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Beaivváš – an institution for Sámi culture management or mainstream entertainment?

The Sámi National Theatre's role in the Sámi community of Norway

Marie Kvernmo

Thesis submitted for the Degree of
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When the idea for this thesis was born in Stockholm 2008, I did not know what adventures lay before me. First, to study at University was far beyond my dreams of what I thought I could achieve. To travel alone to the other side of the world and actually accomplish my plan was a second thing I thought was impossible. To reach the day when my thesis is done was a third thing I thought never would happen. Now I am here, – I did it all!

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Abstract

After the Sámi awakening movement in the 1970's which culminated in the Alta conflict in 1981, the Sámi theater Beivváš was created to highlight the Sámi language and culture in Norway. The theater became a success and was at first one of the main spokesmen for the Sámi people in the political and cultural contexts. As Sámi rights were recognized, Beivváš and several Sámi institutions were established as a piece in the Sámi nation building process. In the process where Beivváš went from a free theater group to a fixed item on the state budget, the Western theater form became applicable to the Sámi theater. Beivváš has faced huge challenges in the management of the institution and has now come to a critical point in the development where the choice seems to be between commercialization of ancient Sámi arts- and cultural expressions or a closing of the Sámi national theater.

This thesis' purpose is to describe and analyze Beivváš' past and present role in the Sámi community in Norway and discuss a prospective solution for the theater's role in the future. To look how other Indigenous peoples solve their culture preserving challenges, I have visited TIPA – the successful Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts in Dharamshala, India. The exile-Tibetans' strategy for culture management is examined and discussed to determine whether TIPA is a possible model for how to conduct the Sámi culture institution Beivváš in the future.

(Photo Front page: Ridnoaivi2013/Mienna)



Beaivváš' first theater production *Min duoddarat* (Our highlands) 1981 (Photo: Dagbladet)



The performance *Hamlet*, at the Ice Globe Theater in Čohkkiras/Jukkasjärvi, Sweden 2003, (Photo: Harry Johansen)



The outdoor performance *1852/Kautokeino Rebellions*, 2008 (Photo: Marit Anna Evanger)

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1 Introduction

“Sun, my Father, please receive me. I'm coming for getting strength, the strength we need when we once again shall resist the powers that are most dangerous for our people - from ancient days to the present. Please receive me Sun, my Father.”¹

For centuries, since the beginning of colonization, conquest and occupation, the world's Indigenous peoples have fought to protect their cultures, values and ways of living from extinction. The struggle for equality and recognition continues. One of the Indigenous peoples' strategies for survival today are to build institutions and use the rights of self-determination to preserve, revitalize and develop their cultures and languages in an appropriate direction.

In the North, in Guovdageaidnu Norway, the Beivváš Sámi National Theatre's role as culture preserver in the Sámi community is questioned. Some claim that the theater is out-of-date, while others believe Beivváš is an important institution to preserve Sámi culture. Beivváš claims itself to be a cultural institution whose mission is to strengthen Sámi language and identity as well as promote and develop Sámi traditional artistic expressions. Is Beivváš the important culture institution it intends to be or just mainstream entertainment?

In the East, in Dharamshala India, the cultural institution Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts has the same intentions as Beivváš has. But in contrast to Beivváš, TIPA is considered as the most important culture preserving institution for the exile-Tibetans. TIPA's strategy for keeping the Tibetan ancient culture alive appears to be successful. Is there something Beivváš can learn from TIPA in terms of culture management?

1.1 Background for choice of topic and research question

With this thesis I aim to survey Beivváš' role in the Sámi community in Norway and discuss what a Sámi theater institution could be to best serve its people. This discussion is mainly based on ethnographic fieldwork and informants. In addition I use the Tibetan institution TIPA for comparing and contrasting to Beivváš.

When I started the Master's Program in Indigenous Studies at the University of Tromsø, I had already chosen to do a research on Beivváš and TIPA. My education in Sámi

¹ Lehtola 2008: p.54. The noaidi's request to his father, the Sun, in *the play Váikko čuođi Stálu...* (My translation from original written by Ingor Ántte Áilu Gaup and Beivváš: “*Beivi Áhčážan, váldde mu vuostái. Mun boađan oaččundihte vuoimmi, dan vuoimmi maid mii dárbašit go vuot galgat dusttet daid fámuid mat ledje várálepmosat min álbmogii – dološ áiggiid rájes otnáš ráddjái. Váldde vuostái mu, Beivi Áhčážan*”)

theater, European classical drama and theater studies, Educational science and yoik, as well as my work experience as an actor and drama teacher in a Sámi community, was decisive for my choice of topic. In addition to caring for my own Sámi culture, it has always been an interest to learn about other Indigenous peoples' cultures and lifestyles. As a Sámi artist I have had the privilege to perform and cooperate with other Indigenous peoples on both national and international stages. Through this work I have realized that our struggle for preserving our Indigenous cultures has many similarities. For Indigenous communities, the performing arts are important factors contributing to culture preservation and identity strengthening work.

Beaivváš Sámi Nášunálateáhter (hereafter *Beaivváš*) is a Sámi culture institution which was established for the purpose of expressing Sámi culture through performing arts. For this work, they make use of the European classical theater model and customs as a method for strengthening Sámi culture and identity. *Beaivváš* faces major challenges in many ways as a Sámi culture institution. The discussion on what is Sámi theater has been ongoing since its beginning. Now the discussion has gained new fervor. In March 2014, the Sámi Parliament plenary approved plans for a new theater building for *Beaivváš*.² It means that the theater starting in 2018 can increase the activity and develop the company to a larger cultural institution. The time has come for a discussion on how a future Sámi theater could be, in which direction to go to best serve the people.

Also other Indigenous people struggle to preserve their culture and strengthen their identity through performing arts. The Tibetan people have established the *Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts* (hereafter *TIPA*) due to the spiritual and political importance of preserving Tibetan ancient heritages of religion and culture. *TIPA* is considered to be the most important ambassador for the genuine Tibetan performing arts throughout the world and have a high status among its own people. It has five decades of experience preserving, promoting and developing the ancient Tibetan culture's performing arts expressions. Because of *TIPA*'s consciousness of its own culture and their responsibility in culture management, I consider it to be the right and qualified institution for comparison and contrasting to *Beaivváš*.

There are other Indigenous theater institutions I could have used for this comparison, but a meeting with *TIPA* is the reason why it was chosen. The Sámi Jienat Choir—which I was a member of—attended a musical peace project where the choir had the pleasure to make a performance with *TIPA*. In a conversation with the Artistic Director at *TIPA*, I was informed about the institute's culture management strategy. He explained that at the same

² NRK Sápmi: <http://www.nrk.no/sapmi/godkjente-byggeplanen-1.11581875> (06.03.2014)

time as they educate Tibetan youth in interdisciplinary performing arts, they preserve and promote their ancient culture and develop it in accordance with Tibetan values and worldview. Their strategy of cultural survival seems so universal and smart to me that I was convinced that we can learn something from the Tibetans in our management of our own ancient culture. To have a solid background for comparison, I went on ethnographic fieldwork to Dharamshala to survey TIPA's working methods and status among the exile-Tibetans.

Beaivváš and TIPA have much in common when it comes to intention and mission. But, I am aware that the two institutions are different at other levels, especially considering the extremely tense political situation Tibetans are living under. I am also fully aware that Tibetans are not formally recognized as Indigenous peoples, but if we look what ILO-convention 169 applies to, the Tibetans fit exactly into the description.³ The Sámi former UN's expert on Indigenous Peoples, John Bernhard Henriksen commented on the Tibetan people's status:

“By definition, the Tibetans are also regarded as Indigenous, even though they have not actively made use of what we may call Indigenous rights platforms internationally. Tibetans apparently meets all the conditions imposed in order to be recognized as Indigenous.”⁴

There are differences in the economic circumstances of Beaivváš and TIPA as well, in addition to the fact that TIPA is a cultural institution with other missions than presenting performing arts only. This is explained in more details in chapter 4. Another aspect that we should keep in mind is that the Tibetan culture represented by TIPA is rooted in the Buddhist philosophy and way of life. Despite these differences, there are actually more that unites us than divides us. If we look at it on a large scale, Tibetans are in the minority in both India and China and struggle with the same issues as Sámi and other Indigenous people have done and are still doing worldwide; to survive as distinct peoples with own languages, cultures, lifestyles and worldviews. This thesis is centered on the institution of Beaivváš, located in Norway. Although Sámi live in four countries, I will focus my research on the Sámi people in Norway, mainly in Guovdageaidnu. Beaivváš tour areas span three countries (sometimes they visit Russia too). There are three reasons why I chose to limit the research area to Norway

³ ILO-convention 169, article 1

⁴ Comment from Henriksen to NRK Sápmi, 8.10.2010. (My translation. «Per definisjon er jo tibetanerne også å anse for urfolk, selv om de ikke aktivt har benyttet seg av det vi kan kalle for urfolksrettighetsplattformene internasjonalt. Tibetanerne oppfyller åpenbart alle vilkår som stilles for å anerkjennes som urfolk.») http://nrk.no/kanal/nrk_sapmi/1.7327530 (20.05.2014)

only. First, it will take too long time and too many resources to cover the entire area Sámi area. Second, Beivváš is established in Guovdageaidnu and fully financed by the Norwegian Government and the Norwegian Sámi Parliament. Third, different approaches are applied in terms of Indigenous peoples' rights issues and cultural policies and priorities in the four states the Sámi live in. In order to survey the situation of Beivváš I did ethnographic fieldwork in Guovdageaidnu. My research questions are:

1. What role does Beivváš have in its own community with regard to preserving Sámi culture and strengthening Sámi identity?
2. How does Beivváš pursue its mission as a Sámi culture institution?

With the facts, perspectives and views mentioned in this chapter 1.1, I consider the focus on Beivváš' status, work and development to be very relevant. My motivation for this research is to contribute to the public discussion on the Beivváš role as a Sámi cultural institution. These reasons as well as my love for both peoples and cultures have been the inspiration and driving force behind this academic research.

1.2 Research method

This thesis is a case study of Beivváš with a comparative glance at TIPA and based on ethnographic fieldwork in the Sámi community of Guovdageaidnu, Norway and in the Tibetan exile community in Dharamshala, India. I visited both places in order to investigate what roles the two art institutions have in their respective communities. I chose qualitative research methods which mainly uses interviews and informative conversations, in combination with participating and descriptive observations. In less academic terms, I used my five senses included my voice, heart and brain. I visited the institutions to hear and look what they do there, smell the building's fixtures and fittings, feel the atmosphere, touch the costumes, masks and wigs, taste their chai or coffee and talk with the employees. To meet the audience I went to the shows and visited other public places like cafés, temples, libraries, shops and pubs. This allowed me to get in touch with the people and to talk with them about their relationship to culture, to their culture institutions and to life in general. This was my method to build relationships between the informants and myself and between their environment and me. By building such relationships I aimed to understand things in its original context because I believe one cannot isolate information and take it away from its environment. Then it loses its validity and an important dimension –the human dimension.

