INDIGENISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

A pan-Sami view of the Indigenous perspective in Sami culture and research

*Harald Gaski**

Abstract

This article explores Sami cultural and literary research in a pan-Sami perspective, contextualizing it in relation to the emergence of similar research among other Indigenous peoples in the world, termed Indigenous methodology. The article summarizes the development within the field so far, arguing for stronger Sami participation in the international discourse on the role of Indigenous peoples within academia. Indigenous methodology is inspired by the development within postcolonial and decolonizing studies and places Indigenous peoples at the centre, while simultaneously seeking to Indigenize academia. The approach questions which values ought to guide research, and to what degree Indigenous peoples should expect research to have a transformative effect on society. What is the role and place of Indigenous peoples' own values and worldviews in scholarship in general? The article underscores the importance of having developed Sami as an academic language, a great achievement in a world where more and more Indigenous languages are becoming extinct.

Keywords

Indigenous peoples, Sami and Indigenous research, Indigenous methodology, Indigenism, Sami literature

* Faculty for Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education, University of Tromsø, Norway.
Email: harald.gaski@uit.no

Introduction

There are two central points that I want to underscore in this article. The first is the all-Sami, or the *pan*-Sami perspective, as I have chosen to call it, inspired by the pan-Sami intentions of Anders Fjellner in the myth he wrote down about the Sami people being the children of the sun. The second point is the Indigenous perspective in Sami scholarship. My aim is to discuss, albeit briefly, these two positions in the view of the struggle in recent decades for, and recognition of, Indigenous approaches to academia in general, and research on Indigenous peoples and cultures more specifically. I will try to relate my deliberations to different approaches with regard to Indigenous research—such as nationalist, Indigenist, and cosmopolitan (Krupat, 2002)—at the same time as I introduce Sami research in an international Indigenous context. My examples will mainly be Sami, which is the culture closest to me, being a Sami myself with Sami as my mother tongue. Also, in my current position, Sami language is the main instrument in my teaching and research.

The pan-Sami agenda applies both linguistically and culturally, not in the sense that we should be working to develop a common Sami language, but rather in the sense of respecting common foundational values and traditions. In the work of the early missionaries the goal was to create a common Sami language, but given the substantial internal differences that exist between the different languages, that goal remains a utopia—assuming anyone still wants to move in that direction these days. "Standardization" of this sort was part of intellectual projects in Sweden and Norway at the time. In a sense, Fjellner was trying to establish the Sami nation alongside other national projects under way in the region. Nevertheless, it was this sort of desire that lay behind Fjellner's linguistic choices in his writing of the *Biejjien baernie* cycle (*The Son of the Sun* mythic poem), where the foundation is a figurative South Sami, rich in metaphors, and interspersed with loans from both North Sami and Finnish. Fjellner had mastered all of these languages, and, for the record, let me just point out that the differences between South Sami and North Sami are comparable to those between English and German.

Anders Fjellner was an educated minister who graduated from the University of Uppsala in 1821. A South Sami himself, Fjellner was born in 1795 under open skies during the fall migration of the reindeer from the Norwegian side of the border back to Härjedalen in Sweden. Fjellner was a native speaker of South Sami. During his 20 years as a minister in the Karesuando region in Northern Sweden, he also developed competence in North Sami and the Finnish language of settlers to the region. During his years as a student in Uppsala, Fjellner became interested in folk poetry, and set his mind on creating a Sami mythic and epic tradition similar to the Finnish *Kalevala*, which he did with his *Biejjien baernie* epic poetry. He was inspired to write down the epic poems he had heard in his South Sami homeland when he became acquainted with similar traditions during his service as a minister in the North.

One of the most interesting things about translating "The Son of the Sun's Courting in the Land of the Giants" into North Sami—and then participating in the project of translating it back to South Sami—has been discovering just how pan-Sami Fjellner's text is, in terms of language, culture, and of course, mythology (Gaski, 2003). What my co-translator and PhD student, Lena Kappfjell, and I thought would be an easy task, bringing Fjellner's text back to what everyone has always considered to be its original language—South Sami—turned out to be just about as demanding of time and resources as the work of translating it into North Sami. Fjellner must really have striven to choose words from the different Sami languages in an attempt to show that, even in terms of language, there was one common Sami literary legacy.

