We have chosen not to say, "Give us back the drum." We have chosen to say that we want to start a process, in which we are together, to find a good way and repatriate it. As a first step, we will see. There may come a day when we just say: “No, now we are demanding back the drum.” But at the same time, I think both, we and Meiningen Museen, will get more out of it if we could do it together and find a strategy precisely for that, with knowledge transfer and perhaps further cooperation as well, of course. But I think that is the interest from both museums and shapes it then. I do not have a good answer to when it should end and when it should start, but I think it is really nice to get a

process started in advance, of which we can both get a benefit from. A good process, where both go out as kind of winners.

But of course, sooner or later, you get to the point where you say, "OK, no, now we engage the authorities, and now we are taking back the drum."

00:27:47 SWANTJE OPITZ

Do you consider collaboration with other museums and repatriation specifically as part of decolonization processes?

00:28:05 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

I believe so. I think that those museums that have objects which belong to others need to understand why. It is not just a legal matter where the object belongs. Educating the public is also about gaining an understanding of why it should be returned in order to avoid such things happening in the future. So of course, that is what it is all about, because it is an awareness-raising for us too, when we ask for it back. Just as it is with the kind of conversations we are having now. You always start thinking why do we need it back? Why is it so important to us? You have to deal with all of this. I think that meeting the other, the other museum, the other culture, on equal terms will also mean a lot. It is about, as I said earlier, pride and it is about people feeling that: "Yes, we are actually allowed to manage our own culture. We are seen as worthy representatives of our people." So, I think it does something to you as a people. I think it does. So yes, I think it is part of the decolonization process. Yes, I think it is.

00:29:35 SWANTJE OPITZ

How is colonization or decolonization still part of the work of your museum?

00:29:51 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Well, telling the story from your own perspective is what we want to do. We want to convey Sami culture from the perspective of Sami cultural knowledge; from a Sami perspective. As I said earlier, our story was told by everyone else. What we are is defined by everyone else. They all have the answer to how the Sami history in this area was from their perspective and from an outside perspective. I think it is very important that we are allowed to tell it ourselves. And that is what we strive for all the time. Now we are in the process of making a new basic exhibition that will hopefully last a few years. We are trying to highlight what is important to the Sami, because when you look at a culture from the outside, you do not understand everything that goes on within that culture. So now we try to tell the story based on what we think is important and what we think is right. And I think that is part of a decolonization process.

There is something about that which is difficult. Many of us, even though we are Sami, have been educated in a Western way of thinking. I studied archaeology and took my doctorate at Umeå University, and several of the others have studied at the University in Tromsø or Trondheim and so on. So, we are part of an educational system where we are indoctrinated with

certain ideas and perspectives. Therefore, it is very difficult when you have to sit down and try to peel away all that and get to the core of what is important in Sami life. That, what is important to us is that we ourselves are the ones who have the power to define. What is important in our stories? What is important to talk about? What is it that is important that we ourselves are aware of? For it is about our future generations learning about Sami history in the right way. As recently as 2004, a book was published called “Trøndelags historie”, which actually says that the Sami were immigrants to this area in the fifteenth century. This is not at all consistent with what the archaeological material tells us, or what we have seen through myths and legends as well as archival and archaeological material.

But as long as that is what the Sami youth reads, that is what they learn, and that is what Norwegian society learns, and that in turn creates conflicts, for example racism. We have a large group that claims that the Sami have not existed or that they no longer exist, that we who are Sami today, well, we have just made it all up. They claim we have no evidence in history. I think it is important to show the Sami youth, to show the Sami community that we have a history. We have a long history in this area. So that you get that pride. I think that is an important part and then again to understand some other contexts than you necessarily get when you read books.

00:33:30 SWANTJE OPITZ

Indigenous communities around the world share similar stories of colonization and therefore they also share similar problems, needs, and claims today. However, each story is still unique, so what do you think? What distinguishes repatriation of Sami cultural heritage from cultural heritage from other Indigenous groups? Is there a difference.

00:34:01 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, there probably is. But to say clearly what that is might be something to think about a bit. There is, of course, a difference in some ways. In some areas it is very clear when the colonial powers came. If we look at, for example, the American continent: There you have the history when the Western Europeans came to America, and everything you find that is older than that is by definition Indigenous material, while we have lived side by side. What people do today is to try to use all archaeological material against us in a way, read the history, read the Bible to make it fit their reality. There is a difference, that sometimes we have to work more to prove our existence here over a long period of time. Another difference today is that in Norway – and we just take Norway itself as an example – we are very quick to recognize everyone else's rights in relation to all conventions; ILO and Indigenous conventions and so on. But when it comes to their own Indigenous people, Norway may not be so quick. In the Sami community we have a good well-being. In many ways we live better than many Indigenous peoples, but at the same time it is not like we have the right to our cultural heritage or anything else. And many times, I think that... Well, we saw, for example, how much longer it took to get a legislation that allows us to bring back cultural heritage and such. These are perhaps some small differences. There are probably more that I cannot think of right now.

00:36:35 SWANTJE OPITZ

You already talked a little about the way in which the drum conveys traditional knowledge. I also wonder what you think who should traditional knowledge be available to?

00:36:59 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Traditional knowledge should be available to its own people. We say now that Sami traditional knowledge should only be available to the Sami community and then from there, the Sami community must define what it is they want to tell others. I think that many people would benefit from learning some of the traditional knowledge that we have in our society, but at the same time we know that there are abuses. There are others, for example, who start making Sami handicrafts. So, I think that in the first instance it is for the Sami community. Yet, then I think that we can define what we can share, what we can tell the rest of the world. At the same time, I think that some of this knowledge could help to increase the understanding for the Sami community, but perhaps also increase the understanding of nature and the understanding of the world.

I do not necessarily think that the Western way has always been the best for our earth.

00:38:16 SWANTJE OPITZ

In my work, when discussing decolonization, I often come across the term of responsibility. Where do you see responsibility for your museum in terms of decolonization, identity, and traditional knowledge? You already talked a little bit about it, but can you say it is a responsibility or is it rather a wish?

00:38:45 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

We have a responsibility, yes, absolutely. We have a responsibility to bring back the South Sami cultural heritage. Absolutely. We have a responsibility to communicate the South Sami cultural heritage in the right way: Both within the Sami community, but also outwards to others. We have a responsibility. It is part of our social mission as a museum. It is to contribute to the public debate, to help increase knowledge all around, so that we can contribute to, for example, very large court cases that we have going on judging the right to land, water and the right to reindeer grazing and so on. To show, what it is that we think. It is a responsibility to contribute knowledge to that debate.

00:39:25 SWANTJE OPITZ

What do you think, where lies the responsibility of the nation-state?

