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# An Indigenous Sámi museum and repatriation of a Sámi drum from the XVII century<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This research note<sup>2</sup> is about a sacred Sámi drum, stolen by the authorities of Denmark-Norway in 1692. The owner of the drum was convicted to death by the district court in Finnmark, Northern Norway. Nowadays, the National Museum of Denmark owns the drum, which is displayed on loan at the Sámi Museum in Karasjok, Northern Norway. The article provides information about the historical background and the ca. 40 year communication between the Danish and Sámi museums about the ownership and loan of the drum. The article introduces an Indigenous Sámi perspective on repatriation, máhcaheapmi, and it sets the problematics of the repatriation of ceremonial objects of Indigenous cultural heritage in the wider international context of cultural heritage politics. The loan agreement between the museums expired in 2021. In 2020, the Sámi Museum in Karasjok decided to claim legal ownership of the drum. This is the first international repatriation case in which a Sámi cultural institution has claimed ownership of a Sámi ceremonial object from a museum collection owned by a foreign country. The author of this article is an expert in Indigenous research methodologies, which shape the theoretical framework for this research case.

**Keywords:** Indigenous, repatriation, ceremonial objects, Sámi drum, museum, collections

## Prologue

In 1691, an old Sámi man named Anders Poulsen was arrested by local authorities in Northern Norway in Várjjat (Varanger) on suspicion of witchcraft. He was respected by his kinsmen because of his ability to attain knowledge about the future, the past, cases of illness and misfortunes, but some of his contemporaries apparently believed that he served the Devil. He

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<sup>1</sup> This text was originally written as a research note and published in French in a Special Issue on repatriation of the *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 2020:50(3), entitled «Un musée autochtone sámi et le rapatriement d'un tambour sámi du XVIIe siècle».

<sup>2</sup> Research notes represent a genre of academic papers. A research note is a discussion note that seeks to advance a new idea, research questions, theoretical perspective or methodological approach. Research notes may follow a less strict paper outline than full research papers, but still need to make a valuable contribution to the study of a topic.


was accused of performing devilish witchcraft and subsequently imprisoned, forced to hand over his drum, and taken to the district court in Finnmark, Northern Norway, in Čáhcesuolu (Vadsø) to explain his deeds and the use of his drum. In 1692, he was convicted to death by the authorities of Denmark-Norway who dictated missionary policy. This was part of the persecution of witchcraft that took place in the Christianizing part of the world, which lasted from about the 16th century to the middle of the 18th century. Before the execution had been carried out, Anders Poulsen was brutally murdered in prison by another prisoner, who was not subsequently convicted for this murder by reason of insanity. Anders Poulsen's drum, together with a hammer and a copper ring, were sent to Copenhagen (Picture 1). Since that time, this Sámi drum has been claimed to be the property of Denmark. The National Museum of Denmark (Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen) owned the drum until the year 2022. The drum was displayed on loan at the Sámi Museum in Karasjok, Norway during the period 1979-2022.



**Picture 1.** Goavddis, the drum, together with the hammer and the ring (Photo: Liv Engholm, RDM–SVD).

## **Indigenous research methodologies and repatriation**

The issue of the repatriation of sacred and ceremonial objects of Indigenous peoples should be approached from the perspective of Indigenous peoples themselves (see for example, Black 2014; Aranui 2018; Indigenous repatriation handbook 2019), thus serving the aspirations of the Indigenous societies in their search for decolonization and positive transformation based



on their own value systems and understanding of reality. Indigenous methodologies, which have become a part of international academic thinking and research during the last 20 years, can be applied to repatriation research and open new avenues and sources of information, especially by working in collaboration with Indigenous communities. The core of Indigenous methodologies is to put the Indigenous peoples' interests, knowledge and experiences at the center of methodologies and of the construction of knowledge about Indigenous peoples (Rigney 1999; Smith (1999) 2012, 2008; Tuck 2013; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith 2008; Porsanger 2004, 2007, 2014, 2017; for Sámi research, see Keskitalo (1974) 1994; Virtanen et.al. [2021]). In the Sámi context, repatriation and provenance research are of crucial importance because most of the objects related to the cultural heritage of the Sámi people have been stored and displayed outside the Sámi region.