The theme of this article is not a linguistic or literary analysis of Fjellner's *Biejjien baernie*

cycle; I simply wanted to say a few introductory words about Fjellner and his contribution towards creating a common literary and cultural legacy for the entire Sami people by offering the Sami our own creation myth and our own epic. Beyond that, I want to emphasize the significance and necessity of seeing Sami culture as *one* culture with common foundational values in the north, south, west and east. My point of reference is Sami literature—in this case primarily seen from a South Sami perspective, which does not happen too often—and my task is to exemplify Sami cultural history in a pan-Sami approach to the topic. I attempt to contextualize Sami scholarship within an international Indigenous discourse. The pan-Sami perspective is actually fairly well accepted in historical and archaeological research. But it has, naturally enough, been more controversial when it comes to language and literature. Language is, in addition to being the main means of communication between peoples, at the same time a very personal issue; it demonstrates our belonging to culture, geography, social class and level of cultivation, or cultural sophistication. For a lot of people, not knowing one's own indigenous language feels like a big loss and imperfection, and thus contributes to the psychological aspect of the identity question connected to language competence.

The ability to read nature

In order to understand what Fjellner's aim was and how it relates to the broader questions of this article, it is important to understand how Sami people have looked at knowledge and its owners over time. In Sami culture the ability to read nature and its inhabitants, both animal and human, has been an important skill. When it is considered an important part of the culture, the person who possesses these abilities is considered a learned person by the Sami. At least that's the way it was in the past. And even though much has changed over the past 50 or 60 years, these values and traditions have still taken part in forming our common understanding of what is valuable and important in Sami culture. These values and traditions have been transmitted to succeeding generations through our language and our stories, through child rearing, proverbs, yoiks (songs) and attitudes. That is why research on Sami literature and traditions is important; it helps us to understand these traditions, and to extract the knowledge that oral tradition has maintained. That is why it is meaningful, even for the Sami of today, to focus on similarities and on our common foundational values, and to view language as our most important tradition bearer—as a reservoir of knowledge from which to draw.

At the time the Nordic Sami Institute was established as a research body in the mid-1970s, the Sami were at the forefront in demanding a change from being objects of research to occupying a subject position where we ourselves wanted to be involved in laying out the premises for scholarship. From being one of the world's most researched peoples, the Sami eventually took the step to initiating our own research based on our own premises. In 1976 the Sami philosopher Alf Isak Keskitalo published his trailblazing essay "Research as an inter-ethnic relation," which, ever since, has been a piece of writing Sami academics have always returned to in search of arguments to describe the asymmetry in power relations between indigenous and non-indigenous groups within academia.

This way of thinking harmonized well with what was happening in other places in the world, such as North America, Australia and New Zealand. As time went on a political movement grew, crystallizing in the establishment of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, while at the same time the political mobilization was followed up by Indigenous voices that involved themselves directly in research and demanded a transformation of approaches and methodologies—a transformation from being the objects of research to having the possibility of conducting one's own research. In this context

it is important to mention Indigenous scholars and Indigenous authors—the same people often occupy both roles—such as Vine Deloria, Jr., N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko in the United States, and Mudrooroo and Oodgeroo (whose "white" names were Colin Jackson and Kath Walker respectively) in Australia. Their work was furthered eventually by people like Gerald Vizenor in the United States, and, even later, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, with her watershed 1999 book, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012), in New Zealand, and Shawn Wilson with *Research is Ceremony* (2008). Ten years after Smith's book, Rauna Kuokkanen in Sápmi (the Sami region) published *Boaris dego eana* (*Old as the Earth*), a book about Indigenous methodology and philosophy, and about the knowledge that is our own inheritance (Kuokkanen, 2009). These people—and a great many others too numerous to include here—have contributed to creating a space for Indigenous peoples to be active participants in, and not just passive informants for, research.

Need for a transformation of the mentality in the scholarly world

At the outset it was important to establish conditions that allowed the Sami and other Indigenous peoples to have the opportunity to participate in research themselves. But after a while it became clearer and clearer that a transformation of mentality was needed in the scholarly world—a new paradigm, a new way of understanding—in order that Indigenous peoples' own knowledge could be allowed in. Both of these processes took time, and the most intense methodological debates—we Sami have to admit this—have happened in places other than Sápmi. Among the Sami the view that scholarship was neutral dominated for a long time, along with the belief that it was enough to get Sami scholars into research, and then things would change automatically.