00:39:31 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

The nation state has a very great responsibility, and Norway has signed the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples and the ILO Convention and everything else. The Norwegian state has a responsibility to facilitate that we can both safeguard cultural heritage, but also that the Sami people can continue to develop on their own terms. That is what I think. Then we think that the world has a responsibility to ensure that we humans can actually live on equal terms. Many people think that when we say that we want this and that, it is about having special rights. No, but we should have equality. We should have equal rights to develop our cultural heritage in a good way.

00:40:23 SWANTJE OPITZ

Do you think that the nation-state can do more to support for example repatriation processes?

00:40:32 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, absolutely. That can be done. Now it is clear that in many cases the initiative must come from the Sami communities or from Indigenous communities. We have to show and say what it is we want to have returned and why we want to have it returned. But of course, should the state facilitate that and then they have a lot of responsibilities also in other areas.

00:41:03 SWANTJE OPITZ

The Sami have sometimes been described as not European in the sense that they were colonized, and that they were seen as different from the majority. They have been compared to Native Americans. You were already talking about some differences between Native Americans and Sami. However, this plays into perceiving a group of people as "the others." In your opinion, how has the exhibition of Sami drums in museums created an understanding of the Sami as the others?

For example, in Meiningen, where the drum is exhibited as a musical instrument?

00:42:03 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

I do not really know if I understand what you mean.

00:42:07 SWANTJE OPITZ

I was wondering, if there is an exhibition in a museum in Germany and there is a drum; do you think it creates an idea of Sami identity or does it support the idea of the Sami as "the others"?

00:42:37 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, very often in other museums we are presented as a curiosity. When drums were collected, in the 17th/18th century, it was very common to make such curiosity chambers, which the Sami were a part of. It is clear that the drum in Germany is in a completely foreign context. It does

not belong there in any way, neither in Germany as a country nor in a music exhibition like this one. So yes, in a way it is. Of course, as Sami to see a drum in a music exhibition; it is so wrong. We just think: "Here is something that has been very important in history, and then it is presented in that way". Well, yes, it is in a way alienating it and manifesting images of the others. If I go out in Norway today and do not wear anything that shows that I am Sami, many people would not think about the fact that I am Sami. That is how it is, but at the same time we have a cultural difference and a cultural We have probably a cultural origin too, even though I am not a fan of talking about DNA and things like that. We have a history with presumable contacts and, I would almost say, roots that are different from the Norwegian ones as is shown both by research and everything like that as well. In many ways, we sometimes feel a bit foreign in Norwegian society as well. But there are also these curiosity chambers where things are presented completely differently. It becomes very foreign.

00:45:00 SWANTJE OPITZ

So, do you think the idea of "Otherness" has changed today?

00:45:07 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

The idea of?

00:45:11 SWANTJE OPITZ

Otherness. Being "the others".

00:45:18 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, both. There are probably still many times, perhaps subconsciously, that you talk about people in such a way that you alienate yourself from them, that they become the others. We sometimes experience when we both see texts and meet people that we in a way become distanced. But at the same time, it is to be our own culture here and also something we want. We want to get to have our cultural peculiarities. Maybe it is the wrong word, but we have our cultural differences from the others. That we do, but then again, we are back all the time to the same thing: We want to define ourselves. We want to decide what is important to us and what we show both outwardly and inwardly. So, we want to tell our story.

00:46:40 SWANTJE OPITZ

And in what way can a museum depict and shape identity with the help of a drum, for example, or duodji?

00:46:54 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

We can help to provide knowledge about it. We can help to tell the next generation about the history of things. We can do that. We can tell the story in a more correct way. I am not going to say that there is an objective truth, because there is not. But we can at least tell it. It is about showing it so that the Sami youth can recognize themselves when they come and see their history. They should feel that: “Yes, this is what I have heard.” or “This is where I have heard it. This is true.” So, it is also passing on knowledge. It is traditional knowledge, this handicrafts knowledge. We think it is our responsibility to pass it on to the next generation.

And I think that feeling safe and feeling at home in your culture is part of creating pride; being able to come and see that here is a museum that actually shows my culture. There are many museums. We have been to all the Viking exhibitions and all sorts of things like that, yes, but here we have something that shows our culture.

00:48:31 SWANTJE OPITZ

So, I understand how the Sami audience can benefit from access to the drum. How can the German audiences benefit from accessing the drum?

00:48:59 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

I think that if you start to get a better understanding of what it is about, then maybe you get a better understanding of other cultures. I think that maybe instead of seeing the drum in Germany, maybe you can come to Norway and see the drum where it belongs and learn more about Sami culture in general. In Germany, they have a lot because, at the same time as these drums were being collected, stories were written about witchcraft and the Sami, who were in pact with the devil and knew both this and that. Well, come to us, and you will hear the other story about how this was a helper through life. Since that is what it is all about; to salvage yourself. It is about having a support in life, to find out how to deal with things.

00:49:56 SWANTJE OPITZ

The different names “Freavnantjahke gievrieh” and “Meininger Zaubertrommel” connect the drum to different places and create an idea of belonging. When I heard “Meininger Zaubertrommel”, I associated it with, for example, German witchcraft processes. What is your perspective on ownership in relation to the drum?

00:50:29 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

What it should be called? It should be called Freavnantjahke gievrieh.

00:50:33 SWANTJE OPITZ

Can a person or institution own the drum? Is ownership the correct expression of it?

00:50:46 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

No, it is not that. We manage it. That is what we want. We want to manage it so that we can provide knowledge about it and then we can pass the knowledge on to the next generation.

Again, we are back to defining our own history and giving it other names is a way of destroying and making it invisible. By calling it Meininger Zaubertrommel you make the origin where it comes from invisible. Absolutely, I think that is very important, and I also think with terms like drum, gievrieh, rune drum, magic drum and all that is also a way of alienating oneself from them and making the Sami background invisible.

So no, Meininger Museen cannot own Freavnantjahke gievrieh. Saemien Sijte does not own the drum either, but we can manage it as part of a South Sami community.

00:51:54 SWANTJE OPITZ

I had a question about whether an object or duodji can belong to more than one person, but we just talked about the fact that one cannot own a drum. Can one say that the drum now has a German part?

00:52:17 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

A German part? Yes, it has a part of history in Germany. It does. Plus, I think that is something we convey, that story, how it was taken, how it ended up in Germany, why it is in Germany and of course also, a little bit, well, how they misunderstood the drums and exhibited it among other musical instruments. It is a bit of a funny story, is it not? But yes, that is what it is. They get a lot of stories; an object has many stories.

When it comes to owning objects, of course you can own a knife or a gukse, things like that, but the knowledge about it is a collective knowledge. These objects are part of the collective knowledge of Sami history. So, in many ways it is the community that owns the drum rather than a person. For, even though there may be descendants of the drum, back in history when it was used, it was passed down from generation to generation, from person to person. Then there were people with the trait and knowledge who could use them. But today, I think that it is a collective. It is the South Sami community that owns the objects when we manage them.