This research note describes the over 40-year process of the continuous struggle undertaken by a little Sámi museum to attain the rights of ownership of a precious piece of Sámi cultural heritage, the drum of Paul-Ánde, Anders Poulsen. This research note focuses on the need for repatriation research that is conducted in close collaboration with Indigenous Sámi communities who are the rightful owners of Sámi cultural heritage. Furthermore, the note discusses the issues related to the decolonization of museum practices conducted by mainstream museums and a quest for the recognition of the need of collaboration between the museum professionals of the mainstream and Indigenous museums.


The Sámi term *máhcaheapmi* can be used in the meaning of the term repatriation when the return of cultural heritage is in question. This process is called *máhcahit* in North Sámi. In this research note, *máhcaheapmi* is used to introduce and apply this Sámi concept to the scholarly and political discourse about Indigenous repatriation in the Sámi context. The history and meaning of the concepts of *máhcaheapmi* and repatriation in Indigenous and Sámi contexts require analytical elaboration, which is outside the scope of this research note. Starting from the early 2000s, the Sámi museums across Sápmi initiated several repatriation projects and processes. These include the survey *Samisk kulturarv i samlinger* (Sámi cultural heritage in museal collections) in 2000–2004 on the Swedish side of Sápmi (Edbom 2005), the project *Recalling Ancestral Voices* in 2006–2007, which involved three Sámi museums in Finland,

Sweden and Norway (see Harlin 2008), and Bååstede<sup>3</sup>: Return of Sámi cultural heritage in 2012–2019 on the Norwegian side of Sápmi (Bååstede 2017). As a result of the Bååstede project, the Norsk Folkemuseum in Oslo and the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo are going to return almost half of their Sámi collections – about 2000 objects – to six Sámi museums in Norway, although the actual physical repatriation of the objects is still obstructed because of the lack of appropriate and acceptable infrastructure in the Sámi museums, which are constantly underfunded. Inspired and encouraged by this wide-ranging Norwegian project, the National Museum of Finland in Helsinki decided in 2017 to return the biggest and oldest Sámi collection in Finland to the Sámi Museum Siida, thus transferring the ownership of over 2600 Sámi objects to the Sámi Museum (Harlin 2019: 47). These acts of repatriation have a strong symbolic meaning, and they affect the feelings and the sense of identity of Indigenous people very strongly (Indigenous repatriation handbook 2019; Conaty 2015).

Sámi drums and other sacred objects were burned or sold as exotic artefacts under the missionary and colonization policies in the North in the 17th and 18th centuries. Nowadays, only about 70 Sámi drums have been preserved, fortunately, they were preserved for future generations as the drums are easily decaying in poor conditions. Additionally, one can find pictures of drums that were destroyed, burned or lost in the course of history (see Manker 1938, 1950; Ahlbäck et.al. 1991; Pentikäinen & Pulkkinen 2018, 377). The preserved Sámi drums have almost exclusively been kept and owned by various museums in many different countries. Only two drums have recently come into the legal possession of Sámi museums in Norway through the Bååstede project (EMRIP 2020: Submissions from museums), though these drums were not physically moved to their respective museums in Snåasa (Snåsa) and Divttasvuonna (Tysfjord) until the first half of 2022. Sámi drums, which were taken from Sápmi in the name of Christianity, or out of the curiosity of priests, missionaries, civil servants, explorers or travelers in the North, can be seen in the national and private museums of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, France and Italy, just to mention some. The time has come for mainstream

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<sup>3</sup> In the South Sámi language, bååstede means “return”.



museums to become conscious of the colonial legacy that their collections still represent in respect to the Indigenous Sámi people, as some museums have already done.