In academic research it is controversial to talk about using the heart, too, but it is included in all you do, whether you call it ontology, epistemology or axiology. In my research, the heart symbolizes the human dimension or the humanity. How can you do research if you have no positive passion for it? In this connection one may ask whether the ruthless research on Indigenous peoples throughout history had been different if the researchers had allowed themselves to use more heart and had not regarded and treated people as objects only. I support myself to Dalai Lama's soft power policy which seem appropriate to use, especially in connections with the Tibetans; love and compassion in all you do. I believe then it cannot be wrong. That Dalai Lama has become the entire world's (except from China's) symbol of love, peace and humanity today, I hereby take it seriously into account.

No research is completely objective. I have tried as much as possible to put things in perspective for the best way to get a clear picture of the situation. However, researching my own home place was particularly challenging in terms of objectivity. To become outsider to my own past is an unattainable state. In that case I must lose my memory. To strive to achieve complete objectivity is perhaps not a good idea either, according to Eber Hampton of the Chickasaw Tribe who believes that there is always a motive for doing a research, and that it is actually on the basis of feelings that you do research:

"Emotionless, passionless, abstract, intellectual research is a goddam lie, it does not exist. It is a lie to ourselves and a lie two other people. (...) When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to the people around us."⁵

My interview methods have changed between the unstructured or non-standardized interview and semi-structured interview as described by Chilisa, where the structure of the interview is completely or partially flexible.⁶ I have accommodated to the informants and the category to which they belong, where the employees answered by virtue of their position in the institution and as professional theater scientists and the private persons answered out of their individual interests and perceptions. Some interviews can be characterized more as conversations rather than as questions and answers. Except from one interview which was done via the internet using Skype, I met the informants at their work, school, or other public place such as a café. All interviews were personal, either just with the two of us, – or as in Dharamshala – with the interpreter present. All of the informants were presented the code of business conduct for the

⁵ Wilson 2008: p. 56

⁶ Chilisa 2012: p. 205

interview and data collection aligns the Norwegian data directive, with total anonymity if they wanted it. All interviews were recorded with the permission of informants. Both recordings and texts have been stored on private data files, secured behind personal password according to the regulations.

The informal conversations have taken place at random places at random times, when the topic has come up naturally. These conversations have been both private and with several interlocutors present. Sometimes I have just observed and listened to other people's conversations on the topic and not participated myself. I have also followed discussions on social media. Although I do not give these sources especially weight, it has added many interesting viewpoints worth taking into account.

My observation of the two institutions and their audiences differs. In Guovdageaidnu I was a participating observer at several theatre plays performed by Beaivváš to get an impression on how the plays were received by the audience. To describe my observer role I have employed the terminology from the non-Indigenous American, James Spradley. He characterizes a participant observer to one who “comes to social situation to engage in activities appropriate to the situation” and who “observe the activities, people, and physical aspect of the situation.”⁷ This describes quite accurate what I did. Unfortunately I did not get the opportunity to observe TIPA in Dharamshala in the same way since there were no performances shown at that time. However, when a teacher from TIPA invited me to observe while he taught traditional Tibetan dances to a middle school class at TCV, I got the chance to do passive participant observation by being bystander.⁸

Audio recording was absolutely necessary, even in the interviews when the informant didn't speak English or other language I understand, because it helped me remember the situations and settings. In my case, most of the Tibetan informants spoke very good English but with a strong accent which I hardly understood in the beginning. By recording the interviews of both the Sámi and Tibetan informants, I could listen many times to a certain sequence until I fully understood it. All the interviews from the audience in Dharamshala were transcribed by my Tibetan assistant because the informants spoke partly in English and Tibetan. Two of the interviews were only in Tibetan where my assistant translated simultaneously as he transcribed. At the interviews at TIPA the interpreter or transcriber were not necessary due to their good English language skills. In my text where informants are quoted I have standardized the language without changing words or meanings.

⁷ Spradley 1980: p 54

⁸ Spradley 1980: p 59

Other important and updated sources of information are the internet web pages of Beavvváš, TIPA, the Sámi Parliament and the Tibetan Central Administration. (While I have written thesis, the TIPA's webpage closed down in January 2014, but I have a printed version available). I found a short summary about TIPA's history, written in English, in the TIPA history book from 2010. Since available literature on TIPA is limited, the Tibetan interviewees are the most important sources of information. In addition I have watched private videos of TIPA recorded in Stockholm 2008 as well as official movies produced by TIPA about TIPA on the internet. About Beavvváš; in addition to the Sámi interviewees, supplementary information is from their annual reports and other publications as newspapers and Norwegian broadcasting NRK Sápmi.

The research is of quite a different character in the two institutions and in the communities hosting Beavvváš and TIPA. This is because I have lived and worked in Guovdageaidnu for more or less 30 years where I have periodically been an employee in the Sámi theater from 1985 to 2010. Before I met TIPA in Stockholm in 2008, the institution and Tibetan culture was almost completely unknown to me, though I once before had performed with an artist educated at TIPA.⁹ In Guovdageaidnu the information was easy to get access to because I speak the language and know the culture. The Beavvváš' reputation is spoken about in the daily life and many channels like news on TV, newspapers, internet and among the audiences. It was easy to be colored of the people's opinions in both negative and positive ways. However, the information gave an overview and base for deeper research. These possibilities of investigations I missed to a large extent in Dharamshala because of the language difficulties and my limited knowledge of Tibetan culture in the Tibetan diaspora. Thus, the standard of references in this thesis is naturally more supplementary in the Sámi community than in the Tibetan. Since the main focus of this thesis is concentrated on Beavvváš, I considered detailed research in Dharamshala to be unnecessary. As tools for the fieldwork in both communities I had an iPod recorder, camera, pen and paper and my laptop.

The four groups of informants who have contributed are employees working at the institutions and representatives from the audience in both Guovdageaidnu and Dharamshala. From TIPA I interviewed three employees from the artistic management's section which all happens to be males, and two random students, - a young man and a young woman. From Beavvváš I interviewed two actors at permanent post, one of each gender. The employees at both institutions did not find it uncomfortable to get mentioned by titles in the research since

⁹ Described in chapter 3.4.3

they gave interviews by virtue of their professions. For the same reason I have chosen to mention them by their function as employees, for instance theater manager, actor, student, opera master, etc. Regarding Sámi and Tibetan informants representing the audience, I have aimed to get both genders represented in various ages and from various walks of life.

I have four groups of informants which I have chosen to separate by belonging and function. Employees at Beavvváš Sámi Teáhter and TIPA are named with their professions and belonging as Beavvváš-actor, TIPA-student, etc. Informants from the audience in the Sámi and Tibetan communities are named with belonging and number, as Sámi 1, Tibet 2 etc. A complete overview on the informants is presented in the appendix.

All together with observations, participating, interviews, informal conversations, literature, press publications and internet research I have tried to make a comprehensive picture of the situation of the two institutions' role in their own communities. However, all research is done with the purpose of obtaining material for a survey on Beavvváš. The internet has been a valuable source to find documents, films and official webpages, especially regarded to the Tibetan issues. There are not much available sources to find in libraries and archives, so I am very grateful that this documentation is available on internet. Still, I have considered the internet sources as secondary or supplementary. But, I have to mention that to search information about Tibet on internet can be a risky affair. I was warned about this by a journalist in Dharamshala. Due to the Chinese crack-down on Tibet, the official Tibetan webpages can be infected to prevent disadvantageous critics on China leaking out.¹⁰ I can't tell if this was the reason, but the fact is that my PC together with my external hard disk collapsed three times on a half year during my work on this thesis. In these computer crashes I unfortunately lost one interview from a Tibetan and three from Sámi informants, in addition to valuable documentary materials as films and photos from Dharamshala. So I hereby warn the readers not to open the Tibetan internet links unless the computer is protected with an advanced anti-virus program.

1.3 My multiple roles as researcher

The role as an Indigenous researcher in own community is complicated because there are multiple ways of being an insider and outsider in Indigenous contexts, states Linda Tuhiwai Smith.¹¹ This describes my situation well as an Indigenous researcher in my former

¹⁰ One example: Aftenposten 08.02.2012. <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/Tibet-komiteen-hacket-fra-Kina-6758408.html> (20.01.2014)

¹¹ Smith, Linda T 2012: p. 138

hometown Guovdageaidnu, but another factor came in addition: By interviewing two opposite groups in one community, the researcher role became even more multilateral. I had the double role as both insider and outsider at the same time among both categories of informants. In addition, being an insider at the theater meant being an outsider among the public and vice versa. It was might easy to arrange and conduct interviews in own community, but the many roles in relation to the two groups brings the double responsibility for the consequences of the research. Smith remarks: “Insider research has to be ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and positions.”¹² A special awareness is necessary when research takes place in an already vulnerable and pressured Indigenous community. I have kept that in mind from the beginning to the end of this work, in both Sámi and Tibetan communities.

It was important for me to establish a relationship of trust in both places. In Sápmi it was already established to a high degree during my years as employee at Beaivváš and as Sámi citizen in general. In Dharamshala I spent more time getting to know informants and explain why I am doing research on this. It was clearly an advantage where the Tibetan informants already knew about Sámi people. For the uninitiated it was necessary to tell them a little about my culture, showing pictures and sharing music. Like Sámi people they had bad experiences with some Western researchers. Intentionally, I was very open about my research topic and my own Indigenous background to reduce the risk of being considered an uninspired Western tourist on a spiritual and cultural shopping trip, or an outside academic who builds a career on Indigenous peoples’ misery. The introduction to my culture was a way to prepare the informants for the interview, to consolidate our equality and to set a framework for a fruitful conversation. This method is mentioned by Kovach: “Indigenous researchers have included cultural methods by incorporating them in the research design, but not as formal data-collection methods.”¹³

Among the members of the Tibetan diaspora I considered myself an outsider in general, but an insider in the minority and Indigenous concept. Among some employees and students at TIPA I felt more of an insider than outsider because we knew each other personally through our performances and stay three years before in Stockholm. For the other employees and students at TIPA I assume I was completely outsider.

¹² Smith, Linda T 2012: p. 140

¹³ Kovach 2010: p. 128

1.4 Research with an Indigenous perspective.

In context with my role as an Indigenous student in the program Master of Indigenous Studies, I see myself not only allowed, but obliged to “conduct my own research” and “articulate my own research paradigm.” as Wilson expresses it.¹⁴ This way of doing Indigenous academic work is in accordance with the international Indigenous paradigm which is prevailing among Indigenous scholars around the world. For Indigenous peoples to have an academic voice within Indigenous research is a part of the decolonizing movement.¹⁵ Due to this, I aim to put the research in a Sámi perspective and also an Indigenous perspective. It is a choice that requires listening to Sámi and other Indigenous peoples and using literature and theories by Indigenous peoples where it is obtainable. This includes making your own voice heard, too. This decision is due to a single reason which is fundamental for Indigenous research: It is essential to do a research on the Indigenous peoples’ terms and from the Indigenous peoples’ world view. For me as a Sámi it means contributing to the development of the Sámi community in a direction we want ourselves as I, a member of our community, understand it.