In North America, where there has always been a more outspoken type of debate compared to the Nordic region, the tone among Indigenous scholars was much more aggressive, and there has been a continuous struggle to "Indigenize" Native American Studies so that it can become a place for Native Americans—more Native American-owned, if we can put it like that—while we in Sápmi have, to a large degree, left that battle unfought. So far our scholarship has not distinguished itself to any appreciable extent from Western scholarship in approach or choice of methods. It's been more about getting Sami perspectives into research—i.e., Sami empiricism—and not, to the same degree as in North America and Oceania, a question of taking our own epistemology as a point of departure, of theorizing from our own knowledge traditions. Such theorizing, Sami scholars have argued, may proceed not necessarily in place of the Western tradition, but rather in addition to it: the aim has not been framed as an "either/or" question, but rather as a "both/and" proposition. Our knowledge and our traditions are just as legitimate as those of the West and we have sought to make that premise apparent through our approaches to research.

Which values do we want to guide scholarship? To what degree do we expect that scholarship will have a transformative effect on society, so that our values and worldview can have significance for scholarship in general? We Sami are a bit parochial—i.e., oriented towards our own local region—in that we think of Sami scholarship as interesting primarily to the Sami, and we are much less concerned with the possibility that our scholarship can contribute to the larger society. In North America, scholars of Native American studies hope that research will contribute to self-governance, or sovereignty. In New Zealand, the intention is to contribute at the national level, while in Sápmi we seem to think that there is a difference in principle between research politics and research practice. It can seem as if institution-building—and

thereby access to scholarship—has been prioritized over and above the content (and quality) of the scholarship.

Different approaches: Nationalist, Indigenist or cosmopolitan

In this section I want to use two anthologies that I have been editor and co-editor for as the starting point for saying a little about different approaches to Indigenous research and cultural activity. I am referring to two *belles-lettres* anthologies for secondary school: *Åvtese jåhta* (*Moving Forward*), which I edited together with Lena Kappfjell, and *Ivdnesuotna* (*Coloured Thread*), for which I was the sole editor. The books were published in 2005 and 2008. Both of these books were edited from a pan-Sami perspective, or what the American literary scholar Arnold Krupat (2002) and his Native American colleague Tol Foster (2008) would have called a "nationalist" perspective. Nationalist in this regard means basing one's frame of reference in a nation, such as the Sami nation—a term that was used extensively earlier, as in the Finnish Sami researcher Karl Nickul's (1977) book *The Lappish Nation*, and much earlier, in Carl Linnaeus' 18th century references to Sápmi.

The nationalist perspective has a goal of including the entire Sami people as an entity or community, without emphasizing the details that divide, focusing instead on that which binds together. This perspective coincides with what I have pointed out above as Anders Fjellner's pan-Sami-ism—in other words, the view that "We Sami are one people", as it is also phrased in the Sami cultural-political programme.

The term *nationalist* is used in relationship to the terms *Indigenist* and *cosmopolitan* for perspectives on scholarship in an Indigenous context. Indigenist is derived from *indigene*, the same root as is found in *Indigenous*, and connotes something having to do with the primary or originary, as in *Indigenous peoples* as the term is used by the United Nations and the International Labour Organization. This perspective is grounded in the cultural background and the reservoir of knowledge possessed by each individual tribe or people as a community—even if that community can be said to be a constructed or an imagined community—in the sense expressed in Benedict Anderson's (1983/1991) classic book title *Imagined Communities*. In the Nordic region it will be possible to combine the meanings of *Indigenist* and *nationalist* in one term, and simply refer to it as Indigenist. The term itself is theoretical and expresses a chosen approach to research, but has over time also been connected to Indigenous peoples themselves conducting that research. As a continuation of the nomenclature discussion one could suggest using the term *Indigenism* for the entire field of study, as a reference to the theoretical discussions on *Indigenous methodology*.

The cosmopolitan perspective has, as its name suggests, a global aim—it seeks to be international and comparative. It can also be presented as *cosmopolitan comparativism* (Krupat, 2002), i.e., as an attempt, in an Indigenous context, to discover what the common values among different Indigenous cultures are, and perhaps too, what it is that differentiates them from the general Western/dominant discourse. In a Sami context this means that we must participate in the international scholarly debate about Indigenous research, and that we enter that debate with our own specific experiences, from our own local and national situations, but also that we are willing to enter into a global discussion of premises and challenges for scholarly and cultural activity that arise from our praxis as an Indigenous culture. A cosmopolitan perspective includes an analysis grounded in a common disciplinary and methodological approach to the subject matter, while simultaneously being aware of specific linguistic and cultural conditions that affect the analysis. It would, for instance, be completely feasible to use Sami terms and a so-called "Sami understanding" in a cosmopolitan analysis, but

these things would then have to be explicated and made accessible to an international reader, and not be exoticized and ascribed an aspect of esoteric knowledge. In order for the Indigenous perspective to be interesting as a global scholarly resource, it is necessary that Indigenous scholars are willing to communicate and function as mediators in our practice of Indigenist and cosmopolitan comparative scholarship.