In 2020, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights sent a request for contributions to a report of the UN Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on “Repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”. The report was to be presented to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in Autumn 2020 (for report and submissions, see EMRIP 2020). The Sámi museums in Norway immediately responded to this request by a joint statement, which was sent directly to the UN Expert Mechanism and the Human Rights Council, with a copy to the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and the Sámi Parliament of Norway. In the introduction to the submission, the Sámi museums stated the following:

*As sacred objects, the drums are part of the cultural heritage of the Sámi. Therefore, it has been natural for the Sámi museums to work for and expect the repatriation of the drums to the Sámi people; their return would also make it possible to display them in the Sámi institutions (see Submissions from museums, academics and others: Sámi Museum Report, EMRIP 2020).*

The return of sacred and ceremonial objects has a deep positive impact on present-day Sámi communities. *Máhcaheapmi* of cultural heritage provides Sámi communities insights into their centuries-long history and makes the returned objects part of their living heritage again, thus opening a different kind of ontological discourse (Harlin 2019: 48). The return of Sámi objects of cultural heritage to the people who know their own history and tradition enables the broadening and deepening of information disseminated by museums because the communities might have a lot of traditional knowledge related to the objects (Guttorm 2016). For the Sámi and other Indigenous peoples, repatriated museum collections and objects have a culturally and emotionally deep meaning that differentiates the concept of Indigenous museums from mainstream museums. Repatriated objects in Indigenous museums strengthen communities’ sense of belonging and identity, arouse and strengthen interest in cultural heritage within the communities, and stimulate the more active use of museums by both locals and tourists. This, in turn, might have a positive impact on the development of local tourism and community economies.

## The story of Paul-Ánde's drum

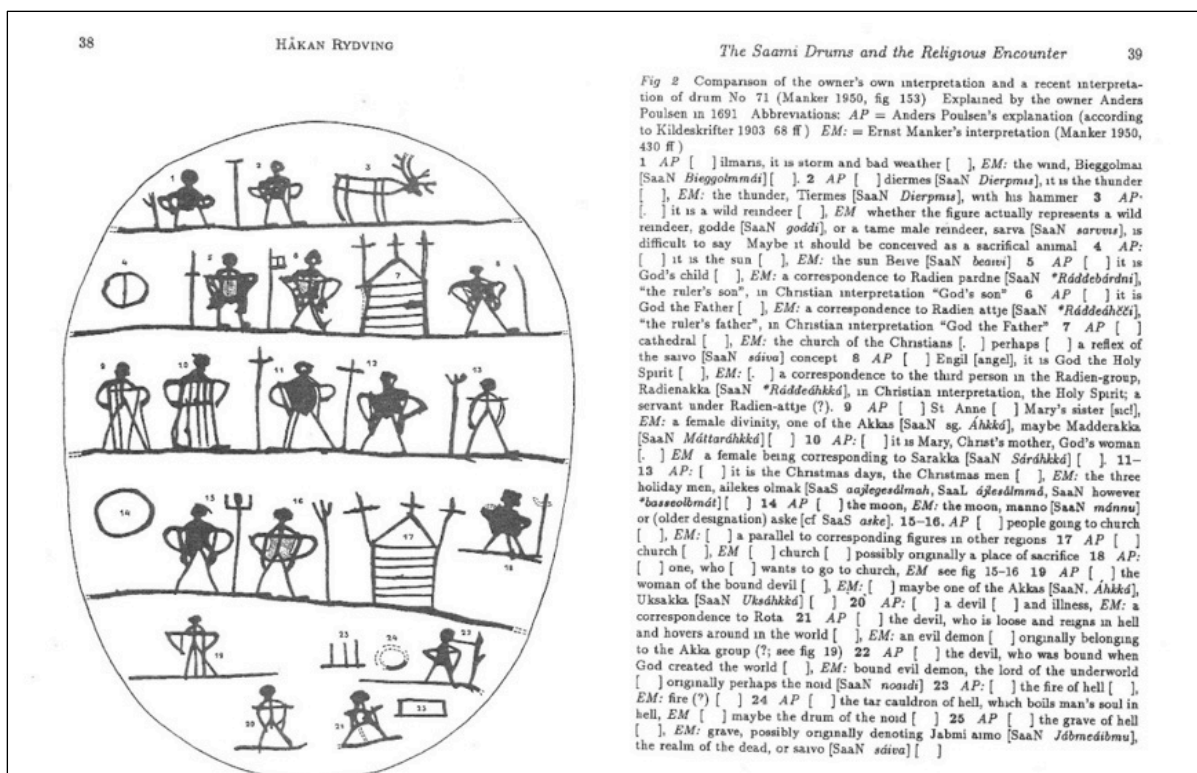
Anders Poulsen was born around the year 1600 in Torne Lappmark, which is called Durdnos in North Sámi, on the Swedish side of Sápmi. His Sámi name, according to various sources, is Paul-Ánde, Pávval Ánde or Boala-Ánde. He was from a reindeer herding family and moved to the coast of Northern Norway in about the 1680s. According to some historical sources, he lived some time in the areas of present Nordland, Troms, Porsanger, an area near present Ohcejohka (Utsjoki) and further in Várjjat (Varanger). According to the explanations that he gave to the district court, he was about 100 years old, and he paid taxes to Denmark-Norway just like other coastal inhabitants were obliged to do. He had many children, and four of them followed the trail of their father (Qvigstad 1903, Solberg 1943, Hagen & Sparboe 1998, Solbakk 2002; Niemi 2009).