00:53:50 SWANTJE OPITZ

What is the plan for the drum at your museum? What do you hope what happens next?

00:54:03 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

I hope we can get started on having a meeting with the Meininger Museen, where we can discuss a repatriation process. I hope they are willing to carry out a repatriation process, and then we can discuss how we can best make it happen. Symbolically, in 2023, it will be 300 years since the drum was taken from Sápmi. It was taken by Thomas von Westen in 1723 and sent down to Denmark. So, it would be really nice if it could come back then. It is the plan that it will be

included in our imparting of Sami history and Sami culture. The plan is for it to be included in our permanent exhibition. We have room for that.

00:54:56 SWANTJE OPITZ

Yes, I saw that now you have a very, very large building, no?

00:55:01 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Well, very, very large it is not, but we have room for the drum. We already have stands set for it. It just has to come in.

00:55:17 SWANTJE OPITZ

Is there anything we have not discussed, but that should be mentioned.

00:55:24 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

No, I do not know. I kind of feel like I am talking about everything. I have actually been busy in other thoughts. Maybe there are things I will come up with later that I should have said. However, I can send an email in that case.

00:55:39 SWANTJE OPITZ

Yes, I hope that it is alright if I contact you again, if I have a question while I read through the transcript and do not understand something.

00:55:53 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, just do that, absolutely.

00:55:56 SWANTJE OPITZ

These were all the questions I had. I am excited that I have learned so much. Thank you. I hope that the repatriation process will start.

00:56:15 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, so do I.

00:56:19 SWANTJE OPITZ

Thank you so much for your time. It took now about an hour. I hope that was alright. Have a nice Tuesday.

00:56:31 DR. BIRGITTA FOSSUM

Yes, the same.

12:56:32 SWANTJE OPITZ

Thank you.

00:56:34 Birgitta

Goodbye.

00:56:37 SWANTJE OPITZ

Goodbye.

Appendix 4 – Interview with Museum Director Philipp Adlung (17.03.2022)

00:00:01 SWANTJE OPITZ

As mentioned in our preliminary talk, we are talking about the Sami Freavnantjahke Gievrieh, as the drum is called in South Sami. In German it is known as Meininger Zaubertrommel. In this context, we talk about concepts such as ownership, identity, traditional knowledge and decolonization, or colonization.

I am specifically interested in understanding Meiningen's perspective on the drum and what the drum means to your institution.

My first question is: Is there a difference between the drum and other objects in the museum?

00:00:45 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Yes, we are a residential museum. In Thuringia, the culture is largely determined by the residential culture. There have been many small principalities over centuries, which always had the claim of their own states. That is why they have collected accordingly. These are the things that we know from cabinets of curiosities. But above all, of course, they are art collections. Fine arts, applied arts, music and theater also played a role for many, more or less. These are the things that have been shaping and characterizing Central German and Central European culture for centuries, even until today.

Of course, the areas of foreign cultures also played a certain role, but a subordinate role one must say. That is something to consider and certainly it is also connected to the fact that the small states saw themselves as the hub of the world - I say that somewhat ironically. There were complete states with the whole infrastructure from schools and education to culture, theater and orchestra. Foreign cultures, though, were not necessarily particularly relevant there, and for this reason they do not really play a major role. In Meiningen, in particular, there is a second part of the collection in addition to the ducal collection that we have, namely from the Hennebergischer Altertumsverein [Hennebergian association for the study of antiquity, HaV]. This is basically an association founded by the poet Bechstein, which deals with regional history and has also collected accordingly. It also deals with folklore from the region, but of course, this does not explain why we now have a Sami drum. This is a complex story. In the end, it was a gift from the Danish royal house to the princes here in Saxony-Hildburghausen. Then, through many dynastic developments that happened here, many mergers of small duchies, these things have come into the property of this aforementioned Antiquities Association. This, in turn, is the most important part of our collection. Thus, a complex collection history, which can be reconstructed nevertheless to a large extent. It was a gift from the Danish king to a Thuringian princely house and because of that it came much later to our collection in Meiningen. The piece is part of our permanent exhibition. We have been a public museum for 75 years – before that, the ducal family was housed here in our castle, they lived here – since then, the object has also been exhibited.

00:03:48 SWANTJE OPITZ

At the moment there are various discussions about which terms to use for certain Indigenous cultural objects. I would be interested to know which terms you associate with the drum. Is it an object, is it a museum object, or how do you think about the drum?

00:04:16 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Yes, of course, it is a museum object that gives us information about a culture that is far away from us, but also maybe not so far away in big Europe today. A drum about which we know a lot, but which of course has not been researched to the last detail. It is an important anchor for us to learn about Sami culture and traditions in Central Germany. I believe that it is also the aim of ethnological collections in general, to make it clear that we are not alone in the world, but we are part of a larger whole. Therefore, it is very important to learn something about foreign cultures. For us, this is also an object about which and through which we can tell a lot, about things that otherwise do not affect us so directly here.

00:05:05 SWANTJE OPITZ

At the moment there are many discussions in research about calling it Duodji, meaning Sami craftsmanship. It is interesting that you and Birgitta Fossum say that it is a museum object. In 2017, Saemien Sijte asked to receive the drum on loan for the exhibition "Hvem eier historien?", in English "Who owns history?" in Trondheim. Meiningen was hesitant at first and refused. I would be interested to know how this process unfolded. When did this process begin for your museum and how did it work out for you?

00:06:03 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

I was not on board then at the museum at that time, but I have done my research. This big context of "colonially displaced cultural assets", which we will talk about in a moment, was not actually up for discussion for a variety of reasons. It is simply the general obligation of all collections, public collections, here in Germany and elsewhere, that we must of course preserve our collections. That is a cornerstone of museum work. We are not junk dealers, nor are we traders, but it is a matter of preserving the collections as they are and, of course, also making them available for science and for exhibition projects of other institutions. However, it must remain justifiable. It is a very complex and special object with a very high ideal value, probably also a material value, but an ideal value. It is simply a question of conservation that every museum person has to ask themselves: Can I justify packing up such an object, taking it out of the safe climate control, with all the stress of a box, of packaging, of climate changes, of movements? There is no transport that does not mean stress for an object. You must weigh that up. At that time, the initial consideration was that it was too risky, that damage could perhaps be expected. In that case you have to consider that maybe it is not a good idea. In the end, we were able to convince the restorers to do it, but it is a balancing act.

00:07:49 SWANTJE OPITZ

Were the reasons to lend the drum to Norway in the end, that you could say, you can support, that maybe certain risks come along with the transport and with a possible wrong storage?