The right to represent oneself

One important premise for Indigenous research has been the right to represent oneself. Previously, Indigenous peoples' languages, knowledge, values and worldviews were not taken seriously, and one tended to feel that colonial attitudes were perpetuated in scholarship's relation to Indigenous peoples. This dissatisfaction, and the will to do something about it, form the backdrop for the development of Indigenous methodology, as well as decolonizing and anti-colonial theories and methods. When one claims, from an Indigenous position, that there is a need to *Indigenize* the academy (as in the book *Indigenizing the Academy*; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004), this is based on the fact that one does not find the current situation satisfactory. It is precisely because of this that Indigenous communities around the world demand decolonization and application of their own knowledge systems on equal footing with "Western" epistemologies. The next step, then, will be to prove in practice how to apply Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge—how it can be rendered accessible and usable in an ethical and culturally responsible way—across significantly broad swaths of research and scholarship (Wilson, 2008). The efforts at Indigenization within academia represent an international Indigenous movement.

According to the Māori scholar Graham Smith, colonization is actually not over. He argues that Indigenous peoples must liberate themselves from "politics of distraction" and, instead, begin working to improve our own conditions. Furthermore, there is a need for consciousness-raising that can bring Indigenous peoples away from re-active politics and into a pro-active praxis (G. Smith, 2003). These terms have been central in the construction of Kaupapa Māori in New Zealand, a conception of research and academic activity that places Indigenous peoples and their own wishes and needs at the centre, rather than simply responding to demands and challenges from authorities and researchers from the majority societies. Graham Smith makes the point that de-colonization is a reactive term, and that it should instead be replaced by what he calls *conscientization* as an active element that places Indigenous people at the centre. Kaupapa Māori includes, among other things, Māori philosophy, worldview and cultural principles, and consists of both practice and theory. Sami research in the Nordic region can draw much inspiration from both New Zealand and North America, not least in terms of having the boldness and strength of will to trust in our own knowledge and experience regarding the thematics, development and conduct of research projects.

The starting point for the international debate is the principle of self-determination, where the principle of autonomy first and foremost underscores how important it is to be able to make decisions affecting one's own language and culture, and that these decisions must reflect the cultural, political, economic and social preferences of the culture. Included here is also the need for a common vision of what one desires to achieve. This conceptualization must be followed up with a transformative praxis—in other words, practical work to change the situation for the better, a programme for achieving the conditions that the Indigenous people desire. Therefore there is a need for "change agents"—people who use their time working towards the goal of greater independence in questions of research and education.

There will always be voices that oppose this view—including voices among Indigenous

peoples' own academics—those who stand out in this context as defenders of the hegemony, of a state of being that perpetuates current institutional arrangements, either because these people themselves benefit from the status quo, or because they view the Indigenous methodology debate as far too politicized. In the meantime, it is important to emphasize that we are discussing the conditions for conducting research, the legitimacy of being able to test out and use our own knowledge traditions and ways of understanding, in addition to what may be purely methodological choices for concrete research projects. In regard to Sami culture and cultural expressions, this suggests that Sami normative values, along with ethical thinking and terminology, must be used to form the basis for analysis of Sami art, literature and music, for instance. Such Sami views need not be taken as the only approach, but at least as an equally important and equally valid approach to traditional "Western" ways of understanding. As the next step, it would be natural to also try applying this approach to material from other branches of the sciences, including the social sciences.

The Native American researcher Craig Womack comments on what self-government means in practice for Native American and Indigenous literary scholarship:

> Native literature, and Native literary criticism, written by Native authors, is part of sovereignty; Indian people exercising the right to present images of themselves and to discuss those images … The ongoing expression of a tribal voice, through imagination, language, and literature, contributes to keeping sovereignty alive in the citizens of a nation and gives sovereignty a meaning that is defined within the tribe rather than by external sources. (Womack, 1999, p. 14)

It is in this perspective that Sami research can begin to emerge with greater value and with international ambitions—and, not least of all, as a scholarly movement that can attract other scholars to cooperate with it. In this new perspective a central point will be that universities and university colleges in the Sami north cooperate across national borders and across old disciplinary boundaries. The goal of new knowledge must always be considered in relation to the people, culture and scholarly community that the knowledge will serve, and therefore consideration of capacity and capability-building will be central, in part in order to educate Indigenous candidates to be leaders in this research themselves.