In order to bring up the Indigenous perspective it seems reasonable and necessary to listen to ourselves on what concerns valuation, research and development. One statement which seems to explain my opinion in short is the one from Maurice Squires: “All problems must be solved within the context of the culture –otherwise you are just creating another form of assimilation.”¹⁶ (The term Indigenous perspective is explained more profound in chapter 2.1.3). But I underline, my intention in using Indigenous research methodologies, is not to disregard the mainstream Western academia, non-Indigenous scholars and their theories. It is rather an attempt to conduct research which suits my people. Bagele explains: “Just as Euro-Western research methodologies are Indigenous to the Western academy, its institutions, and the dominant group, postcolonial Indigenous knowledge is connected with the colonized and the historically oppressed.”¹⁷

In accordance with the Indigenous paradigm I have chosen to use Indigenous authors as much as possible. In the methodology I will especially mention Shawn Wilson, Margaret Kovach, and Cora Weber-Pillwax - all from Canada, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Graham Hingangaroa Smith from Aotearoa, Bagele Chilisa from Botswana and Rauna Kuokkanen

¹⁴ Wilson 2008: p.53-54

¹⁵ Wilson 2008: p.53

¹⁶ Kovach 2010: p. 75

¹⁷ Chilisa 2012: p. 98

from Sápmi. Still, Indigenous literature was not available on all topics I treat in this paper, but I have aspired to let the Indigenous voice be the keynote speaker.

As an Indigenous researcher I have for ethical reasons and in respect for the Tibetan people, intentionally made a detailed presentation on the Tibetans and their state as oppressed people (chapter 4). I want their voices to be heard, too, and I aspire to render it as they present it themselves. I believe by bringing attention to their situation, I give something back to the Tibetan people and their community which so kindly assisted me, and thus my community, in this research.

This thesis presentation design is a mix between academic writing and storytelling. The design is a conscious choice and due to what I find appropriate with regard to the culture and theater topic, the Indigenous methodology, the Indigenous perspective and the use of traditional Indigenous knowledge in research and analysis.

1.5 Literature overview

It was a challenge to find published academic literature about Beavvváš, at least written by Sámi themselves. One book I will emphasize is the Sámi professor Veli-Pekka Lehtola's *Muitaleaddjiid Maŋisboahttit, Beavvváš Sámi Teáhtera historjá*, published in 2008. He presents Beavvváš' history and development chronologically and examines the impact the theater has had over the years in the Sámi community. This is based on archival material and interviews with instructors, actors, theater directors and other staff at the theater. The theater's importance as seen from the audience's side is only presented to a small extent through public debates and not through interviews. Lehtola is investigating why theater –according to his findings– became the leading Sámi art genre, and how the theater with the help of art built Sámi common experiences of today's world.¹⁸ The book is written in Northern Sámi language.

It was even a bigger challenge to find literature on TIPA in a language I understand. One of the Tibetan basic literatures is Joanna Ross' book about the Tibetan unique performing art: *Lhamo, Opera from the Roof of the World*, published in 1995. In addition to giving a rich description of the ancient culture expression, it provides a short presentation of Tibetan culture, Tibet's modern history and the history of TIPA. The non-Tibetan author Ross worked at TIPA as a volunteer and her enthusiasm for, and interest in, Tibetan opera resulted in the first book written in English on the topic. She underlines the book does not claim to be an academic work, but at-that-time director of TIPA gives his acknowledgment by hoping “this

¹⁸ Lehtola 2008: Book's back-page

book will provide useful references to students, scholars and artistes in the future.”¹⁹ Since the book is acknowledged by the leadership of the institution, then and now, I consider it as a reliable and representative source for the Tibetan performing art Lhamo, and TIPA.²⁰

The North-Norwegian author Jens Harald Eilertsen, writes about Beaivváš’ history in Norwegian language. He has included the Sámi theater in the North-Norwegian theater history in the book *Polare Scener. Nord-Norsk teaterhistorie fra 1971-2000*, (Polar Stages, North-Norwegian theater history from 1971-2000) released in 2005. The book is about the development of the professional theater activity built on the region's own resources. This overview is based on archival material, interviews, theater critics and publications. He calls the emergence of Beaivváš “a fairytale story with a lot of power, love and perseverance.”²¹

The English language book *Aboriginal Voices* from 1992, edited by professor of theater and drama Per Brask and anthropologist Willian Morgan, treats the phenomenon of Indigenous theater in general. Here Beaivváš is included in a study on theater activities of Amerindians, Inuit and Sámi. The book contents a collection of essays and interviews by various authors involved in Indigenous theater, exploring the characters and purposes of the Indigenous theater groups. “[They]...all have formed theater groups to tell their stories of their cultures, yesterday and today, to themselves and to non-natives.”²²

As far as I know, there has not been larger academic research on Beaivváš from Sámi scholars, except from Lehtola. The American theater scientist Dr. David Dwight Schuler did his PhD on Beaivváš in 2004 and noted: “They have been a model for Indigenous theatres around the world. Their culture fascinates me, because there is a survival component to it. With everything they have been through, they have continued to adapt and survive.”²³

Literature on Sámi history is from the book *Indigenous Peoples. Resource, Management and Global Rights*, written by Svein Jentoft, Henry Minde and Ragnar Nilsen. Minde views the challenge of indigenism and describes the Sámi situation during the Indigenous movement where the struggle for Sámi land rights and self-government is central topics.

¹⁹ Ross 1995: Foreword by director Ngodup Tsering

²⁰ The book was recommended to me by an employed at the research and publication section of TIPA

²¹ Eilertsen 2005: p.7

²² Brask & Morgan 1992: p. x

²³ University of Wisconsin-Platteville news January 2012: <http://www3.uwplatt.edu/news/uw-plattevilles-schuler-long-time-researcher-saami-theatre-saami-display-platteville-public> (25.05.2014)

1.6 The thesis outline

The first chapter presents the background for the choice of topic, the research area and research question, research methodology and fieldwork, my role as researcher, an explanation of the Indigenous perspective that permeates the thesis, and a presentation of the literature.

The second chapter reports on the Indigenous situation, definition of Indigenous peoples, the international legal framework applying to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination in research, stories from Indigenous encounters in the cultural arena, an explanation of Indigenous theater and examples on Indigenous culture's position among its people.

The third chapter is a presentation of Beivváš, a resume on Sámi history, the Beivváš' origin, its history and work from its initiation till today, the administrative and artistic structures of Beivváš, reflections from my employment in the Beivváš, observation from the fieldwork, the yoik and storytelling basis in Sámi theater, and a brief analysis of Beivváš position in Sápmi.

The fourth chapter is a presentation of the Tibetan people, their history, their political and cultural situation, the relationship between Sápmi and Tibet, TIPA's administrative and artistic structures, a presentation on TIPA's role, work and mission in the Tibetan diaspora, glimpse from the students' situation at TIPA, and a resume of my research results about TIPA.

The fifth and last chapter presents the discussion on the Beivváš' cultural and social role in the Sámi community, based on research data from fieldwork, literature and publications. Further, Beivváš is compared and contrasted to TIPA's cultural management strategies, a discussion on Beivváš and the Sámi Parliament's culture perspectives, and analysis of the findings. This chapter also views Beivváš' challenges and presents and suggests prospects for Beivváš' future policy and priorities as a cultural institution with TIPA as an example. It is providing a perspective on the Beivváš present and future by using the Sámi shaman drum as modern analytical tool, and finally gives a summary of my findings and the research question's results.

2 The Indigenous peoples' world

Sámi and Tibetans belong to the international Indigenous community. There is certain background information that needs to be presented in order to make it easier to understand the challenges Indigenous peoples have to contend with. This chapter will provide a relevant overview of the world's Indigenous peoples' state today. The first part is based on the United Nations publication *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples (SOWIP)* from 2009.²⁴ It describes Indigenous peoples' history in general with an additional focus on their identity, art and culture development. Further, I give a short overview on the legal framework applying to Indigenous peoples, with a special focus on the Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination within research. This is very relevant due to my choice of using Indigenous methodology in this thesis. I have also provided space for Indigenous cooperation in political and cultural arenas, in addition to the characteristics of Indigenous theater. My experience and role as artist and culture worker among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and as Indigenous student, is reflected in the text.

2.1 The state of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The world's Indigenous peoples' status has changed for the better after the global Indigenous movement started in the 1960's. In addition to the international human rights applying to all people, specific laws and conventions were designed to give Indigenous peoples the necessary protection, like the International Labour Organization's (ILO) *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention C169* and the *United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*. This comes together with national laws and constitutions in each state they live in. Before these rights for protecting Indigenous peoples were made, the UN convention *International Covenant on Civil and Political rights (ICCPR)*, a part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1966) was an important instrument in the global Indigenous peoples' movement. Article 1 states; "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." Especially article 27 from the same covenant has been important for claiming Indigenous peoples rights. It tells:

²⁴ SOWIP 2009: p. 1-9, 51-77.

“In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.”

In spite of Indigenous peoples’ rights today, SOWIP claims that the Indigenous peoples’ traditional ways of living are to a large extent threatened after centuries of colonization and oppression, sometimes even by extinction. The peoples and their cultures are dominated and influenced by their colonizers and the modern world’s mainstream lifestyle and perception of welfare. In all corners of the world, Indigenous peoples struggle to survive as distinct peoples and to protect their values and lifestyles from disappearing into the dominating communities.²⁵

Protection and developing of culture and language are one way to maintain identity and distinctiveness. Indigenous peoples, as well as others, express their cultures and identities through many channels; on the political arena, in religious connections, through social behaving and through art. A good example of art institutions are *Beaivváš* and *TIPA* that are discussed in this thesis. Artistic expressions have always been characteristics of a culture and identity from the very beginning of human existence. Through folk art we have learned about ourselves and other peoples’ lifestyles, values, principles, codes and the land we and they live in. Artistic expressions work as a communicator between people and generations, and can be expressed in both tangible and intangible ways.

To protect an ancient culture’s heritage from extinction and at the same time follow global development, seem to be a huge challenge. Preservation and development of the cultural arts requires adaptability and innovative thinking. How can the old be combined with the new for sustained culture management? Indigenous nations all over the world have adapted to modern Western means and methods for use in their work for protecting and developing their cultures. One of these nations is the Sámi, which has established several educational and cultural institutions after Western model in Sápmi to save and develop Sámi language and culture.