According to Paul-Ánde's testimony, he had learnt to use the drum from his mother. This information is striking because according to the historical sources as well as Sámi oral tradition, women – at least women in fertile age – were forbidden to touch sacred drums (Rydving 1991: 44). To the question about why he wanted to learn about the use of the drum, Paul-Ánde answered that he wanted to know about fortune and misfortune and to help people who suffered or were in trouble. He explained that with the help of the drum, he intended to do good things for people and that he had never used his knowledge or skills to harm anyone.



**Picture 2.** The back side of the drum (Photo: Liv Engholm, RDM-SVD).

The drum is made of a whole piece of pine tree, a burl covered by reindeer hide on which various symbols are depicted in a reddish paste made from alder bark. The wooden part of the drum has two big openings to hold the drum in hand (Picture 2.) This kind of drum is called *goavddis* in North Sámi. Bowl drums are characteristic to the northern parts of Sápmi, while South Sámi drums, called *gievrie*, are frame drums made of bentwood and covered by reindeer hide (for Sámi drums, see, for example, Ahlbäck et.al. 1991; Rydving 1992, [1993] 1995, 2011, Pentikäinen & Pulkkinen 2018, 379).



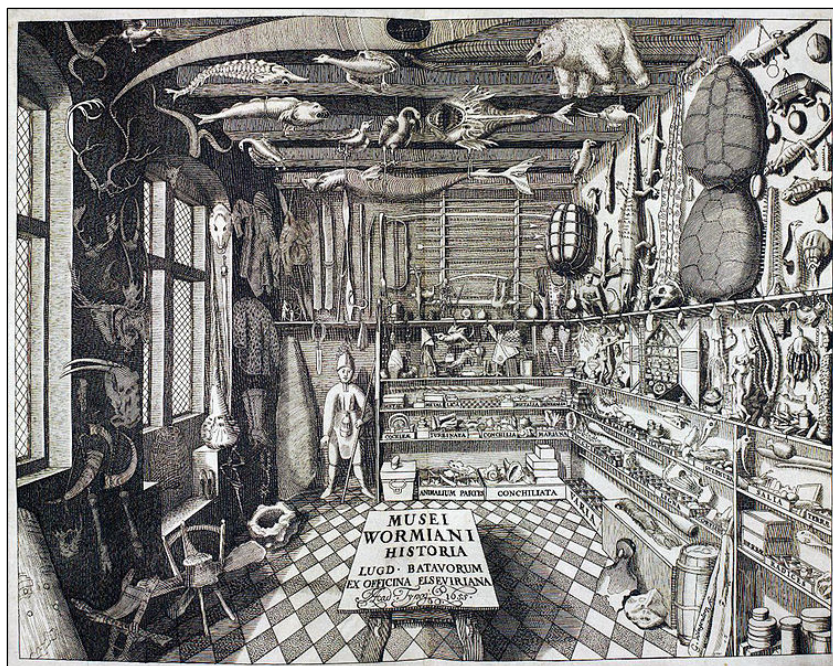
**Picture 3.** A comparison of Paul-Ánde's own explanations and of Ernst Manker's interpretations of the symbols on the surface of the drum, according to Rydving (1991).