In the United States, the Native American scholar and author Gerald Vizenor coined the term *survivance* (Vizenor, 1994, 2009), which is a combination of the words *survival* and *resistance*—i.e., survival through resistance—as a path for Native Americans to take, to survive by engaging in resistance to the pressure of the majority. This is reminiscent of our classical Sami texts, which the Finnish pastor Jakob Fellman wrote down in Ohcejohka, in northernmost Finland, at the end of the 1820s, and in which the shaman's message to his people is to fight on through the language, and never to allow themselves to be assimilated (Fellman, 1906, pp. 254–259); in other words: survival through resistance.

The Sami shaman's words in the antiphony "Suola ja Noaidi" (The Thief and the Shaman; Gaski, 2004, pp. 36, 44–45), can also be heard in the Australian scholar and author Mudrooroo's term *poetemics* (Mudrooroo, 1997, p. 68). He combines the words *poetics* and *polemics*, and wants Indigenous people to write a counter-discourse, a counter-narrative to the narrative of assimilation. Sami *authors* have indeed done this, from Johan Turi, Anders Larsen and Pedar Jalvi in the early 1900s, through Paulus Utsi, Gustav Kappfjell and Nils-Aslak Valkeapää from 1970 to 2000. But our *scholars* have not followed up in the same way. Therefore it is important to remind ourselves of other voices, beyond the scholars', in order to emphasize the Sami message. The shaman's words, from the

time when colonization began, live on in art, but they have sadly been far too absent in Sami scholarly practice.

On the other hand it must be said that part of the reason that the initiative of the Sami eventually gave way internationally to the Anglo-American world is grounded in two important facts: first, that the Sami voices were more engaged in working for Indigenous peoples' rights at a purely political level, and second, that as one of the world's Indigenous peoples, the Sami concentrated primarily on developing scholarship about ourselves in our own language. The political struggle also had a clear linguistic dimension for the Sami, to a much larger degree than for most other Indigenous peoples—with the possible exception of the Inuit in Greenland. That's the way it still stands today, and the Sami ought to, and have every right to, feel proud about having managed to develop our language into a scholarly language. But, at the same time, this has meant that we haven't had time to participate in the international Indigenous discourse at the same level as others because it takes time to conduct research, disseminate research, and discuss research politics in Sami, Norwegian and English simultaneously. Therefore it is not at all odd that the Sami have been on the defensive for a time, but we are now once again headed back to the international arena at full speed (Kuokkanen, 2007; Minde, 2008; Porsanger, 2004).

Sami classical works of literature

In Sami literary and cultural history there are several classics, such as those written by Olaus Sirma, Anders Fjellner, Isak Saba, Elsa Laula Renberg, Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Paulus Utsi, Gustav Kappfjell, Nils Mattias Andersson, Rauni Magga Lukkari, Jovnna-Ánde Vest and Kirsti Paltto. These and others are notable figures in Sami literary history, which, in addition to textual material, also includes orally transmitted myths and epic yoiks. Olaus Sirma's (1650–1719) two yoik poems from the middle of the 17th century made their impression on European literature through translations into English, German, French and Dutch. They were even published in what is regarded to be Europe's first cultural journal, *The Spectator*, in 1712. Isak Saba (1875–1921) wrote the Sami national anthem, while Elsa Laula Renberg (1877–1931) organized the first national gathering of the Sami. The Sami National Day, 6 February, was established in her honour. Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943–2001) was the foremost Sami multimedia artist, and a great poet, who was awarded the prestigious Nordic Council Literature Prize in 1991—the only Sami author so far to receive this honour. Jovnna-Ánde Vest (1948–) is perhaps the leading prosaist in Sami, while Rauni Magga Lukkari (1943–) is regarded by many to be the language's foremost poet. Kirsti Paltto (1947–) is by far the most prolific Sami writer, with publications in all genres.