SOWIP states that globalization is a mixed blessing for Indigenous peoples. On one hand globalization has made it easier for Indigenous peoples to raise networks and organize

²⁵ SOWIP 2009: p. v, 21

with other groups around the world, on the other hand their lands and cultures are exposed for exploitation by the outside world.²⁶

2.1.1 Who are Indigenous Peoples?

“Indigenous peoples are custodians of some of the most biologically diverse territories in the world. They are also responsible for a great deal of the world's linguistic and cultural diversity, and their traditional knowledge has been and continues to be an invaluable resource that benefits all mankind.”²⁷

These words are from the foreword of the SOWIP publication. They state further that “Indigenous peoples continue to be over-represented among the poor, the illiterate and the unemployed.”²⁸ The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) notes that Indigenous peoples constitute at least 370 million individuals representing more than 5000 different peoples. “Their problems are in many ways similar, in others, depending on the nation-state within which they live.”²⁹ There is no stated definition of who Indigenous peoples are, but ILO-169 takes a practical approach and provides criteria for describing the peoples it aims to protect. Self-identification is considered as a fundamental criterion for the identification of Indigenous and tribal peoples, along with the criteria outlined in article 1:

(a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;

(b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

Self-identification as Indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply.

²⁶ SOWIP 2009: p. 70

²⁷ SOWIP 2009: p. v,

²⁸ SOWIP 2009: p. 21

²⁹ IWGIA web page: <http://www.iwgia.org/regions> (01.05.2014)

2.1.2 The rights of Indigenous peoples

The ILO-Convention 169 of 1989 is the foremost international legal instrument which deals specifically with the rights of Indigenous and tribal peoples. The main principle of the convention treats the Indigenous peoples' right to preserve and develop their culture, and the government's duty to take measures to support this work. Norway ratified this convention in 1990, as the first state in the world. The UNDRIP is a political and moral instrument which establish obligations on a national level. "The declaration establishes universal minimum standards for the rights of Indigenous peoples, and contains important provisions on Indigenous peoples' rights as e.g. the rights to self-determination," writes Gáldu.³⁰

The Tibetan struggle for autonomy operates on the very basic level of universal human rights. According to The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy's (TCHRD) annual report 2013, a covenant such as ICCPR is not even ratified.³¹ "The ICCPR was signed by China fifteen years ago but was not ratified and China only announced in 2011 that it was beginning steps towards ratifying the treaty."³²

Comparing to the Tibetans, Sámi are on the opposite end of the scale of advancement when it comes to rights. In addition to the international laws treating all Indigenous peoples, we are protected by the Norwegian laws. The Norwegian King Harald said at the opening of the Sámi Parliament in 1997 that Norway is founded on the territory of two peoples, the Norwegian and the Sámi. In the national laws, particularly §110a (added 1988) in the Norwegian Constitution, applies to the Sámi: "It is incumbent upon the state government to pave the way for the Sámi people to secure and develop their language, culture and community." and explains it with:

"With this paragraph have the Norwegian authorities set out a legal, moral and political commitment to facilitating the conditions so that the Sámi people themselves should be able to ensure and affect the Sámi community's development. The paragraph gives the Sámi people themselves an active role with regard to safeguarding their interests. The constitutional clause is designed to provide both protection and development."³³

³⁰ Gáldu is the Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, located in Guovdageaidnu: (my translation) *Erklæringen fastsetter universelle minstestandarder for urfolks rettigheter, og inneholder viktige bestemmelser om urfolks rettigheter til land, vann og ressurser, samt urfolks rett til selvbestemmelse.* <http://www.galdu.org/web/index.php?sladja=56&vuolitsladja=121&vuolitvuolitsladja=26&giella1=nor>

³¹ TCHRD 2013: p. 68. <http://www.tchrd.org/2014/01/tchrd-releases-2013-annual-report-and-special-report-on-re-education-through-labor/> (20.02.2014)

³² TCHRD 2013: p.158

³³ Regjeringens Stortingsmelding/Government White Paper 55 (2000-2001). (My translation from original: «Det paa ligger Statens Myndigheter at lægge Forholdene til Rette for at den samiske Folkegruppe kan sikre og

2.1.3 Sámi self-determination practiced in academic research

Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination have given us the possibilities to development in our political, social, cultural and economy spheres. Within the field of education it means, among other factors, that Indigenous peoples can educate scholars for developing our communities "in accordance with their own priorities," as former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous peoples James Anaya states about Indigenous peoples' self-determination in general.³⁴ Since Indigenous peoples are now actively using their self-determination rights and want the responsibility of their own academic researches, it has gradually lead to a paradigm shift in Indigenous research, directed by Indigenous peoples themselves.³⁵ This is discussed and confirmed by many Indigenous scholars in the Indigenous methodologies field during the last decade. The result is that research *on* Indigenous peoples has changed to be research *by* and *for* Indigenous peoples. In my opinion, this change of perspective evokes more consciousness and responsibility on our own advancement. To acknowledge this advancement I chose to use Indigenous methodology to view my research from an Indigenous perspective, and to promote and not prevent this positive effect of self-determination that has turned out to be constructive for us. With this subchapter, I give focus on the benefit of Indigenous methodology in Indigenous research, presented by the voices of Indigenous scholars around the world. I also highlight some of the challenges I have to deal with as an Indigenous student in a non-Indigenous university.

The former President of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament, Ole Henrik Magga³⁶ lectured at the international conference "Sámi self-determination: Scope and Implementation", where he pointed out that:

“[T]he purpose of Sámi research must be to provide research results that are useful in terms of maintaining and developing Sámi society, and to safeguard Sámi language and culture. ...[K]nowledge is sometimes used as a political instrument of power through the majority population often consciously emphasizing the knowledge they

udvikle sit Sprog, sin Kultur og sit Samfundsliv. ... Med denne paragrafen har norske myndigheter fastsatt en rettslig, politisk og moralsk forpliktelse til å tilrettelegge forholdene slik at samene selv skal kunne sikre og påvirke det samiske samfunnets utvikling. Paragrafen gir samene selv en aktiv rolle med hensyn til å ivareta sine interesser. Grunnlovsparagrafen er utformet med tanke på både vern og utvikling.»
<http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/asd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/20002001/stmeld-nr-55-2000-2001-/3/4.html?id=325836> (01.05.2014)

³⁴ Gáldu Čála 2008: p. 13.

³⁵ Wilson 2008: p. 52-54

³⁶ The first President of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament 1989-1997, the first Chairman of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2002-2004, now professor in Sámi Linguistics at the Sámi University College in Guovdageaidnu. http://nbl.sn.no/Ole_Henrik_Magga (01.05.2014)

have themselves produced or possess, and that Sámi knowledge is often ignored because of this ulterior power motive.”³⁷

Taking the responsibility to do research from an Indigenous perspective in order to develop our own community, is based on the modern way of thinking I find among several other Indigenous researchers. The Australian Indigenous scholar Rigney describes the purpose of Indigenous research as: “Indigenous peoples are at a stage where they want research and research design to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggle, as it is defined and controlled by their communities.” He explains that this is because, “Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non-Indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values.”³⁸

During centuries we have experienced that Western research on Indigenous peoples has not benefited Indigenous peoples’ development much, rather it’s the opposite. To use Indigenous scholars as much as possible seem reasonable to me because we have roughly the same platform by experiencing the consequences of colonization and marginalization. I assume scholars who have Indigenous backgrounds know more of the Indigenous peoples’ issues because they are a part of it. They have their daily lives in an Indigenous community, and their lives are not a 9-5 job which can be left at the office. Therefore I rely more on our own and other Indigenous peoples’ judgments and theories on matters that concern us.

Weber-Pillwax writes:

“Indigenous research methodologies are those that enable and permit Indigenous researchers to be who they are while engaged actively as participants in research process that create new knowledge and transform who they are and where they are.”³⁹

Kovach characterize the research from twentieth century to, “These early qualitative studies were responsible for extractive research approaches that left those they studied disenfranchised from the knowledge they shared.”⁴⁰ By these statements I interpret it as Western academic theories and research designs are unsuitable for an Indigenous peoples’ research and that an Indigenous paradigm is preferable. This process of self-determination within academic research is a decolonizing of mind and “to break free from the frames of Western epistemologies” as the Sámi scholar Jelena Porsanger expresses it. She states that

³⁷ Gáldu Čála- Journal of Indigenous Peoples rights No 2/2008, page 15.

³⁸ Rigney, Lester-Irabinna (In Wilson 2008): p. 54-55.

³⁹ Weber-Pillwax 2001: p. 174,

⁴⁰ Kovach 2009: p. 27

Western epistemology is suited to Western academic, which in most cases differs from the Indigenous way of thinking.⁴¹ Graham Hingangaroa Smith describes the Maori peoples' "shift in mindset" as a vital initiative in their development. They changed from being reactive to proactive to avoid "the politics of distraction," a strategy that is implemented by the colonist to retain Indigenous peoples committed to defend, explain, etc., instead of developing.⁴² Another Sámi scholar, Rauna Kuokkanen, points out that;

"The ultimate goal of an Indigenous paradigm is to reach a self-sustaining and self-defining state of Indigenous societies, to reconnect the fragmented parts of knowledge and return to the holistic philosophy in research."⁴³

These decolonizing views from the Indigenous scholars support my decision using an Indigenous approach to the studies and use Indigenous methodology to explain my research analysis (in chapter 5.2). "The research methods have to mesh with the community and serve the community."⁴⁴ If we are to manage and develop in accordance with our own priorities, it is necessary to be more proactive. One important practice experience from the theater stage which easily can be transferred into our daily real life of Indigenous peoples is: The space is not given to you. You have to take it and fill it yourself.

To walk the Indigenous path within research is complicated, seen from my point of view. This is because it exists in a dichotomy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous academia. In addition, the mainstream academia system does not facilitate a new path in research, not even in the Indigenous studies program. I think the will is there, but the experience and expertise is not yet sufficient. The Indigenous research development should have been better in Norway, considering that the country is regarded as a homeland for two nations who have lived with each other since time immemorial, and are by law equal in all spheres. Even though Sámi are among the most privileged of the world's Indigenous peoples, our rights to self-determination within research, is obviously not yet an established practice, not even in Norway. My experience is that it is difficult to combine Indigenous methodology with mainstream methodology and theories, because one often undermines the other. The dichotomy occurs in the minority–majority relationship and in our different worldviews. The Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson once visited my university and held a private lecture,

⁴¹ Porsanger 2004: p 107.

⁴² Smith, Graham H, 2003: p. 2

⁴³ Kuokkanen 2000: p. 420,

⁴⁴ Weber-Pillwax 2001: p. 168

arranged for a handful Sámi, me included. It was a relief to hear a lecture by someone who had the right map matching the terrain. Wilson together with the other Indigenous scholars' confirms my understanding of the Indigenous world, the Indigenous paradigm and gives me self-confidence to speak with *my* voice, for *my* people to the benefit for *our* development the way *we* think is best for us.

2.2 Cousins in spirit

It is much easier to operate as Indigenous in the culture field. Our story of occupation and colonizing is basically the same all over the world, but this common destiny has its good sides, too. The past decade attention to Indigenous peoples' situation and the establishment of international Indigenous communities have provided opportunities for international cultural exchange and cooperation between us. Political cooperation programs such as the UN's Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) and Arctic Council conferences etc. are events that have become important venues for Indigenous peoples to meet, feel kinship, exchange experiences and expand our network of contacts and stand in solidarity together.