Paul-Ánde's drum is unique and is unlike any other Sámi drum because of the patterns depicted on its membrane. On the surface of the drum, made of reindeer skin, the symbols are placed on five levels that are parallel to each other (Picture 3). Some scholars of religion have assumed that this unique type of surface is to be held as a special Finnmark type of drum. However, it is more possibly an example of a very personal drum type, and for sure of the North Sámi type (Rydving 1991: 44-45). Furthermore, according to the court records, Paul-Ánde stated that he got the drum from a person named Pedar-Ánde, Anders Pedersen, a Sámi man from Torne



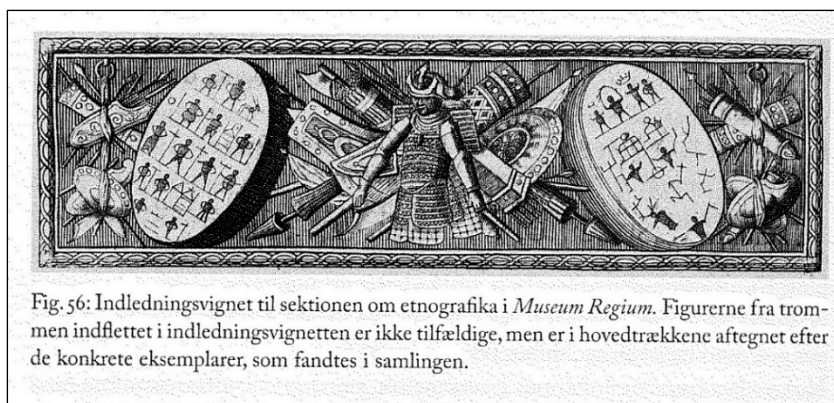
Lappmark. It is obvious that there are many research questions that are important for future research on provenance, but these questions are not discussed in this research note.

In court, Paul-Ánde explained the meaning of each symbol and figure depicted on the surface of his drum. As a matter of fact, the court records represent one of just two written historical sources with explanations given by the drum owners themselves. All other explanations of the symbols of the Sámi drums are interpretations given by someone other than the owners of the drums. Many scholars are of the opinion that the court records in Vadsø from Paul-Ánde's case provide good insights into the Indigenous Sámi religion of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while other scholars argue that his confession may well be the result of the severity of the trial, with the death sentence at its end (Willumsen 2016). Based on the analyses of the courtroom discourse, Anders Poulsen's explanations, and descriptions of his presentation in the court records, Willumsen (2016) argues that the descriptions of the drum symbols are related to the so-called pre-Christian Sámi religion only in few cases. Most of Paul-Ánde's descriptions are interpreted as Christian symbols. Thus, his confession may well be the result of his wish to convince the court that he no longer adhered to the traditional Sámi beliefs but had adopted the Christian faith (ibid.).



**Picture 4.** The frontispiece from the Museum Wormianum depicting Ole Worm's (Olaus Wormius (1588–1654)) cabinet of curiosities, which Frederick III of Denmark added to his collections in his Kongens Kunstkammer.

Anders Poulsen was one of many Sámi persons who were executed and killed during the missionary activities of the Lutheran church in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Denmark-Norway, in the territories we nowadays know as Northern Norway and Sápmi (for the list of executed persons during the trials against witchcraft and sorcery in Finnmark regardless of ethnicity, see Willumsen 2013, 2015; for the list of executed Sámi persons, see Solbakk 2002; on Indigenous religion, see Harvey 2000, 2002; Porsanger 2007; Tafjord 2013, 2016; on the conceptions of sorcery and the Sámi in early modern Northern Europe, see Kaikkonen 2019, 2020). At the time, these territories belonged to the Danish crown. In 1692, the drum of Anders Poulsen ended up in the Royal Cabinet of curiosities in Copenhagen (*Kongens Kunstkammer*), which was established by Frederick III of Denmark in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Picture 4). In 1847, after the Danish constitution was adopted, the state of Denmark took over the Royal collections, which became – together with other collections – the foundation for the National museum of Denmark established in 1849 (the collections got the name *Nationalmuseet* in 1892). In the old museum catalogue “Museum Regium” from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a picture of this drum appears in a vignette to the section on ethnography. Museum Regium was meant to inform European elite about the collections of the Danish king (Picture 5).