00:08:07 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Generally, it applies to all objects that if you take down an object from where it is or take it out of the display case, it will never come back in exactly the same good condition. No matter what measures you take. It is a question of whether the changes and the risks are so small that you do it. It is, however, always best for any museum object not to be moved at all. That is why you exhibit them in showcases and try to do as little as possible with them. In this respect, it was a consideration that it is very important for Norway and that we also absolutely want to accommodate our friends in Norway. That was not up for debate at all. Without a question. We also experience that in other areas every day. That is simply ethos, that you help each other with important things and that was a very important exhibition project.

00:09:02 SWANTJE OPITZ

What is your perspective on how the drum is currently exhibited and stored in Meiningen?

00:09:10 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Well, it is somewhat unique for us. We do not really have any other significant objects from the ethnological field that would be comparable in any way, not from other cultural areas. In this respect, it has always been a problem: Where do I exhibit it? Clearly it has to be shown because it is an outstanding object. You know that other museums may see that differently. They prefer to put objects that are foreign⁴⁶² to their collection in offices and say: That [object] is a break for us. We also have a very nice musical instrument department here, because Meiningen is traditionally a city of music and theater. I think that it was the best way to add it to the collection of musical instruments, because it is also, at least marginally, a ritual instrument, somehow. It produces sounds, acoustic phenomena. Whether one considers them primarily as music or less so is the second question. That was the right place, where it is presented now very beautifully and safely in an air-conditioned showcase with all the explanations. I do not think you can present an object any more beautifully than we do. But right next to it, of course, we have our cornett, our crumhorn and our historical clarinets, which are also very well-known and everyone has to decide for themselves how to explain this combination. We try to explain it, but it is not easy.

00:10:43 SWANTJE OPITZ

⁴⁶² The German word used was „sammlungsfern“. The suffix -fern expresses a distant connection or alien relationship to the noun. In this case, it refers to a distance between the object and the context of the collection.

That is, the decision to exhibit it as part of the musical instrument collection is because you are trying not to create too big a break?

00:10:58 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

With us, the alternative would have been to put it with the theater studies area. There is no relationship at all, I would argue. We also have a collection of instruments of torture. That is nowadays a part of Dark Ages exhibitions. Maybe in the broadest sense, one could have thought about that, but it is certainly not very good. There is no connection at all with our courtly household with rococo furniture and a collection of paintings – Dutch, Italian, 18th century. Therefore, it was rather a matter of finding where there is the closest connection, but we are not trying in the musical instrument department – I just want to say this – to create a relationship by force. We simply have to respect the fact that it does not actually exist.

00:11:51 SWANTJE OPITZ

The Sami artist Iver Jåks once mentioned that after his death his art should return to nature. That is an example of how there are very different approaches to how cultural heritage should be handled. How important are objects for institutions like museums?

00:12:25 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Museums are not only educational institutions, but also institutions that count on objects. They do not try to explain things with theoretical knowledge or texts, but they use objects to explain world history, world cultures, and basically our own existence. For humans differ from animals in that they can be creative, that they find forms of expression in literature, in speaking, writing and cultural techniques. Therefore, museums are naturally also preservers of the idea of humanity. Objects are at the center. That I believe, especially in our times, in which we not only experience many catastrophes every two years, now with Covid-19 or the war in the Ukraine and these upheavals, which all perhaps still lie ahead of us. Also, because of the great digitalization situation, which seems to change everything, I have the impression that these objects and therefore the ur-analog become more and more important. It is becoming more and more important that we emphasize that these objects are the most important and the backbone for museum work and thus also for people who ask themselves: Where do I come from, where am I going? That is why objects are outstanding and crucial. That is our approach, also for our museum work, whereby imparting must of course include all forms, but the object is at the center.

00:14:00 SWANTJE OPITZ

What do you think are the possibilities within the institution of a museum, when exhibiting objects like for example the drum? What arguments are there for keeping the drum in a museum in particular?

00:14:20 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

We humans are simply particularly emotional beings. For us, a replica or a scan of an object is ultimately not comparable with an original. Especially, when it is not just about the enjoyment of art, as is usually the case with museums, of course – that is, an aesthetic, musical or artistic enjoyment – but simply when it is about a big question: Where do I really come from? Where do my people come from? What are their origins, how did they show themselves? Especially, when it comes to peoples who are not located in Central Europe and mastered many cultural techniques very early on, but rather less so. Then this emotional dimension takes on a completely different meaning beyond what also constitutes a museum. That explains a lot to people and in this respect, I am also of the opinion that the original is particularly unique. Especially since replicas, which can be made today in a great way with 3-D scanners – which is on a level that one is just thrilled about – often cannot compensate for that.

00:15:39 SWANTJE OPITZ

There are only a few drums from the time before the Christianization of the Sami and of course many of them are not as well documented as the drum we are talking about. This also of course makes the "Meininger Zaubertrommel" a very special object for the Sami culture and you have already mentioned a bit what makes the drum so special for Meiningen and for your museum. Perhaps you can say a little more about this and perhaps also what connections you see between the past and the present through the drum.

00:16:23 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Well, as I said, the drum is somewhat foreign to our collections. However, that does not change the fact that it is fascinating and shows us a part that, otherwise, we do not associate with our cultural roots. Therefore, it is very important. Also, you have to keep in mind that in the history of collections sometimes a single object was the beginning of a development. So, of course, it is always easy to say: That does not fit in with us at all. On the other hand, it can also be the starting point for a new focus of the collection.

I must say that we have made great efforts, especially my colleagues in the past, to research this object in detail. Others did not do it, they put objects in the depot and now we have a somewhat bizarre situation that we find great interest from many sides and the others who have hidden objects, they continue to hide somehow. That is not a good situation either, and it is a development that could be a bit absurd, perhaps. Therefore, I think you have to look at it in totality.

00:17:56 SWANTJE OPITZ

Birgitta Fossum told me that an inquiry about a possible repatriation of the drum went to you on the part of Saemien Sijte. You explained to me already in our preliminary conversation that such processes have to go through certain instances and have to be discussed there. It is a time-

consuming process that has to face many questions. I am interested in what the absence of the drum would mean for your location, for your museum and, so to speak, the German audience?

00:18:32 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

The object is very important for us. It is on almost all the museum flyers. Even our big banner outside the castle has the Sami drum on it. It is a well-known and popular object and, in this respect, it is an object that we would miss, because it was simply associated with our collection, also through research, scientific contributions and many debates which were held.

I still think that – I do not want to anticipate a later question – for us, this whole issue was and still is not primarily considered under the aspect that injustice or such happened 300 years ago. I think this is a difficult debate. Is it okay if I bring that up now?

00:19:30 SWANTJE OPITZ

Yes, of course.