Among the non-Sami, a person like the Finnish minister Jakob Fellman (1795–1875) is also an important voice in the history of Sami literature, as he learnt Sami himself and accomplished tremendous work in collecting and transcribing epic yoiks that would otherwise have been lost over time, since they had been obliged to go underground in the colonial context. Performance of these yoiks was not allowed by the missionaries, and the yoiks were thus ever more rarely performed in public, and would ultimately have been forgotten as traditions changed and were lost in social transition. The colonization of Sápmi and the Christianization of the Sami brought about such major upheavals in our history that our entire society changed. Without enthusiastic collectors of Sami traditions during this tumultuous and unfortunate period, we would be much poorer today culturally. That is part of the price one pays in a society with oral cultures and traditions that are no longer practised: eventually they are forgotten and disappear. Therefore people like Fellman, Just Knut Qvigstad, Otto Donner,

J. A. Friis, Bjørn Collinder, T. I. Itkonen and others are important figures to include in Sami literary history because they did important collecting work, even if their frame of reference was different than that of today's Sami. The old ethnographers—the Lappologists—wanted to record dying Sami traditions, while today we are concerned with traditions because we *don't* want them to die out, or because we want to reclaim them.

Therefore the recording of the South Sami tradition bearer, *Kristoffer Sjulsson's Minnen* (*The Memoir of Sjulsson*; Bäckman & Kjellström, 1979) ends up in the same category as Johan Turi's (1910/2010) book *Muitalus Sámiid Birra* (*An Account of the Sami*) for the Sami, and can be considered as a parallel to the well-known book *Black Elk Speaks* (Neihardt 1932/1972) among the Native Americans of North America. *Black Elk Speaks* is actually the observations of a Plains Native American medicine man, an Oglala Sioux (Oglala Lakota), but the book has garnered status and meaning among broader groups of Native Americans in the United States. In Sápmi we still like to emphasize the local connection. Therefore, Turi's book is considered first and foremost as a North Sami classic, Anta Pirak's (1937) book *Jåhttee Saamee Viessoom* (*A Nomad and His Life*) as a Lule Sami variant, and *Kristoffer Sjulsson's Minnen* as the South Sami classic.

Turi's book from 1910 was published in a new English translation in 2012 that was made directly from the Sami original, unlike the previous editions which were based on the Danish rendition of the book. In a forthcoming study by the American literary scholar Arnold Krupat (in press), John Neihardt's (1932/1972) book containing Black Elk's story is analysed as an elegy, as a book that describes the prairie Native Americans' traditions as they once were with sorrow in mind because the traditions were already then in the process of disappearing after the incursion of foreign values. There was hope in the old Native American chief's story precisely in the fact that his story was being written down, that it would not die out, but would live on—exactly in the same way that we find a sadness in Turi's book in contemplating a Sami future, even though Turi, too, sees an opportunity of educating the world through his book. Another Sami parallel is found in Nils Mattias Andersson's melancholic memoir-yoik *Åvlavuelien ålmaj* (*The Man on Oulavoulie*; Arnberg, Ruong, & Unsgaard, 1997). The yoik, in this case a Sami elegy, contains a tiny hope for continued existence in that the yoik was being recorded on tape and would be published on LP, and later on CD. "The Man on Oulavoulie" is perhaps the most beautiful example we have of Sami improvisational art. The yoik is a vuelie, and thus represents another tradition within yoik aesthetics than a North Sami luohti. The terms refer to two completely different yoik traditions, each as important as it is different. The internal differences between different types of yoik throughout Sápmi are probably as significant as the differences between the various languages/dialects.

Whether we choose, for the sake of terminological clarity, to speak of different Sami languages or Sami dialects, is not simply a linguistic question, but perhaps just as much a cultural-political question: Do we want to focus on differences or on similarities? Can we speak of both/and, or would we rather accentuate an either/or position? Must one always exclude the other, or could it sometimes be practical, desirable, and even politically correct to look at that which binds together more than pointing out that which divides? My attitude is, I would think, implicitly expressed in the title of this article. The main point is to ask the question, and to think it over, rather than to be solidly and categorically committed to just one answer.

Sami parochialism or cosmopolitanism?

It has been very interesting, as part of my scholarly and mediating activity, to work in parallel in North and South Sami, Norwegian and English. This is something I have done in multiple books, in translating Sami texts, and in a series of articles. One of the projects that could be brought up in this context is my work with Sami proverbs (Gaski, 2010). Proverbs are, in many ways, a culture's wisdom, gathered over time, and they represent knowledge that in today's world can be found in fields like pedagogy, philosophy, folklore and anthropology. Since anthropology deals with relationships between cultures, including views of neighbouring peoples, it is amusing to register how the Sami have understood their Norwegian neighbours, as expressed in the adage: Dáža lea dáža juohke beaivvi—a Norwegian is a Norwegian every day. It is, in other words, a sigh of resignation over the fact that nothing can change (read: improve) a Norwegian's opinions and behaviour.