**Picture 5.** An image of a chalcography from 1694, published in C. Mordhorst (2009).

## The Sámi museums


For centuries, many objects of Indigenous cultural heritage have been collected, alienated from their rightful owners and communities, and stored in museum collections. Up to the present day, most Sámi cultural and historical objects are to be found in museums outside Sápmi, in

the Nordic countries or elsewhere. Some of these precious objects of Sámi history, culture and religion have been displayed in Sámi museums, but only on loan from European museums.

Without a doubt, the main aim of museums is to gather, preserve and display objects of history and of the cultures of various places, regions and peoples. However, in the Indigenous and Sámi contexts, museums are perceived and embodied in a different way from the Western and European concept of the museum. Indigenous museums have other important tasks and duties. In addition to preserving and intermediating cultural heritage and serving Indigenous peoples and outsiders, they are also actors within the community and work to empower the community (Harlin 2019: 47-60, Cury 2020). *Máhcaheapmi* of cultural heritage makes this conceptual conflict particularly visible (see, e.g., Handbook of Indigenous repatriation 2019).

Since the 1950s, several Sámi museums have been established in the Nordic countries, funded by the national states, to collect and display Sámi culture. The emergence of Sámi museums occurred in the context of a global shift towards political awareness and cultural revitalization among Indigenous peoples. Modern Sámi politics in the Nordic countries are mainly based on the Sámi Parliaments, the representative bodies for the Sámi in Finland, Sweden and Norway (see Josefsen et.al. 2016). At present, there are two main Sámi museums in Finland and Sweden: Siida ([www.siida.fi](http://www.siida.fi)) and Ájtte ([www.ajtte.com](http://www.ajtte.com)). In Norway, there are six Sámi museum associations, which are managed and funded through the Sámi Parliament of Norway (<https://sametinget.no/kultur/kunst-og-kulturutovelse/museer/>). All Sámi museums have been established in the traditional Sámi territories where varieties of the Sámi language are spoken. Close collaboration with local Sámi communities and the use of the Sámi languages in museum practices are important working principles of the Sámi museums. Collections, the dissemination, renewal and the research activities and management of the Sámi museums in the Nordic countries implies that qualified Sámi staff is employed both in running the organizations and as museum professionals.

The Sámi Museum in Karasjok was officially established in 1972 as the first Sámi cultural institution and the first Sámi museum in Norway (Johnsen 2014). The first steps towards establishing the Museum in Karasjok were taken by the Museum Association named *Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat – De Samiske Samlinger* (literally “The Sámi Collections”), founded in 1939. Before World War II, four hundred and thirty (430) objects of Sámi cultural heritage were



collected for the future Sámi museum. Unfortunately, all these items and their documentation were destroyed by the end of the war in 1944, when the German army withdrew from Finnmark and Northern Norway, practicing the scorched earth policy by burning down all settlements, including the village of Karasjok (see Hunt 2014).


Beginning in the 1950s, the Museum Association continued its work towards the establishment of the Sámi Museum. This consolidation of efforts happened in the wake of the cultural revitalization movement among the Sámi, which aimed at preserving and developing their culture and language and opposing the assimilatory policy called Norwegianization (see Minde [2005] 2016). The Sámi needed their own institution that could be a hub to maintain, strengthen and transfer Sámi traditional knowledge, material and spiritual culture, language and cultural heritage. The Sámi Museum was built with financial support from the Arts Council of Norway (*Norsk Kulturråd*) and extensive soliciting. The Museum got its name from its founding organization, *Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat* (SVD). The main activities of the new established Sámi Museum were to be a cultural center for the local Sámi communities, to collect and preserve Sámi cultural heritage, to document Sámi cultural heritage, to conduct research and to disseminate information first and foremost by the means of permanent and temporary exhibitions. The museum collections include *duodji* (a Sámi term for traditional handicrafts), Sámi arts, national clothing, vernacular architecture, transportation, items related to the traditional means of livelihood, such as reindeer herding, freshwater fishing, fishing in the sea, farming, gathering, hunting etc., as well as the objects related to Indigenous Sámi religion and spirituality. Altogether, the museum collections today contain about 5500 objects. In the 1970s, SVD was granted the status of the Sámi National Museum. The museum lost its status of a national museum when the Sámi Parliament of Norway took over the management of Sámi museums in 2002 (Gaup 2014). Today, SVD is part of the museum association called *RiddoDuottarMuseat*, which comprises of four Sámi museums and a Sámi art collection in the county of Western Finnmark, Norway ([www.rdm.no](http://www.rdm.no)). Members of the Governing Board of *RiddoDuottarMuseat* are appointed by the Sámi Parliament, the local municipalities and the founding organization of SVD. Representatives of the museum staff are elected internally.