00:19:35 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Well, I think since people have been collecting somehow, there have always been shifts, shifts of cultures and they certainly often went hand in hand with violence. There is no question about that. However, it is just research and education interest of course, which is behind that. There is of course as well the situation that the peoples themselves were not particularly interested in their own things at all. We know examples from Egypt and so on, where it can be argued excellently whether they were not quite happy that certain things were no longer there. At that time. Today everything is different. Yes, it is a highly complex story. I also believe that a debate about legally evaluating all the processes that have taken place in the last 300 / 400 years will lead nowhere. I think this here is really a completely different discussion than the one about colonial art and, of course, the Nazi-topic. That is why it is still not the primary aspect for us to talk about whether injustice happened 300 years ago. Particularly since we are only now the third instance, which came into possession later via donation, legal donation, and therefore we do not actually see a legal or a moral basis for the return now. But the question remains whether an object in a very opulent and rich collection, which we do have here in Meiningen, is properly housed in the long term or if it could have a completely different value somewhere else. That is the debate, which is a different one, but which I consider to be quite important, generally in today's times.

00:21:18 SWANTJE OPITZ

I understand that the drum has a symbolic value for your museum as well. How would you describe it? What is the drum a symbol of, from Meiningen's perspective?

00:21:40 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

It is simply a symbol that there is interest in foreign cultures after all. As I explained to you, the history that we have in Thuringia – with the many small states that considered themselves absolutely on a par with Prussia or Habsburg, which is quite droll – led to a certain isolation. That is why the Sami drum was given here as a curiosity. It was not given so that the princely house in Hildburghausen or Meiningen would later make a collection of it, but it was basically always seen as a curious story.

In the meantime, however, one can say that ethnological themes and world cultures do play a role. That is quite important, because here in Thuringia these buzzwords of provincialism still come up quickly. This is a sign to say: Foreign cultures do play a role here in Meiningen. But whether a truly outstanding object makes sense from a collection point of view or helps with this important cause, which does exist, is a completely different question.

00:22:57 SWANTJE OPITZ

Often researchers such as Ernst Manker, who has done a lot of research on Sami drums, are more interested in the symbols related to the religious aspect of these objects. They want to find out, or wanted to find out, how the Sami belief system works. The drum as a central object of research in confiscation processes, etc., has not been discussed as much. However, we see the development that it is getting interesting now. What do you think? Why are aspects like provenance and repatriation, restitution so prominent right now?

00:23:49 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

First of all, I would like to say once again that for me this question of shamanism in Northern Europe is connected with the topic of Christianization. I say this because we here in Central Germany are of course the heart of the Reformation movement. That is the topic that strikes everywhere with Luther of course primarily, but certainly also the other reformers in Europe. These are things that have taken turns. Christianization on the one hand, that took over from paganism. Those are things I would like to see us explore in much more depth, because that is highly exciting. I mean to imagine that Christianity apparently only became established among the Sami at a time when Johann Sebastian Bach started his final career as music director in Leipzig. That was when Protestant music had long since reached its highest flowering and Luther was also already 200 years past. These are precisely the questions that are much more exciting than always asking: Where is the object now? That is important because of identity. I said earlier that this is absolutely important. It is about emotionality and that is not to be underestimated either. However, this transition from paganism to Christianization, which took centuries and was not at all easy, whether it worked or not. It was a long process. There were probably also transitional phases of many decades, if not centuries, in which shamanism and Christian faith existed side by side. These are the topics that are really great. Then perhaps one can imagine that objects like this drum can be brought together with early ritual objects from the Reformation movement. These are much more exciting things, where one would suddenly say that this almost connects us with each other. We look at this topic from one angle and you look at it from the other.

00:25:56 SWANTJE OPITZ

Yes, that is indeed very interesting. Then why do you think there is so much fixation right now on clarifying provenances and making repatriations possible? Of course, I am living in a research vacuum because I am dealing with this and I see and read about it a lot, but I have the feeling that repatriations and provenance are getting bigger and bigger.

00:26:37 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Well, it is clear that collections, whether public or private, always have to be on a clean, moral and legal basis. To show art that is beautiful but that has been looted are things that are mutually exclusive. Art and culture are always something peaceful. Per se. We Germans have the situation that in the 20th century we were at the forefront of pretty much all elementary crimes of mankind, to put it sarcastically. Of course, we are also particularly committed to this issue. More than other nations here in Central Europe, I would say, which is righteous. Those, who have committed as many crimes as we have, must think about it first. That is why a great deal has been said about this debate on the cultural assets lost during the Nazi era, especially those of our Jewish fellow citizens. We had the topic with the SBZ, Soviet occupation zone, in the 1940s. Then, of course, the expropriation of the GDR afterwards. So, I think it is appropriate that we are very concerned with this and that other countries are looking out if there are things in German collections that are actually theirs because these objects did not come legally. That is right and good. As I said, I do not see any direct comparability in this specific case, but I always think it is good if we do not somehow resolve such debates in a legal, hair-splitting way, but rather ask ourselves these other questions that I mentioned: What is the history of collections? What do collections mean to us? What do they mean to others? Where are the original objects ideal?

00:28:19 SWANTJE OPITZ

I find that incredibly interesting that you say that one should not look at it legally and that one has to try to find other ways to judge where an object is in good hands. I would be interested in your personal perspective on the concept of repatriation. When would you say that a repatriation was successful?

00:28:44 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

I will put it this way, this term repatriation is too close to the debate about colonial art for me, so I just would not use it at all here. I am personally of the opinion that the object is better off in Norway than with us. Even if that would be very, very difficult for us, because it is simply a great object, a very special one. As I said, culture today is culture of humankind and it does not end at national borders and cultures. But if this really comes up for debate, we have to talk about how we can enhance our collection in other parts, because it is not possible to simply hand over a collection object without any moral or legal claims. That would go against the principle of collection preservation that I mentioned at the beginning. But as I said, there have

to be discussions and I also think that this can absolutely work. However, you said it: We are not the owner of the object ourselves. This is a debate that goes beyond the debates at the moment, because it is, I think, not primarily located in this colonial art debate, but simply concerns collection, methodology and collection perspectives as a whole. Then, of course, there could be very, very different cases, much more prominent ones, that you could talk about just as well. There are museums in Dortmund, for example, where they have a Monet, but not a single other Impressionist. They are proud of it because it is a great water lily painting, but everyone knows that it is there by sheer happenstance. Nevertheless, if you were to debate whether it might not be better off in another Impressionism collection, if you could get something else that fits the collections better, that is a very hot debate. You have to know that if you start without moral and legal claims, it could also draw new circles. Not everyone will be just thrilled about it.

00:30:55 SWANTJE OPITZ

What do you think in general, not only in relation to the drum, what other forms of cooperation between museums are imaginable besides or in addition to repatriation? When it comes to contexts like that.