I will, nevertheless, let the proverbs lie, and instead comment on some remarks I have heard about the book *Åvtese jåhta*, claiming that it is hardly a South Sami anthology, because it also includes texts from the other Sami areas. The book was never meant to be a purely South Sami anthology, any more than the collection in North Sami, *Ivdnesuotna*, was ever meant to be a purely North Sami anthology. On the contrary, both books are *Sami* anthologies—edited on the basis of a nationalist perspective on Saminess. I am absolutely convinced that we need more books of the same type. I belong to those who have very little enthusiasm for focusing—or over-focusing—only on one's own language; we know that this leads to narrow-mindedness and actually to a sort of ethnocentrism, even within the minority itself.

Instead, I believe that we should have more translations *between* the Sami languages, just like on the global level we should have had more translations between different Indigenous peoples' literatures. Unfortunately this is an under-prioritized area. Translations, and especially good translations of high quality literature, are generally a benefit for language development. There is a long tradition of translating world literature into as many languages as possible; yet here too the Sami national authorities have chosen a different policy—to give priority to the publication of original literature. We need, however, to be honest enough to admit that we do not have that many world-class authors writing in Sami, if any, and that it would therefore be beneficial to the development of our languages to have more books translated into Sami. In the Nordic region there is a discussion that has gone on for as long as the Nordic Council has existed about the need for, and value of, translating between each other's languages, and it has always been an expressed premise that it is beneficial to the development of the receiving language, to have literature translated into it.

For Sami literature, and for a positive Sami self-image, it would be especially important, in addition to translation between our languages, to be translated into other languages as well. In a global Indigenous context, in the cosmopolitan perspective that I have mentioned, it is obviously completely necessary that Sami literature be translated into Spanish and English, so that our voices, too, can be heard in the great, global chorus of Indigenous voices from all over the world that make use of these colonial languages in the present day.

Traditionally we are quite familiar with how, within the same language family, one has always made fun of and ironized the neighbouring dialect. In the Sami case this has so far mostly been an example of good-natured, internal teasing within the larger group; but if we were to begin restricting ourselves defensively to only our own language, from among the different Sami languages, then we would be on the wrong track. What I refer to as good-natured internal teasing is really of a different

character because, in spite of it, the minority group has always stood together in the face of the majority population; the internal ironizing has rather been intended to contribute to making the group stronger in its confrontation with the states' attempts at assimilation.

In this article I have tried to be representative of the pan-Sami within Sami literary scholarship. Those who research Sami languages do not focus only on one dialect, but instead have a knowledge of the similarities and differences within the different Sami languages, as well as within the field itself—something that is completely natural, because Sami scholarship is a part of, and has to maintain a relationship with, Nordic and international scholarship within its scholarly disciplines.

We should, as Sami, be proud of having managed to preserve our Sami languages through thousands of years of interaction with the majority societies around us. That is the best affirmation of the meaning of language—as an aesthetic medium for play with words and expressions, as a medium for communication, and, not least, as the most important medium for preservation of Sami identity through history.

Glossary

Biejjien baernie — The Son of the Sun. A mythic figure in Sami oral tradition. He courted the Giant's daughter, and their offspring, the Gállábártnit, are regarded as being the ancestors of the Sami. After their death, the Gállábártnit became the star constellation that, in the Western world, is known as Orion's Belt.

Lappologist — Ethnographer who used to specialize in the study of Sami language and culture at the time when the Sami still were called Lapps; parallel to the use of the term Eskimo instead of Inuit, and the research branch that used to be named Eskimology.

Lule Sami — The Sami language in Norway and Sweden is divided into three main dialectal groups: North Sami, Lule Sami and South Sami. The languages are not mutually understandable without any previous study. The naming of the language groups has to some extent also resulted in a cultural division. The Lule Sami are the people in the middle, between the North and the South Sami, concentrated in the Tysfjord area in Norway and the township of Jokkmokk in Sweden.

luohti — The main denomination for North Sami yoik.

Sápmi — The cultural region traditionally inhabited by the Sami people.

vuelie — The main denomination for South Sami yoik.

yoik — Yoik is the original and traditional music of the Sami. The concept of *juoigat* (to yoik) exists over the entire Sami region, but yoik itself is called different things in the diverse Sami dialects. Yoik was traditionally also part of the shamanistic religious practice, and therefore banned by the missionaries. Today, yoik enjoys a revitalization as part of world music.