## Why was Anders Polsen's drum on long-term loan in Sápmi?

In 1978, the Sámi Museum in Karasjok approached the Department of Ethnography of the National Museum of Denmark to loan the drum of Anders Poulsen and display it for the public in Karasjok (RDM–SVD archive, correspondence 1978–1979). SVD especially emphasized that this drum represents an extremely important period in Sámi history and is therefore priceless to the Sámi. Furthermore, SVD informed that a renowned Sámi artist, sculptor and graphic Ánddir Ivvár Ivvár, known by his Norwegian name as Iver Jåks was employed to design the embellishments and the exhibitions of SVD. In his museum and exhibition design, Iver Jåks took Indigenous Sámi religion as an important point of departure and artistic inspiration, pointing out that the Museum needed to complement its collections by displaying objects related to the spiritual life and religious history of the Sámi people.

In 1979, the National Museum of Denmark decided to give Paul-Ánde's drum to the Sámi museum in Karasjok on a long-term loan. The drum was incorporated in the museum exhibition, giving the Sámi people and all the visitors of SVD the possibility to get a 400-year perspective on Sámi history, spirituality, *duodji*, symbolism and imagery and a perspective on the conduct of the missionary policies among the Sámi. A copy of Paul-Ánde's drum was made by the Historical Museum of the University of Bergen at the end of the 1980s and displayed for the public in Karasjok, while the original drum has been exhibited on special occasions. The skillful *duojár* (a North Sámi term for a craftsman or artisan) Osvald Guttorm from Karasjok was employed to make the copy of the drum from wood and reindeer hide. He brilliantly managed the task, using traditional Sámi handicraft techniques and materials. This copy has been displayed on loan at the Várjjat Sámi Museum in Northern Norway in *Vuonnabahta* (Varangerbotn). In 2017, the original drum was displayed in Karasjok in connection with the 100-year anniversary of the Sámi political movement and solidarity, which was widely celebrated in Sápmi across national borders (Olsen Haugen 2017).

In 1999, the National Museum of Denmark prolonged the loan contract for 10 more years. In 2006, SVD began the initiative to acquire the drum permanently for the Museum and back to Sápmi. SVD approached the Commission of the Cultural Heritage of Denmark, and a recommendation for transfer of the right of possession and of the drum itself to the Sámi Museum was sent to the Danish Ministry of Culture. In the early autumn of 2007, the National



Museum in Copenhagen informed SVD that such permission was indeed granted. In Karasjok, this news was received as the greatest achievement in the modern history of the Sámi culture. Surprisingly, a couple of months later, the National Museum of Denmark sent another letter refuting the previous one and asking SVD to return the drum to Copenhagen without delay (RDM–SVD archive, correspondence in September – December 2007). In this letter, the National Museum apologized for mistakenly allowing the Sámi museum to believe that the ownership of the drum could be given to the Sámi museum. The argumentation of the Danish museum was as follows:

*Since the planning of the far-reaching return [of artifacts] to Greenland, the National Museum has beseeched [the Ministry of Culture] to keep together collections that belong together. The drum originates from The Royal Chamber of Arts [De Kongelige Kunstkamre, the former Royal Cabinet of curiosities]. This collection of artifacts represents the historical period of 1580-1820 and has, over time, been considered one of the world's foremost – and best documented – ethnographic art collections. (Letter from Forsknings- og formidlingsafdelingen, Etnografisk Samling, Nationalmuseet, 5.12.2007, SVD archive).<sup>4</sup>*

Thus, the National Museum of Denmark legitimized its ownership of the drum by appealing to the fact that the Royal Chamber of Danish Arts had long had the drum in its possession. Additionally, the museal documentation of a given historical period was used as an argument to call for the immediate return of the piece of Sámi cultural heritage back to its “rightful” owners, the National Museum of Denmark.