00:31:19 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

I am always in favor of joint exhibition projects with two sites. I also think that even such a topic as the Sami culture and its diversity could suit us wonderfully. So that perhaps – before we always discuss all or nothing or that an object has to go there or there – let's make an exhibition here about this culture, for which we have an argument because of the object, but about which just too little is known.

These are things that I think are incredibly attractive, and I have noticed in the whole debate that you get a lot of feedback, that many people are very interested. So, I think exhibition projects are very good, research projects, but, as I said, the object is simply very fragile in terms of its nature. One cannot do some kind of object tourism. At some point it has to have its peace and quiet, because it simply cannot take it very well.

00:32:24 SWANTJE OPITZ.

Would you say that repatriations, restitutions are part of decolonization processes which are very present and very prominent right now?

00:32:38 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Yes, of course. That is part of the process of coming to terms with history: Injustice that is to be redressed as best as possible. But it must also be said quite clearly that past crimes can never be undone. The fact remains that things happened. I am only talking about the subject of colonial art in Africa in particular. I think we Germans must make this clear to ourselves. Because of the situation of our history in the 20th century, we tend to have a somewhat naïve

idea: If we do a lot now and are at the forefront of restitution and reparations... We know the things which were tried financially. You can never undo that. The stain on history simply remains. That is why it will always be about things that soften the blow a bit today, that show goodwill. But it remains that it is part of the inglorious history of us. The plundering of the collections, what the French did in Egypt, and the English too. The British Museum would not exist anymore if they thought and acted the way we are doing right now. But as I said, there is a reason for us to be at the forefront.

00:33:55 SWANTJE OPITZ

There is an atmosphere, at least that is often how I have perceived it: If we give everything back, then all injustice is undone and then this process stops. There may be other approaches and other ways to deal with these questions of guilt and responsibility. What role would you say decolonization or colonization plays in your everyday work in your museum?

00:34:34 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Actually a rather little part because Meiningen has been such a closed unit, to which objects with such a provenance have come rather by chance. In fact, the things collected here were those that were common in the art trade, those that were fashionable. The Dutch were also collected, later more Italians. These were things that other princely houses did in the same way. They were fashions, and you cannot say now that this is what particularly distinguishes our Princely House. It was not much different in Gotha. There are preferences, and of course they change quickly. Basically, I would not set too much of a profile here. However, I would like to add to the aspect you mentioned earlier: I believe that this undoing is another aspect that we must think about more globally. We cannot say that we are now, through the media, a global community that is heading towards a common destiny, but then suddenly look at nation-states or collection units when it comes to things like this, that is a contradiction. One must also understand that culture is sometimes world art, too, and for all people. It does not matter whether they belong to this nation or not. We would never think of limiting the music of Beethoven or Bach to us. These are world cultural goods that belong to everyone. They belong to absolutely everyone, and that is why some debates go a bit in the wrong direction. But again, the Sami drum is something completely different, because a people who have little evidence of their own history have a completely different situation. It is not about a cultural aspect, but about questions of identity. So, please do not understand it in the same way.

00:36:30 SWANTJE OPITZ

That would lead me directly to the question: Do you see a difference between Sami cultural heritage and that of other Indigenous groups? Is it that there is little Sami cultural heritage?

00:36:49 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

That is a general phenomenon with Indigenous cultures, because they simply – I will put it this way – largely stayed in living situations that were different from what we have here in Central Europe. Here with our princely houses and also a certain rapid political security, for better or for worse, there were of course people who could build collections, who could raise an interest in art. This is totally unthinkable. The Indigenous peoples had to deal day after day, above all, with surviving at all. In such a situation, I do not start to somehow form this cultural interest. I mean, cave paintings hardly had any cultural purposes, but they were basically signs that are of course seen in this context today. That is the difficulty, that these peoples have so few testimonies, beyond the culture of use, beyond objects of use, that have survived. Even the drums are not basically a cultural asset. It is a document of faith and of life. That is, I think, the situation.

00:38:00 SWANTJE OPITZ.

Incredibly interesting that you say that there are so few testimonies that today's generations of Indigenous peoples can fall back on.

Often through the fact that we do not have Indigenous peoples in Germany, perhaps certain perspectives or certain concepts that are commonplace in their Indigenous contexts are rather unfamiliar to us. What do you associate with the term "traditional knowledge"?

00:38:39 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

First of all, I do not associate anything with it at all, because I am not familiar with the term. I ask for understanding. I am not an ethnologist and I have also come to the object...

00:38:46 SWANTJE OPITZ

No problem.

00:38:46 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

But if you could maybe explain again, what you mean by that.

00:38:51 SWANTJE OPITZ

Yes, no problem. For me as a German, that was also a concept that I have not come across before. For example, in case of the Sami, the drum can reflect a lot of traditional knowledge and that traditional knowledge is crucial for the identity formation of today's generations. So that this object is not only a testimony of former conditions, but is used as a way to revive this knowledge and to use it today. Possibly, for example, through such a drum, to understand: How was our faith then? How is our faith today? How do we create or shape our identity through this object?

00:39:52 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

If you transfer that to Central European cultural history, you are probably going to talk about iconography. That is, to understand what is between the form of expression concretely in terms of signs, symbols and history. This is actually not only a phenomenon of Indigenous peoples, but of us today in general. We no longer automatically associate things with certain figures, even in medieval, sacred art, because the belief is no longer known. The stories are no longer known. The formula of the cross is no longer associated with anything, certain chorale melodies are no longer known. In all forms of expression, it is like that. When a certain melody, which is actually a passion song, for example, is used with another text, it basically achieves an ambiguity. That is what Bach did with the "O Head Full of Blood and Wounds" melody. That is a beautiful melody for us, but through it, at the same time, it is said that the baby Jesus who is born is going to die. That is iconography in music as an example, but it is the same in art. There this knowledge is crucial for me to understand the dimensions. I would not go so far that for us [Germans] the origins are explained through this, but it says quite a lot about the people. With the Indigenous peoples, who perhaps have not experienced this cultural development, for the known reasons, we get very quickly to the origins through this knowledge, which they have. Ultimately, yes, one can only say that it is very important, crucial even, and also nothing unknown for us here.

00:41:44 SWANTJE OPITZ

You already talked a bit about how people in Germany are very quick to say that we have to give everything back. In my work, when I talk about decolonization, I often stumble over the term responsibility. Would you say that responsibility is something that actually goes along with that, and if so, where does responsibility lie at your museum in terms of decolonization? You already said that in and of itself you just have a few objects that are foreign, but would you say that responsibility is a concept that plays a role?

00:42:29 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Yes, of course. As I said, the moral dimension is important in what you are exhibiting and what has wrongfully ended up in a museum. When the museum has also been actively involved in some way that it got into the collection, you must show that. You have to talk about restitution or at least other solutions. You can perhaps talk about permanent loans or such, when the object is important. All this is possible.