In the cultural arenas here in Sápmi, like on festivals and concerts, we often find that through these meetings special friendships arise between the members of the Indigenous groups. In spite of language difficulties we have the will to build bridges between each other with help of various culture expressions like dance, music, performances, spiritual ceremonies, rituals and outfits. Indigenous peoples stand out by actively using their traditional costumes to show their identity. Distances notwithstanding, one can find many striking similarities between the Indigenous folk costumes with regard to the use of materials, symbols and decorations. Our traditional music's vocal expressions can be very similar, too. In some cases, an untrained ear cannot distinguish yoik, chant from the North American natives, or song from the nomads in Tibet from each other.

A good example of an Indigenous peoples meeting is when the Sámi choir *Sámi Jienat*⁴⁵ met TIPA. In August 2008, 12 members of the choir traveled to Stockholm to attend the *Vox Pacis* project.⁴⁶ The project was a musical workshop with participants from 15 different cultures/countries representing the five largest world religions. The intention with the project

⁴⁵ Sámi Jienat is a Sámi choir with members from all over the Sámi area, performing yoik, psalms and modern Sámi music. www.samijienat.com (01.05.2014)

⁴⁶ Vox Pacis - The Voice of Peace was founded in Stockholm 2006 and aims to musically, artistically, intercultural and interfaith work for peace and reconciliation in the world through dialogue and cultural encounter, initiated by the Swedish producer Gunilla Nordlund. www.voxpacis.org (01.05.2014)

was to create dialogue between the different religions by means of cultural expressions. On the 9th of August, at the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, a concert with Sámi Jienat, the students from TIPA and monks from the Buddhist Gyuto-monastery was set up. It became a success.⁴⁷ In spite of the fact that we just met and had only a couple of hours rehearsal time, different languages, cultures and religions, we experienced an excellent collaboration. It revealed a surprising number of similarities between the Tibetan and the Sámi cultural expressions. Through music, prayers, and dance we became very familiar with each other and really enjoyed each other's performing arts. The mutual friendship was easy to see during the 17-day-long stay in town because where there was a Sámi, there was also a Tibetan, and vice versa. The choir members and myself, experienced the Tibetans to be both strangers and close at the same time, like a cousin you meet for the first time.

Very often we Sámi realize that we have more in common with people on the other side of the earth than with people from our own country. In this opinion about common fellowship we are not alone, it is mutual, and I will refer to Wilson, writing:

“Travelling and meeting people from different cultures has always held a fascination for me. My upbringing taught me to treasure differences between cultures, though in meeting Indigenous people in Canada, United States, South-east Asia, Norway, New Zealand and Australia, I have noticed that we share similar beliefs and common spirituality. I have often wondered how Indigenous peoples from opposite sides of the earth could have values that are so alike.”⁴⁸

Seen from a large scale perspective, Indigenous peoples seem to have more similarities than differences. It is not only because we meet somebody who really understands our situation, but basically we have no conflict going on with each other as we do with our colonizers or invaders. As an example, although Sámi and Norwegians have lived side by side for centuries, there are still underlying conflicts that come to the surface now and then, especially in regard to questions about rights, equality and identity. It is in these discussions I can find that there is suddenly growing a gap between myself and my non-Sámi friends, relatives, neighbors, colleagues etc. This estrangement can operate both ways. It seems easier to have a dialogue where both parts are equal to each other, –when they have same platform.

It is not always an obvious explanation of why it is easier to get in tune with other Indigenous peoples than your non-Sámi neighbor. Common destiny and common consolation

⁴⁷ NRK Sápmi: <http://www.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/404374/> (01.05.2014)

⁴⁸ Wilson 2008: p. 32

of course unites, but there is often more than just the outward things. The spiritual perspectives and worldview of Indigenous peoples should also be taken into consideration when it comes to uniting factors. “Spirituality is the relationship human beings create with the spirit world in order to manage forces that seem overpowering” writes SOWIP. It continues:

“Indigenous spirituality is intimately linked to the environment in which the people live. For Indigenous peoples, the land is the core of all spirituality and this relationship to the spirit of the earth is central to all the issues that are important to Indigenous peoples today.”⁴⁹

Also from my perspective, our common spirituality is our relationship to the environment where we see ourselves as part of nature, a relationship that requires us to be on good terms with it in order to survive. This understanding and perception is shared by Indigenous peoples and this cosmo-vision is probably another reason why one feels a close kinship and fellowship with each other. Is it always necessary to analyze good feelings and explain it with words? When you don't have a common language, a good heart and free spirit can be enough to establish a sincere friendship. In Sámi, when people are in tune without knowing each other, we say “*Min vuoiñjat dovddadii*” -*Our spirits recognized each other*. We can also say our spirits are cousins.

2.3 Indigenous Peoples' Theater, a path toward cultural empowerment

I think most people agree with me when I state that the most important elements in a human life are to belong to a community, to have an identity and a mission. Identity can be expressed through culture and language, and for minorities and oppressed peoples', culture and language can be the elements who rescue a peoples' existence from extinction, collectively or individually. In the last 30-40 years Indigenous peoples around the world have adopted the Western theater art form of expression to preserve their cultures and present their identity. Indigenous peoples mix their own traditional performing arts with the Western theater form and use the theater as a mean to enhance, transform and retell their culture, viewed from their standpoint. One can say that they use the Western theater language to reach out with their message to be heard and understood.

In my experience, often the non-Indigenous spectators see the performances as an exotic form of entertainment rather than a mediator between cultures. For Indigenous peoples themselves, their theaters are supposed to have a more complex role than just entertainment.

⁴⁹ SOWIP 2009: p. 59

This is confirmed in Brask & Morgan's book where we get a glimpse into the Indigenous theater's world. Here Morgan states that Indigenous theater can contain rituals, education, storytelling, and be a political manifesto and a repository of folklore and history. Further, he explains that Indigenous peoples have adopted the Western-style of stage presentation to tell their story, present their culture and way of life and to give them back their cultural identity after centuries of oppression by the colonial powers. In addition to presenting cultural expressions and stories, Morgan points out that Indigenous peoples' theater has a function as a powerful tool to heal both the individual and communal psychic wounds of a people.⁵⁰ This description corresponds well with how I have experienced Indigenous theater during my work in Beavvváš and as individual artist home and abroad.

To describe how an Indigenous theater can be received among Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences, there is a story I want to share. In 1985-1986 when I worked in the Beavvváš theater as actress, we had a production named *Váikko čuođi Stálu...* (*Even if a hundred Ogres...*) The performance was a journey in the Sámi colonial history where Stállu/Ogres symbolized all the threats that the Sámi people have been exposed to over the years, as for example robbers, kings, tax collectors, priests, anthropologists, and were symbols such as alcohol, cultural imperialism and public reports. We played for both Sámi and non-Sámi audience. Among the non-Sámi audience we experienced that some did not recognize the play and left, some received it as a wonderful, exotic cultural fairytale, while others were terrified and apologized that they had been ignorant to the Sámi history. In the Sámi areas we experienced that many in the audience wept through the performance. One example of how the Sámi audience received the performance can be interpreted in an experience from Guovdageaidnu in 1985 with the same play: After the first act, most of the audience sat as paralyzed in the chairs and we didn't get much applause when we walked off the stage. Later I was told it was not because they did not like the performance, but because they had personal relations to what was told and suffered because of that. As one Sámi spectator expressed after the performance: "That story is nothing to applaud!"⁵¹

This can be an example of how Indigenous theater can be completely different interpreted by insiders and outsiders. This can also indicate that Indigenous theater has a dual role, as a healer and an identification for the insiders, and a culture educator for the outsiders. Undoubtedly, Indigenous theater can be an effective and important tool to rebuild a disempowered culture.

⁵⁰ Brask & Morgan: ix-xviii

⁵¹ «Den historien er faen meg ikke å applaudere!»

2.4 Indigenous culture, — deadly important.

I believe the concept of culture exist among all peoples in the world, Indigenous or not. If you look up “culture” on internet, the German-American anthropologist Franz Boas’ definition on culture comes up. In my eyes his definition seems to be universal:

“...the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.”

In the SOWIP publication, culture is described with an Indigenous viewpoint as an amendment: “Culture is also that aspect of our existence which makes us similar to some people, yet different from the majority of the people in the world.”⁵² Seen from a positive side, Indigenous peoples can use their culture consciously to distinguish themselves from the dominant cultures, and to individually and collectively strengthen their identity. TIPA and Beivváš are clear examples on that.

Although the theater itself is a peaceful way to preserve and promote one's own culture, it is not always perceived that way. The Indigenous world is unsafe, also for artists and performers. We Sámi are not risking much by being champions of our culture. Of course we get exposed to some harassment every now and then from private individuals who dislike Sámi, but we have freedom of speech and never have to fear for our physical lives because of our involvement in cultural affairs. In many other countries it is extremely dangerous to be an artist and express love and commitment to your culture and way of life. In Tibet, many Tibetan artists are imprisoned and tortured for singing songs that are perceived as anti-China propaganda. Some artists disappear, no one knows where they are or whether they are dead or alive.⁵³ They are considered as threats to the Chinese dictatorship.

One example of how risky it is being Indigenous artist in other parts of our world, I have personally experienced through the encounter with Sotz’il, a Mayan theater group from Guatemala. They participated as teachers and performers for the Indigenous Youth Gathering at the Riddu Ridđu Festival in 2010 where I was a worker in the youth project. I was very fascinated and impressed with their recreation of a nearly lost Mayan culture, and it urged me to find out more about their methods and strategy. After the festival the group came to

⁵² SOWIP 2009: p. 52

⁵³ One example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFLPB8Bj3ik> , <http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=34906&article=China+arrests+popular+Tibetan+singer+after+packed+concert> (27.05.2014)

Guovdageaidnu where I got to discuss more with their leader Lisandro Guarcax about the Maya culture's visions, practices and spiritual heritage. He said he was the headmaster of a school for Mayan children, the spiritual leader of the village and worked actively to preserve the Maya language and culture. He welcomed me to Guatemala to do fieldwork in their theater and in their village Sololá. I had begun to plan for fieldwork in Guatemala when I got a phone call informing me that he was kidnapped and found in a ditch outside the village, tortured and murdered. It happened just four weeks after he left Guovdageaidnu. He was the third from the Sotz'il-group who had been killed in the recent years because of their engagement in reviving and revitalizing Maya culture.⁵⁴

Obviously, culture kills and culture rescues in the world of Indigenous peoples. This chapter I will end with a quotation of an inmate from Torres Strait Island, an Aboriginal who was allowed to participate in cultural activities whilst incarcerated:

“I'd be dead; I would be dead if I didn't have my culture. That's how much it meant to me especially when I was in jail ..., I can express myself in my culture, I can talk to people that have lived the same things, you know(...) Yeah culture just gave me so much release from everything, it allowed me to express myself, yeah no without it I'd be dead, I truly believe I would be dead, I don't think I would have lasted five years in jail without my culture...”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Gáldu: <http://galdu.org/web/index.php?odas=4720&giella1=nor> (01.05.2014)

NRK Sápmi: <http://www.nrk.no/sapmi/riddu-artist-bortfort-og-drept-1.7272401> (01.05.2014)

⁵⁵ A former prisoner quoted in the Aboriginal scholar Noritta Morseu-Diop's PhD, *Healing in Justice*, page 124.