References

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, England: Verso. (Original work published 1983)

Arnberg, M., Ruong, I., Unsgaard, H. (1997). *Jojk—Yoik*. Book and 3 CDs. Stockholm, Sweden: Sveriges Radios förlag. (Original work published 1969)

Bäckman, L., Kjellström, R. (1979). *Kristoffer Sjulssons minnen—Om vapstenlapparna i början af 1800-talet—Upptecknade af O. P. Pettersson [The accounts of Kristoffer Sjulsson on the Sami from the Vapsten area in the beginning of 19th century—as recorded by O. P. Pettersson]*. Stockholm, Sweden: Acta Lapponica 20. Nordiska Museet.

Fellman, J. (1906). *Anteckningar under min vistelse i Lappmarken. Andra delen [Recordings from my sojourn in Sápmi. The second part]*. Helsingfors, Finland: Finska Litteratursällskapets Tryckeri.

Foster, T. (2008). Against separatism: Jace Weaver and the call for community. *American Literary History*, *20*(3), 566–578.

Gaski, H. (2003). *Biejjien baernie—Sámi Son of the Sun*. Karasjok, Norway: Davvi Girji.

Gaski, H. (2004). When the thieves became masters in the land of the shamans. *Nordlit* 15(Summer), 35–45.

Gaski, H. (2008). *Ivdnesuotna [Coloured thread]*. Guovdageaidnu, Norway: DAT.

Gaski, H. (2010). *Time is a ship that never casts anchor. Sami proverbs*. Kárášjohka, Norway: ČálliidLágádus. (Original work published 2006)

Gaski, H., & Kappfjell, L. (2005). *Åvtese jåhta [Moving forward]*. Guovdageaidnu, Norway: DAT.

Keskitalo, A. I. (1976). Research as an inter-ethnic relation. *Acta Borealia B. Humaniora*, *13*, 15–42.

Krupat, A. (2002). *Red matters: Native American studies*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Krupat, A. (In press). *That the people might live. Loss and renewal in Native American elegy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Kuokkanen, R. (2007). *Reshaping the university. Responsibility, indigenous epistemes, and the logic of the gift*. Vancouver, Canada: UBCPress.

Kuokkanen, R. (2009). *Boaris dego eana. Eamiálbmogiid diehtu, filosofiijat ja dutkan [Old as the earth. Indigenous peoples' knowledge, philosophies and research]*. Karasjok, Norway: ČálliidLágádus, Sámi Academica Nr 2.

Mihesuah, D. A., & Wilson, A. C. (Eds.). (2004). *Indigenizing the academy. Transforming scholarship and empowering communities*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Minde, H. (Ed.). (2008). *Indigenous peoples: Self-determination, knowledge, indigeneity*. Delft, the Netherlands: Eburon Academic Publishers.

Mudrooroo, N. (1997). *The indigenous literature of Australia. Milli milli wangka*. Melbourne, Australia: Hyland House.

Neihardt, J. D. (1972). *Black Elk speaks*. New York, NY: Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster. (Original work published 1932)

Nickul, K. (1977). *The Lappish nation: Citizens of four countries*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic series.

Pirak, A. (1937). *Jåhttee saamee viessoom [A nomad and his life]*. Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksells boktryckeri.

Porsanger, J. (2004). An essay about indigenous methodology. *Nordlit*, *15*(Summer), 105–120.

Smith, G. H. (2003). *Kaupapa Māori theory: Theorizing indigenous transformation of education and schooling*. Paper presented at NZARE/AARE Joint Conference, Kaupapa Māori Symposium, Auckland, New Zealand, December 2003.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London, England: Zed Books. (Original work published 1999)

Turi, J. (2010). *Muitalus Sámiid birra [An account of the Sami]*. Kárášjohka, Norway: ČálliidLágádus, Sámi academica. (Original work published 1910)

Turi, J. (2012). *An account of the Sámi*. Translated by Thomas A. DuBois. Kárášjohka, Norway: ČálliidLágádus.

Vizenor, G. (1994). *Manifest manners: Postindian warriors of survivance*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.

Vizenor, G. (2009). *Native liberty. Natural reason and cultural survivance*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony. Indigenous research methods*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.

Womack, C. (1999). *Red on red: Native American literary separatism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.