But I also have to straighten out again, you said "that the Germans are always quick to join in repatriation". I would differentiate between museums and politics. Of course, politics is always inclined to want to set positive signals and is sometimes very quick to do so. However, there is also the museum perspective, which says exactly what I said: Culture is more than simply culture where it is shown just now. It is a world task. Showing world cultures everywhere and making them accessible to people, including young people. You have to consider that if there are no longer ethnological testimonies here, then it cannot be shown to young people here that there is something besides Germany. A debate one has to consider in a difficult political situation, especially with the extreme fringes. If I give back things that are more than European

culture, then I also deprive myself of the opportunity to show that other peoples have achieved great things. That is why the museum people are somewhat divided and also reserved, and you have to take that very, very seriously, this restraint. It is not about relativizing the problems of this collection, but there is also a teaching assignment, and it does not just concern European cultures, but world culture.

00:44:22 SWANTJE OPITZ.

Would you say that this different view at repatriation by the museum world and by politics comes with the fact that the state has a different responsibility towards decolonization?

00:44:44 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Yes, of course. It is surely difficult, generally as a government today, to take responsibility for events that took place over a hundred years ago and in monarchies or in totalitarian regimes. Legally they are the successor and therefore also take on responsibility. However, I think it is simply based on the political processes. If you have democratic elections every four years, the tendency is naturally high not to cause any major problems. Then people like to demand quick decisions. These are simply the processes in our political system, but I think we have a good system between politics and the creative artists. This balances out quite well. So, these issues are well assessed, and the solution cannot always be repatriation. Yet, it is argued that objects should be able to remain here in order to show things. Fortunately, this is not our issue in Meiningen at all. We have a special case. However, there are really great ethnological museums. I have to imagine that if I had not had large collections when I was young, especially in Hamburg in the Völkerkunde Museum [Ethnological Museum], I would miss a lot. For not all people today can travel all over the world to experience or to look at things at that young age. That is naive. I am sticking with it. It must be possible to experience outstanding non-European cultural assets. Anyone who disdains that opportunity has very few other problems, I think.

00:46:20 SWANTJE OPITZ

The Sami were often perceived as non-European precisely because they were colonized, because they were different from the majority society. They were also often compared to Native Americans, which plays a role in the creation of an understanding of "us and them," an understanding of a culture as "the others." How do you think the representation of Sami culture or Sami cultural assets in museums has contributed to this understanding of Sami otherness?

00:47:03 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

I have to admit, I cannot say how far the presentation and collection history in Germany or Central Europe played a role. I rather have the impression that many things were not shown. Especially that culture did not really play the role that it should. For, there is a certain tendency in our, I would say, highly cultivated, civilized Europe, to quickly speak of barbarian peoples

who, for certain reasons, were only Christianized at a very late stage. These are topics that do not play such a role, or if they do, they are summarized. So, one generally summarizes Indigenous peoples and there are also commonalities that one cannot deny between Indigenous peoples that lie in this subject matter. So, I think there is still a lot to be done. However, I also cannot assess whether the culture now stands out decisively from others. I think that the topic of "Indigenous peoples" is generally under-represented and has to be shown more in the collections. Though, as you see when you exhibit these objects, then you have other problems suddenly. Then the questions come up right away: How did objects get there?

00:48:30 SWANTJE OPITZ

In what way can a German museum represent and form identity by exhibiting objects of Sami origin? You already said that a lot of things remain under-represented. Yet, what possibilities are there?

00:48:50 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Communication through exhibitions of course. That is what it comes down to. We have to emphasize the importance of these cultures and peoples for us today. We are in a comfortable situation with a quite unique high culture worldwide. If you consider that Germany has as many opera houses as the rest of the world put together, it shows. Therefore, we are very spoiled and extremely developed. This is great, but it also blinds us to the things that perhaps do not meet these aesthetic standards. These things, that, at second glance, are very, very fascinating because they show completely foreign cultures. Exhibitions are important. However, I can imagine that one could perhaps find much better starting points in other areas such as socio-culture, instead of trying to do more in ethnological museums. That is important. Anyway, I believe that the forms of expression that we have today, which are subliminal, sometimes have fascinating similarities with what Indigenous peoples have already shown. I think that they are much more exciting than trying to make Indigenous forms of expression a part of high culture in Europe. That is something to think about.

00:50:23 SWANTJE OPITZ.

You already said that it is great for a German audience to see in a museum that there are other cultures. What would you say: In what way does a German audience benefit from having access to the drum? When thinking about identity building, what can it entail for me as a German person to see this drum despite the understanding of "there is more out there"?

00:50:58 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

It is a way of thinking which is somewhat foreign to us at first. One is quickly inclined to see everything that was before Christianization as quite primitive and inferior. However, there were ways of thinking and mechanisms behind it, which can teach us, perhaps, a lot. Especially, to manage situations that are different. Maybe one can consider that today's situation of

Christianity is not an easy one. Profanation has progressed very strongly, and we do not know where it will lead. That means that such starting points might as well be welcomed by many people, who might even make up the majority. It is another way of thinking. These people, too, dealt with the basics of being human and why should one not be able to find ways in this for today's life?

00:52:00 SWANTJE OPITZ

Would you say that the understanding of otherness, "we and the others", is different today? That the approach to cultures is different? In the past, one often spoke of exotic cultures.

00:52:20 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Yes, exotic or barbaric and alike. That was, however, also not always meant pejoratively. We know that particularly in the 20th century art was looking for impulses. Art and music were kind of reaching the end of the line. Everyone was of the opinion that they were at the end of a development or needed new impulses. African culture played a huge role: primitive art, not as inferior, but as simplistic, great simplicity, instead of the most complex structures. These were very big impulses. That is why Benin bronzes are so incredibly popular and fascinating with us. That is why it is such a difficult topic to say, we will just do without them. After all, this is world culture.

I still believe that world cultures are the answer to narrow-mindedness and also to certain national developments that unfortunately more and more spread. We have to make it more and more clear that this world community is multifaceted.

00:53:34 SWANTJE OPITZ

Since you said that certain objects belong to the world community, I would like to come to the point of talking about ownership of objects, property and about the different names that the drum has. Freavnantjahke Gievrieh in South Sami, Meininger Zaubertrommel in German, and then there are various Norwegian names for the drum. They make a connection between the drum and certain places and thus create an understanding of belonging.

How do you understand ownership in relation to museum objects in general, but then also specifically in relation to the drum?

00:54:18 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

I think cultural asset in general is, if it has outstanding meaning, always property of mankind. That does not change the fact that you have to clarify responsibilities, though. It is a matter of researching the objects, preserving them, taking care of them in terms of restoration. That is a very big issue. Someone simply has to be made responsible for preserving the objects. You cannot just leave it to the UN or UNESCO. That will not work.