3 The Beivváš Sámi National theatre's background and work

Beivváš means “The little Sun.” The sun is a life-giving source that spreads warmth and light to the earth and creates life here. In Sámi mythology the Sun is the greatest of the heavenly God powers. Here the Sun is our father and the Earth is our mother. The son of the Sun is our ancestor, and the daughter of the Sun obtained reindeer to us. The sun-symbol is a very important symbol in the pan-Sámi culture and appears in many contexts, e.g. in decorations and rock carvings. In the old Sámi pre-Christian religion and in spiritual connections the sun symbol has a central position, like on the *meavrresgárri*, or so-called Shaman drum.⁵⁶ At one version of the Sámi *meavrresgárri*, the sun symbol is in the very middle of the drum with four roads to each direction where the other powerful Gods, Goddesses and symbols are placed.⁵⁷ By using the sun as symbol, the Beivváš theatre identifies itself as a powerful star in the middle of the Sámi “national soul.” The theater themselves says the name is “symbolizing both the life-giving power of the sun and the importance of bringing Sámi cultural identity out into the light.”⁵⁸

The Beivváš theater aims to strengthen Sámi identity through the production of plays of professional quality in the Sámi language and promote the Sámi culture in Norway and abroad. One challenge is the economy. Another challenge is the theater's ideology. Beivváš is a young theater, but it has still undergone much change. In the period from being an idealistic and poor independent theater group to become a national theater in the state budget, much change has happened in the theater's politics and performing style under guidance of various leaders. One can say that Beivváš has gone from being an idealistic amateur theater to a high culture institution in 30 years. This chapter will mainly be a presentation on Beivváš' history, intention, status and daily work within the fields of preservation, promotion and development of Sámi material and immaterial values. The explanation is mainly based on Beivváš' publications, informants and the literature of the Sámi culture professor Veli-Pekka Lehtola and the Norwegian author Jens Harald Eilertsen. Because of my involvement in theater over the years, I have chosen to write in my own experience and point of view as a supplement.

To get a comprehensive picture of the theater's position in the Sámi community, I present a short overview of relevant Sámi history in Norway based on information from the

⁵⁶ The drum/instrument the noaidi use to get connected to the spiritual world.

⁵⁷ South-Sámi shaman drum.

⁵⁸ Beivváš webpage: <http://www.beivvas.no/en/about-the-company> (20.01.2014)

Norwegian Sámi Parliament, Beivváš and articles written by professor in history Henry Minde. Further I give and a briefly presentation of Guovdageaidnu where the theater is located. My presentation of the Beivváš must be seen in the light of that I have worked periodically in the theater from 1985 to 2010.

3.1 A short resume of Sámi modern history

Sápmi, our traditional territory is split in four pieces by the national boundaries of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, and we are thus a matter for four different governments. All states recognize Sámi as Indigenous peoples. Except from Russia, the states have voted in favor of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but only Norway has ratified the ILO Convention 169. Although the Sámi having co-operating councils across the borders, the different governances is further separating Sámi from one another, particularly in rights issues but also in language- and cultural policies and priorities. The following is a short overview of our political and cultural awakening, mainly in Norway, (but with certain ripple effect to the other Scandinavian countries). The report is mostly based on Minde's article *The Struggle for Sámi Land rights and Self-Government in Norway 1960-1990*.⁵⁹

After centuries of alternating governments' harsh colonization policy, forced Christianization and Norwegianization, our culture was in the process of disappearing and our people assimilated into the Norwegian society. After the Second World War's focus on human rights, and the international Indigenous movement in the 1960-70's, a strong awareness grew among us Sámi about our language, culture and way of life. Networking with other Indigenous peoples around the world and the recognition of the Sámi as Scandinavia's Indigenous people gave us the possibilities and confidence to stand up for our rights, not only politically but also culturally.

One specific case that had a strong impact on the development of the Sámi political, cultural and social life in Norway, was the establishment of the power dam in Čávžo, Alta. The Norwegian Government's decision of developing Alta-Guovdageaidnu-watercourse in 1979-81 awoke strong protests among us Sámi people. The fact that the electric power dam building had significant consequences for both our people and reindeer pastures on the area was not taken into account by the government. The painful case and demonstrations got attention beyond national borders and the state of Norway was strongly criticized by the international Indigenous peoples' organizations.

⁵⁹ Jentoft/Minde/Nilsen 2003: p. 75-104.

The development of the huge power station started as a local nature protection's case but escalated to a fight on Indigenous peoples' rights where the Sámi people were put on the Norwegian political agenda. Although we lost the bitter battle and the dam was built, albeit in a smaller scale than initially planned, this was the turning point for us Sámi in Norway to start the run towards Sámi self-government.⁶⁰ The Norwegian Sámi Parliament characterizes the Alta case as a watershed in the Sámi politics in Norway. During this conflict between the Sámi and the state government, Sámi were recognized as both a minority and Indigenous peoples. The government opened up to meet Sámi requirements, and in cooperation with Sámi organizations, Sámi rights were examined.⁶¹

In the autumn of 1989 two of the most important Sámi institutions in Norway were established and opened; the Norwegian Sámi Parliament⁶² in Kárášjohka and the Sámi University College in Guovdageaidnu. These institutions are now the responsible key players for the development of politics, science and education that concern Sámi people in Norway. Though our language and culture are still threatened by extinction, we Sámi are now one of many strong forces contributing to the international Indigenous peoples' political issues.⁶³

3.2 Guovdageaidnu - a culture and education center in Sápmi

Guovdageaidnu⁶⁴ is the largest Sámi municipality in Norway in land area and in terms of Sámi speakers which is more than 85%. Among the approximately 3000 inhabitants in the whole municipality, about 2000 live in the village and the rest live scattered in hamlets around. These figures are taken from the Guovdageainnu Suohkan's (the local council's) fact-pages about themselves. The pages states that reindeer is the largest industry in the county, and along with other outlying, reindeer husbandry is the mainstay of the Sámi culture.⁶⁵ Sámi culture in general has an important place in society where many make their living on culture and art of various kinds. According to the Norwegian Culture Index 2013, Guovdageaidnu has the highest number of employees in artistic work and holds third place nationally over the number of self-employed artists per capita. Beaivváš is a significant contributor to the cultural

⁶⁰ Jentoft/Minde/Nilsen 2003: p. 75-104.

⁶¹ Sámediggi webpage: *Duogaš, Historjá*. <http://www.samediggi.no/Samedikki-birra/Duogas> (01.05.2014)

⁶² The Swedish Sámi Parliament opened in 1993 and the Finnish Sámi Parliament opened in 1996, (In Finland the *Sámi Delegation (Sámi Parlamenta)*, founded under a decree, was a predecessor to the Sámi Parliament, and operated from 1973-1995.) A temporary Russian Sámi Parliament was established in 2010.

⁶³ The most known internationally are Ole Henrik Magga, the first president of UNPFII and John Berhard Henriksen, the UN expert on Indigenous issues.

⁶⁴ Guovdageaidnu is the original Sámi name on the Norwegianized "Kautokeino", and means «midway».

⁶⁵ Guovdageainnu Suohkan:

<http://www.kautokeino.kommune.no/finnmark/kautokeino/kautokeinok.nsf/id/F195C4E3B5CB172241256C5500485580?OpenDocument> (25.02.2014)

life of the community and is the very reason that the municipality is actually highest on the list of performing arts and public visits per capita in recent years, according to the report.⁶⁶

Guovdageaidnu is often referred to as the Sámi cultural capital, and the above mentioned local council describes it as “one of the premier showcases for Sámi culture.” In addition to the tourist industry and various activities within Sámi arts and culture, a wide range of Sámi education and research institutions are established in Guovdageaidnu. Besides primary and secondary schools, the Sámi University College is located here. It offers Sámi teacher training and education in various disciplines within the social sciences, industry, handicrafts and Sámi languages. The Sámi University College is housed in the newly built (2009) Sámi competence center Diehtosiida, along with Sámi key bodies: Sámi Parliament’s Upbringing and Training Department, Sámi Archives, The International Center for Reindeer Husbandry, and Gáldu, – the Resource Center for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. All these institutions have Sámi as a primary language. Of the total amount of various small and large institutions and businesses located here with their cooperation and benefit of one another, one can conclude that there is considerable expertise in education, research work and cultural management in the Sámi small town “in the middle of nowhere.” Guovdageaidnu – the host municipality for Beaivváš – has supported the theater economically and morally, as well as with housing since it started.

3.3 Four Sámi theaters in three countries

Beaivváš is not the first nor the only proscenium-theater or staged theater in Sápmi during the history. Some enthusiasts gave occasional performances with a presentation of Sámi culture in the postwar time and into the sixties⁶⁷, but a Sámi permanent theater began with the Dalvadis Theatre in the early 1970’s. Two Sámi women established the theater in the northern part of Sápmi on the Swedish side of the border.⁶⁸ They took up current issues with political messages presented from a Sámi perspective, but they also had performances based on Sámi mythology. Due to the Alta conflict and the Sámi political awakening the interest in theater increased in Sápmi. The stage became an arena for political messages from the Sámi society. More Sámi theaters were established during this period, such as Åarjelhsaemien Teatere in Southern Sámi area, Rávgoš in Ohcejohkka in Finland and Beaivváš in Guovdageaidnu Norway. The groups had different distinctive characters, but the theater activity in the various

⁶⁶ Norsk Kulturindeks 2013: p. 9,10,15.

⁶⁷ Lehtola 2008: p. 19-20

⁶⁸ Lehtola 2008: p. 21

places in Sápmi had arisen out of the same need and because of the contradictions between the Sámi and the majority society.⁶⁹

Dalvadis was dissolved in 1991, but Sámiska Teatern was established in 2001 in Kiruna with a permanent state grant and now represents Sámi theater in Sweden.⁷⁰ Rávgoš laid down the activities in 2003 due to financial difficulties. Áarjelhsaemien Teatere is located in Mo i Rana and tours across borders in the entire Southern Sámi area, in addition to guest performances in the northern area.⁷¹ Beaivváš have had theater-related cooperation not only with other Sámi theater groups and artists, but also with the many non-Sámi regional theaters in northern Scandinavia all the way from the establishing phase of the theater.⁷² So far (June 2014) Beaivváš is the only Sámi theater with the title Sámi National Theatre.