After many years of official correspondence between the museums, the National Museum of Denmark agreed to renew its loan agreement on the condition that the Sámi museum provide a special showcase with environmental control to store the drum. The required display case, which was equipped with wireless sensors for the remote monitoring of temperature and humidity, was obtained with the financial support of the Sámi Parliament of Norway, and SVD began a new round of negotiation and argumentation with the National Museum. According to

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<sup>4</sup> “Nationalmuseet siden planlæggingen av vidtrekkende tilbakeføringer til Grønland har søkt [Kulturministeriet] å holde samlet samlinger som hører sammen. Runebommen stammer fra De Kongelige Kunstkamre og denne samling med gjenstander som omfatter innsamling i perioden 1580-1820-årene med tiden har blitt betraktet som en av verdens fremste – og dertil best dokumenterte – etnografiske kunstkammersamlinger.”


the most recent loan agreement, the drum was deposited in Karasjok for a period from 2016 until 2021. The condition of the drum, together with the hammer and the copper ring, has been controlled regularly and on demand by museum specialists qualified in the conservation of museum collections. The latest control was conducted in December 2020.

In December 2020, the Governing Board of RiddoDuottarMuseat unanimously decided (board issue *Sak 33-20*) to submit an official demand claiming the legal ownership of Anders Poulsen's drum. This is the first case of international repatriation, a case of *máhcaheapmi* in Sápmi, in which a Sámi cultural institution has claimed ownership of a ceremonial object from a museum collection owned by a foreign country. While this research note was in the process of publication, the National Museum of Copenhagen sent a recommendation to the Ministry of Culture of Denmark at the end of 2021 to approve the repatriation of the drum. On January 24, 2022, the Danish Ministry of Culture approved the transfer of the ownership rights from the National Museum in Copenhagen to the Sámi Museum in Karasjok on a permanent basis.

## Epilogue

Lately, Sámi youth from the High School in Karasjok have visited SVD for their classes in Sámi history and spiritual culture. In their conversations with the museum curator, the Sámi youth have reflected on the fact that the sacred drum of one of their ancestors had not been in the possession of the Sámi museum but belonged to a Danish museum in Copenhagen. "This drum belongs to our cultural heritage and must therefore be returned home to Sápmi." – was one youth's appeal to the world, written in Sámi in the guest book of the Sámi museum in Karasjok in March 2019.

Without a doubt, Paul-Ánde's drum, as well as all other Sámi ceremonial objects, belong to the Sámi people. It has taken 330 years for the ownership of the drum to be returned to its home in Sápmi. One can argue that the drum was stolen on the grounds of the Danish laws of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of these legal actions, a Sámi person was sentenced to death for using his sacred drum. He was killed, his personal property was confiscated, alienated from the territories and communities it belonged to, and sent to a collection of artefacts of the Danish King. It is also questionable whether the National Museum of Denmark or any other mainstream museum in the world can claim the exclusive right to possess Sámi drums because they have been



displayed in their museum collections during the last 400 years. From a non-Indigenous – in this case European – point of view, one can justify the museum’s interest in preserving its collections as they are because they represent the “best documented” period of the gathering of cultural artefacts in the museum collection in 1580–1820. Nevertheless, looking from an Indigenous Sámi perspective, this historical period can be considered the time of the colonization of Sámi territories and as the “end of drum time” – to loan the expression of an expert in the history of religions, Professor Håkan Rydving ([1993] 1995). Indigenous activists, museum professionals, Indigenous politicians and their allies all over the world have tirelessly been involved in resistance and mobilization that aims for a paradigm change in the field of cultural heritage. Non-Indigenous museums internationally are increasingly becoming aware of the necessity to strive for true collaboration and knowledge sharing with Indigenous Sámi museums. Such purposeful collaboration is capable of challenging and finally changing the colonial historical relationships between museums and Indigenous peoples for the best of the Indigenous communities and for the advancement of general public knowledge about Indigenous cultural heritage, history and present day life. Repatriation and provenance research conducted from the Sámi perspective and involving Sámi communities can and should contribute to this process.

## Archives

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