In this respect, ownership is an important thing, also as it defines responsibilities. However, the fact remains that culture always belongs to humanity and what we have here in Meiningen is

ultimately an expression of human culture. Whether one is interested in it or not. In this respect, for me there is a certain relativization of property. It is also relative because it is never about selling things or using them as collateral. So, it is always just an assignment of responsibility.

00:55:29 SWANTJE OPITZ

If we speak not necessarily of ownership as such, but of a certain belonging, a certain responsibility, would you say that the drum in its current state has a German part, a German belonging?

00:55:52 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

No matter where the drum will be one day, to the collection history will always belong that it was here for a long time and that it was cherished, cared for, loved and that it is in great condition, researched like no other. That will always belong to it. The fact that it may now, according to the wishes of the friends in Norway, lead to us no longer having it, is actually a scurrility. It has something absurd about it. However, we do not have to comment on that any further. That is the way it is. I think that is a nice example also in relation to the property issue. Everything with the drum has been done as one would wish for museum objects in general. It is in quite a great condition. Everybody thinks it is wonderful and it is so sought-after here.

00:56:45 SWANTJE OPITZ

Looking to the future: I read - since we are talking about how the drum was kept and cherished in Meiningen - in an article by MDR⁴⁶³ on your inauguration as director of the Meininger Museen that you want to dust off the collections. What is the current plan, quite apart from what Saemien Sijte wishes for? What is the current plan for the drum in your museum?

00:57:27 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Honestly, that is quite a difficult issue. I think I have to add "dusting off" does not mean redoing everything. There are always areas in exhibitions that do not need to be changed because they are great, and I really have to say that about the musical instrument department. That is one of the nicest areas we have. Everyone thinks it is wonderful. It is a nice story with musical instruments, which are usually rather passive when they are not played. There is just the trick that when you approach the instrument, it starts to play. That means actually the played, historical instrument. These are just small things, but they leave a big impression on everyone, young and old. Among them is the drum, the Sami drum, but that does not change the fact: It remains a bit forced. It is really difficult and that is also the whole reason why the debate is taken absolutely seriously and taken up by us. Everyone somehow feels that this is not ideal. It is just difficult.

⁴⁶³ Public Broadcasting Chanel in Germany.

So, in other words, with such a “dusting off”, nothing would change for the drum now, because this space would not be touched anyway. However, that is a little bit due to the situation. That is what I explained to you: it just fits worse somewhere else.

00:59:07 SWANTJE OPITZ

We are at about an hour now. Is there anything that we have not discussed but that you think should be addressed?

00:59:23 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Overall, I would like us to relate the debate to the issue of collections generally, regardless of questions of guilt or crimes of the past. That, too, is a debate that I take seriously because injustice has happened, but we cannot always only deal with the past and what happened at some point and what may or may not have been okay. Instead, we have to think absolutely differently in terms of a world perspective on cultural assets: How to deal with it and with collections? For me, the question has to be in the foreground to generally think about the collection, its composition, internationally, regardless of ownership issues or such. To be honest, I would like to see a very broad debate on this, and I also believe that it would be very good for cultural policy if we were to give an impulse from Germany.

01:00:25 SWANTJE OPITZ

That is, I think, a nice conclusion. There is a lot of potency in that. To me, that is a very good, important point that you raised.

01:01:13 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

From my side, I think we have addressed everything. I mean maybe again – you do not have to put this in the text – you know that German museums are essentially built on magazines. If you are honest, of course the best things are shown. The example with Leipzig, to be honest, that basically cannot be. At least we show our drum, it is loved. But to not even show the things and with that somehow to other peoples who really have so few objects...

01:01:49 SWANTJE OPITZ

Objects are hoarded.

01:01:53 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Exactly, that is somehow, a squirrel mentality, which is no longer up-to-date at all. One would perhaps also have to really look again in the depots to see what objects can be given away first. Also, in the case of the Benin bronzes, it has to be said – and here we always have to talk about

the exhibits first – there are so many in the depots and the visitor would not even notice if they were no longer there. That is a debate that really needs to be had.

01:02:20 SWANTJE OPITZ

Yes, definitely.

I am incredibly grateful for the interview. We talked about the fact that for many people the process of repatriation is quite clear and also quite simple. I am grateful to hear your perspective because I think that explains a lot and also sheds a very different light on how to look at this debate. Thank you very much for that.

01:02:56 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

You are very welcome. If there were any other questions, you are always welcome to get in touch.

01:03:00 SWANTJE OPITZ

Thank you very much, yes. That would have been my very last question as well. If you think of anything else, please feel free to contact me at any time as well. If you notice that you would like to elaborate on something after all or you think of another point.

01:03:20 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG.

You would give me some kind of a transcript, or how is that intended?

01:03:25 SWANTJE OPITZ

Exactly, I transcribe the whole interview. First in German and then I would translate it into English because I am writing my paper in English. I would then send you this transcript so that you can see if that works. So that you can already give me your feedback if you do not want certain parts to be used. Then depending on how your interest and time is as well, I would keep you updated and if necessary, send you outlines of my work. Before publication you would get the work to see if I have represented you alright there: Did I interpret what you told me correctly, do I need to make big changes there? I do not want to deride anyone in any way. I want to show the perspective of both sides on this process.

01:04:26 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

If it is easier to do the transcript in English right away, I have no problem with that either. I have talked after all very much. You will then also clearly tighten, I think. You do not have to write it down for me in German, because I am German, and you can give it to me in the English version. I offer that, but even then, of course, it could be that I note a few things.

01:05:00 SWANTJE OPITZ

Of course, yes. Exactly, it is not about deriding some formulations, but that the perspective is shown.

01:05:17 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Okay, and the paper you sent me, you need then ok from me? I think that is ok of course.

01:05:24 SWANTJE OPITZ

In Norway you have to make an application as soon as you work with people and with personal data. There I had to state whether I told you verbally and or in writing that you can withdraw your consent at any time. Therefore, I just sent you in writing that again. It is a form like that. It is not necessary that we put our signatures under it now.

01:06:00 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Good, then you do not need an answer on that.

01:06:04 SWANTJE OPITZ

No, it is a reassurance for you that you can revoke your consent.

01:06:13 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Yes good.

01:06:17 SWANTJE OPITZ

Thank you very much. I hope to be able to come to Meiningen very soon. I would love to see the drum and, generally, I am very interested in the musical instrument collection.

01:06:25 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Yes, I would love to. Let us know, we would be happy. All the best for your work.

01:06:32 SWANTJE OPITZ

Thank you very much.

01:06:32 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

As I said, please feel free to get in touch.

01:06:34 SWANTJE OPITZ

Wonderful. Have a great weekend already, even though it is still a bit away.

01:06:40 DR. PHILIPP ADLUNG

Thank you, Mrs. Opitz. Bye.

01:06:42 SWANTJE OPITZ

Thank you, bye.