3.4 **Beaivváš Sámi Nášunála Teáhter's history**

«It was not an intention to start a Sámi theatre at all,» “The intention was to make a small rock-musical on some poems written by Nige-Niillas Áilu,⁷³ introduced to me at Christmas 1979... But after the huge success with the musical “Min Duoddarat”, we started to think of establishing a permanent Sámi theater.⁷⁴

1981, as a direct result of the Alta power dam building, the Beaivváš was born. It began with a group of young Sámi artists who got together to make a satirical play about what happened in the battle of the Alta River. Most of them had actively participated in the demonstrations, were removed with police force from the area, and fined or punished by the authorities in other ways. The first theater performance was as much about identity as about politics and the visualization of the Sámi rights battle drew lot of audiences, both Sámi and Norwegians. Although it may not have been the intention to start a permanent Sámi theater, it was obviously a need in the society to have a mouthpiece and a crucial reason why the theater became permanent.

Eilertsen tells the story of Beaivváš where he gives an uplifting image of the Sámi theater. He includes Beaivváš in the northern Norwegian theater history and portrays it as successful and equitable to the north Norwegian theater institutions. In his history of

⁶⁹ Lehtola 2008: p. 21-26

⁷⁰ Sámiska Teatern webpage: <http://www.samer.se/1268> (19.11.2013)

⁷¹ Áarjelhsaemien Teatere webpage:

http://www.asteatere.no/no/om_teatret/historie/%C3%85arjelhsaemien+Teatere.9UFRjMZp.ips (02.07.2014)

⁷² Eilertsen 2005: p. 170, 311, 381.

⁷³ Ailo Gaup, Sámi author and shaman, originally from Guovdageaidnu.

⁷⁴ Beaivváš-actor 1

Beaivváš, the Norwegian theater critics and cultural journalists had their say in the form of reviews and comments of the plays. This can to some extent tell the status Beaivváš has among the non-Sámi audience and review the theater from a non-Sámi perspective. However, Eilertsen himself has not interfered in the internal Sámi culture debate. His description of the theater is mainly on the practical concerns. Lehtola pictures Beaivváš more nuanced and profoundly, viewed from the inside of the theater. Lehtola presents a detailed picture where the informants' voice appears and the institutional concept is more in the background. Both authors divide the theater's history into different eras. These epochs are essentially based on Beaivváš' administrative, political and artistic challenges and development. I have chosen to divide its history into five periods where the direction changes in the theater's policy are clear in my opinion. Of course, it's not quite distinct partitions in each era, as the periods overlap.

3.4.1 The idealistic and nationalistic period, 1981-1991

Lehtola describes the first years of the period as nationalistic where Beaivváš was a battlefield for recognition of Sámi identity and self-image. The theater plays were primarily about the contradictions between the Norwegian and the Sámi community and emphasized the Sámi language and Sámi values.⁷⁵ One of the founders and actors of the theater said in the interview that he wanted a theater business to provide the Sámi community a theater, “but it was not so much to establish a theater for theater's sake, but mostly to raise the status of the Sámi language and culture.”⁷⁶ After the first successes the idea of a permanent Sámi theater occurred, with the vision that the theater should be based on Sámi art and culture and to be run by and for Sámi.⁷⁷

The work to establish a Sámi theater institution has been difficult in many ways. The period when the theater went from being amateur to professional, was very rough. The theater was on one side a resounding success among the audience, on the other side it was economically ignored by the state. In 1987 the Norwegian government guaranteed the theater a trial period of three years with financial support. It was a period marked by administrative difficulties and unstable management, successes and failures, high and low activity, until the theater in 1991 was finally established with permanent yearly financial support from the government. The need for recruitment of trained theater people started to be urgent, and in 1989 a year-long Sámi theater course was initiated in Inari, Finland. However, the permanent

⁷⁵ Lehtola 2008: p. 180

⁷⁶ Beaivváš-actor 1

⁷⁷ Eilertsen 2005: p. 173

actors at Beaivváš were not granted leave to attend the program.⁷⁸ Though many of the participants from the course were engaged in Beaivváš afterwards, no one was permanently employed. If there was an economic or preference-related reason for this, it is unknown.

The very first years of the theater's existence were an experimental period where the theater was searching for its identity; a Sámi characteristic performing style which reflected and protected the Sámi values. During most of this period there was the collaboration with other Indigenous cultures and their performing art expression, an important step to stand out from the European theater traditions.⁷⁹ In the end of this period Beaivváš became a permanent theater with a stable economy and changed from a flat to hierarchical control structure. Although Beaivváš was described from the Norwegian Theater Council (Teaterrådet) as innovative and important for the Sámi culture development,⁸⁰ there seemed to be a certain condition the theater had to accept to be recognized and thus become permanent institution: To prove their artistic and administrative qualifications in theater art, as the Norwegian cultural authorities and experts recognized it. If I see it from a critical Indigenous cultural and political point of view, the price to become a permanent Sámi theater institution was to adopt the classical Western way of theater understanding and management.

I was 19 years when I stumbled into the Beaivváš theater by accident. It was late autumn in 1985 when the theater needed actors for the new play *Váikko čuođi stálu...* and contacted the employment office in Guovdageidnu. I was a job seeker at that moment and was hired to the theater by the "work for unemployed benefit" – arrangement. There were weeks of hard work. In the week before the premiere, we worked almost around the clock. At the most I had 16 -hour workdays. One example which describes the conditions we were working under during this production: In a short break while technicians tried out the lighting, I lie down on the stage floor and fell asleep immediately. I was completely indifferent to the many headlights that alternately beamed me right in the face, just happy that they kept me warm.

The musical-visual play was an idea of the actors Knut Walle and Sverre Porsanger, but we had no manuscript. We made the play on stage where everyone contributed with ideas and solutions, under the direction of Walle. Everybody dealt with everything at once. It happened that one of the actors disappeared in the middle of rehearsals for calling to the ministry to argue about funding, while another ran to the library to look up facts on Sámi history for use in the play. The road was made while walking, in artistic, administrative and

⁷⁸ Lehtola 2008: p. 79

⁷⁹ Lehtola 2008: p. 181

⁸⁰ Eilertsen 2005: p. 230

economic contexts. We were rewarded; *Váikko čuođi stálu...* was the play that lifted Beivváš from being amateur to a professional theater. But, the lack of money stopped further activity that year because almost the whole year's budget was spent on the “Stállu.”⁸¹ After the Nordic tour in the summer 1986, all the actors were laid off without pay. I didn't apply for job in the theater the next years, but attended the Sámi theater school in Inari, Finland from 1989-90. The one year long program “Sámi Teáhterkursa” administrated from Lapin Korkeakoulu in Rovaniemi⁸² was set up to educate professional Sámi actors for work in Beivváš.

Enthusiasm, idealism, anger over discrimination and oppression, patriotism, unity, and love of the Sámi culture that finally came to terms, seemed to be the virtually inexhaustible energy source of Beivváš in this first period. Beivváš itself expresses the beginning as; “...a time of unity and commitment and a real struggle for the Sámi culture's survival.”⁸³

3.4.2 Sophisticated Sámi Theater in European theater frames, 1991-1997

In 1991 after Beivváš became a permanent theater it got the first artistic director from outside, the Icelander Haukur Gunnarsson. He was educated in England and Japan. After the unstable nationalistic period of various leading structures and random funding, Beivváš management stabilized under the guidance of Gunnarsson. The theater showed itself to be innovative and professional in all functions. Together with the stylistic Gunnarsson Beivváš established a new image and developed Sámi dramatics, backed up with visual and musical expression which is still characteristic of Beivváš. This style communicated with both Sámi and non-Sámi speakers. As the strategy was in the first period, the theater continued to build on the mixed style where the European practical theater traditions were the framework for presenting Sámi dramatics. Since Gunnarsson was educated in Japan, Beivváš' plays were often inspired by the Japanese theater traditions.

During this period Beivváš chose to remain a classical proscenium theater or thrust stage theater. In practice, there were not any other opportunities at the Culture House in Guovdageaidnu. The premises (or rather lack thereof), has been a determining factor to the theater's development during all the time it has existed. Beivváš has sometimes used outside areas as theater stage. Theater production for outdoor performances were made already in the winter of 1989 and taken up again two years later when the experimental ice theater scene was introduced with the play “Sezuan”.

⁸¹ Eilertsen 2005: p. 224

⁸² Lapin Korkeakoulu is now upgraded to University of Lapland, still located in Rovaniemi.

⁸³ Beivváš Jahkedieđahus 2011: p. 5. <http://www.beivvas.no/se/jahkediedahus> (01.05.2014)

With Gunnarsson Beivváš went from being radical political champions of the Sámi language and culture, to be sophisticated debaters who tackled the Sámi society internal questions and concerns. In addition to having the role as a storyteller for historical material and some classics, the theater also focused to address conditions in the Sámi community that was/ is not usually talked about in public.⁸⁴ This was introduced through their characteristically physical visual form of expression, with music, set design and costumes created by acknowledged and professional Sámi artists.

Although Beivváš theater was recognized as an adequate theater institution by the Ministry of Culture, the financial support from the ministry was not in accordance with the responsibility attributed to the theater. The status of being an innovative and important institution for the development of Sámi language, identity and culture, was not estimated important enough to give room for much development.⁸⁵ The leadership of the theater had many plans for the future management, but a wider advancement was limited by poor funding and unsuitable premises. Almost ten years after the theater course in Inari, a new plan for formal education of Sámi actors was initiated by Gunnarson and Harriet Nordlund. It was made in collaboration with the Sámi University College who sought the Norwegian Culture Ministry to start a formal theater education in Guovdageaidnu. It was rejected. The rejection of a Sámi theater education together with the company's unsuitable work premises put the theater in a difficult situation. Necessary recruitment of actors and other professionals to the theater was not possible and remained a dream.⁸⁶ Beivváš was at a standstill.

3.4.3 The Western mainstream theater period 1997-2003

Both Lehtola and Eilertsen describe that the concept of musical-visual expression, developed through the two first periods, became a characteristic of Beivváš. The following period continued with some of these characteristic expressions, but the program changed from “heavy and serious performances” to be “mainstream entertainment” based on the new theater director Alex Scherpf's wishes.⁸⁷ The next period became mostly dominated by mainstream Western theater entertainment. With the new theater director, the theater's program politics and identity question emerged again. In Lehtola's history book we get to an open discussion from 1998 on the question “What is Sámi theater?” The debate took place in the media between theater director Scherpf, employees at the theater, the public audience, Sámi arts

⁸⁴ Lehtola 2008: p. 183

⁸⁵ Eilertsen 2005: p. 166-174, 222-230 / Lehtola 2008: p. 31-115, 180-183

⁸⁶ Lehtola 2008: p. 112-115

⁸⁷ Lehtola 2008: p. 119

organizations, cultural workers and a Sámi newspaper editor. The discussion was mainly on two themes; the lack of Sámi workers at the theater, and the lack of Sámi content in the theater's repertoire.

The non-Sámi artistic director was accused and heavily criticized for not using Sámi craftsmen in the production of the plays, but picked Norwegian theater workers from the south with no competence in Sámi culture and language. The Sámi debaters asserted that theater knowledge and expertise of those non-Sámi helpers aided the theater only while they were employed. They found inspiration in the Sámi culture to do some innovative theater art work, but went back south with their expertise. The theater was left without this resource it had nurtured. A Sámi *duojár*⁸⁸ expressed: "Beaivváš is hiring employees from Oslo and southern Norway who do not know the Sámi culture at all. When they finish the job, they disappear from Sápmi again and we remain without qualifications."⁸⁹

The theater's choice of repertoire was called anti-Sámi as one play after another was Western theater-classics. For example Shakespeare was performed. The artistic director responded to criticism that there were not enough skilled workers among the Sámi, that he used Sámi as far as was possible, but also used his right to bring workers from outside when he thought it was best. On the choice of Western theater classics he defended his choice arguing that Sápmi is part of the world and that drama can be drawn from world literature.⁹⁰

Eilertsen characterize Scherpf as a communicator who went out into the community and sniffed out what was going on. Some regarded him more as a provocateur. He challenged the Sámi community and theatrical expressions. The visual *Beaivváš* became more a narrative theater, treating contemporary issues from the Sámi society through satiric plays, in addition to present European classics.⁹¹ In this period the theater revolved to a different style that was more "rowdy" and meant to be more "digestible" to the audience; on one side with cabarets, humorous pieces with juggling elements, produced in hometown, on the other side the serious initiator of imposing productions with Scherpf in the leading position.⁹² The latter productions were spectacular performances played outside, away from hometown and in cooperation with Nordic companies. Briefly one can say that in this period the theater became more universal, extrovert and less Sámi historical and political. The style became more mainstream Western entertainment with the Sámi traditional culture expressions more or less in the background.

⁸⁸ *Duojár* is a Sámi craftsman/woman

⁸⁹ Lehtola 2008: p. 124 (my translation)

⁹⁰ Lehtola 2008: p. 117-142.

⁹¹ Eilertsen 2005: p. 376-382

⁹² *Hamlet Ice Globe Theater* in Čohkkiras, Sweden and *Váigasat* in Harstad, Norway

Nevertheless, the cooperation with other Nordic companies gave Beaivváš opportunities for expansion beyond the limits as an isolated, separate theater at the Culture House in Guovdageaidnu. Scherpf's outdoor theater gave Beaivváš a position as a heavyweight in innovative theater arts, far outside the Scandinavian countries. In spite of this national and international recognition as an innovative initiator in theater arts, Beaivváš was not rewarded. There was no increase in the budget from the Norwegian Government. The theater's economic and location situation, development and advancement remained stagnate.

After ten years away from Beaivváš, I was back in the theater again in as actor and singer in 1997. The theater was now fully established with workers as permanent employments in every function. There was much hustle and bustle in and around the theater during the period of Scherpf. He was heavily involved in the cultural life in Guovdageaidnu and Northern Norway and created debates wherever he went. In response to criticism about the theater not using Sámi workers, with or without qualifications, it was during this period that I had the most work in the theater. I was in four plays as a singer, actor or prop manager, and there were many young people who were engaged at the theater in different functions. I experienced the repertoire to become more superficial than before. Now the theater was more informal and rowdy with less respect for the Sámi traditions and perspectives. In addition to the classical plays, the theater engaged in the live Sámi contemporary society, mostly seen from the mainstream perceptions of right and wrong, good and bad.

The theater academic level was high, but the Sámi spirit was low. I got the feeling that the theater was managed from the south during periods because the repertoire was mostly classics not rooted in Sámi history or traditions. In contrast to my first years in Beaivváš where I had the feeling every little detail was scrutinized and measured from a Sámi perspective, the Sámi spirit was now less important. In some ways I felt we were visited by new friends who came to try out another playground and took over the place before they left us alone with a feeling of being mentally and materialistic utilized. However, this period brought new and exciting connections to the theater. In the play *Ayra-Leena* three Tibetan artists participated as guest performers. One of them was son of Norbu Tsering, the late Opera master I got to know at TIPA ten years later. *Ayra-Leena* was a musical and visual meeting between the Tibetan and Sámi mythologies. It was my first meeting with the Tibetan music, dance and language. In my role as actor and backing vocal I also got a glimpse into the Tibetan Buddhism, spinning the Tibetan prayer wheel and reciting mantra.

3.4.4 The Sámi high culture period, 2003-2007

A few years later Beivváš got their first Sámi artistic director, a pioneer within Sámi theater in general, Harriet Nordlund. She had had much contact with Beivváš in many important connections since the theater's inception. After years working with and for Sámi culture across borders, she had broad competence in the field, in addition to formal Western theater education. Lehtola describes a period where Beivváš went from the outgoing to the more private style in which much of the activity and developments happened within the theater. Together with the staff Nordlund created new visions for Beivváš and the new reform was meant to revitalize both the theater content and the performing style. In addition wanting to investigate more closely on Sámi own roots, she took elements from the predecessors in her new profile. Beivváš' new profile became a blend of the first period's exploration of improvisation and debating, the second period's adaptation of the classics to Sámi conditions, and was combined with her visions of going back to the roots.⁹³ Eilertsen describes this period as different as Scherpf's, where Nordlund's roots in a Sámi art environment provided opportunities to focus differently in terms of repertoire. The theater turned toward "the classical and modern drama in Sámi interpretation."⁹⁴ As the years before, Beivváš continued to bring non-Sámi expertise as guest-workers in the productions.

Lehtola portrays Nordlund as someone who particularly cared for preserving Sámi expressions. One actor noted that it was easier to work with her because "She had the Sámi cultural competence inside, she knew Sámi culture, ethics and morality."⁹⁵ Since the Sámi language, storytelling and yoik art was not a subject at any theater school, Nordlund emphasized the importance of organizing a Sámi theater education to ensure recruitment to Beivváš and to build an expertise in Sámi performing art. Nordlund's engagement and planning of a Sámi theater education continued with new plans. One of the measures that were carried out was the start-up of a theater and drama education as an elective in Sámi high school in Guovdageaidnu. Beivváš paid a drama teacher for one year to lead the youth group. Two hours a week the elective students followed Beivváš' work during productions, in addition to create their own performance.⁹⁶ The drama education continued at the high school for one more year, this time with an educated Sámi drama teacher, but a permanent drama and theater education was not established.

⁹³ Lehtola 2008: p. 145-173

⁹⁴ Eilertsen 2005: p. 401

⁹⁵ Beivváš-actor 2

⁹⁶ Lehtola 2008: p. 161

Despite Nordlund's visions for a more pure Sámi profile and the fact that she produced and presented more Sámi dramatics than the years before, she got criticism for a decreasing number of visitors. This showed that the public was still not satisfied. A new discussion started between Beivváš, other cultural professionals and the public. Lehtola gives a profound presentation of the discussion in chapter 6.⁹⁷ The theater was criticized for being too narrow, going status quo and making uninteresting program selections. Nordlund responded to criticism that the number of visitors does not tell all about the artistic development and that statistics can't tell whether they found the right path or not. Although accusatory words were exchanged between the involved parties, it seemed to become a more constructive debate about the theater's future than the last debate. The conclusion confirmed that the theater needs young actors, new theater building and a budget increase to evolve as expected.⁹⁸

In a brief summary up of this period it seems like Nordlund decided to develop the Sámi theater arts with a new reform of going back to the roots. Her concepts and visions of what is good Sámi theater was to some extent at the expense of the theater's popularity. While Scherpf was more outgoing, universal and turned to a wider audience, was Nordlund more introspective and exclusive. The transition from a mainstream theater style to a theater that required a certain competence in Sámi art and philosophy was probably too demanding and confusing for the audience. Beivváš became a kind of "Sámi high culture theater institution."⁹⁹ But of course, still in miniature, limited by tight economy and narrow premises.

3.4.5 Theater in the age of retirement? 2007-

The next period did not bring major changes in the theater. Gunnarsson is back in his second term as director and has mostly continued with his characteristic style with beautiful visuals and sophisticated performances, often inspired by Japanese theater. The repertoire treats a blend of historical, mythological and contemporary matters. He takes the theater out to international stages in Europa and Asia.¹⁰⁰ At home he seems to make the most of it with the present conditions, but the theater is marked with resignation and a loss of spark and vitality.

In January 2011, a minor debate about Beivváš was on again. In NRK Sápmi's culture program *Árdna*, the well-known Sámi literary Harald Gaski claims that theater art is

⁹⁷ Lehtola 2008: p. 171-173

⁹⁸ Lehtola: 171-173

⁹⁹ Sámi 1

¹⁰⁰ Beivváš Jahkediedáhus 2008: p. 4. <http://www.beivvas.no/se/jahkediedahus> (01.05.2014)

old fashioned.¹⁰¹ He raised the question about what benefit the community received from Beivváš in the 30 years it has existed. He listed the major challenges of the theater, as to get the encounter between Indigenous world and Western theater traditions to succeed, and the problems to get young people to the theater. He called attention to the lack of young audience and claims that the theater communicates unsatisfactorily with youth. He hinted that theater, the old cultural genre, may no longer stand as a central arts institution to aim for in the future. Gunnarsson admitted the challenges, but emphasized that the largest challenge has been to create a Sámi theater, in both content and form. This discussion in the Sámi media did not provide a complete picture of the theater's situation and was not nuanced sufficiently. Still, Gaski asked good questions that certainly were, (and still are) relevant.

The limited funding and missing recruitment began to have serious consequences for Beivváš' existence. Statistics from 2003 shows that the average age of the 4 regular actors was 47,8 year.¹⁰² Now, more than ten years later with no replacements, they will over the next few years be at an age where they can retire. Eilertsen claimed that the budget is largely the reason why the Beivváš' development is at a standstill, but the wear on the employees and the lack of opportunities for diversity and innovation could also be a reason. Considering the small arts community Beivváš operates in and the major cultural responsibility they are required, it is perhaps too large of a mission to be fulfilled with the resources they have available, he states.¹⁰³ There is no doubt that the economic limitations together with the unwillingness from the Norwegian Culture Department has put a stop to recruitment, theater education, other advancement or development for Beivváš over decades. The Norwegian government has certainly not "paved the way for the Sámi people to secure and develop their language, culture and community," when it comes to Beivváš. The Sámi Parliament has not showed any particular responsibility either. I think Eilertsen has a point when he claims that the Sámi Parliament has neither cultural assets nor expertise in the cultural sector to undertake a theatrical development that involves a buildup of an entire arts sector.¹⁰⁴

I was back in the theater in 2009-2010 on short engagements as an actress in a cabaret and in a play for schoolchildren. Except for the quieter atmosphere, there was no particular change from the last time I was there, neither in budget or premises nor program. Both the plays were old concepts, but modernized and made topical to present times.

¹⁰¹ NRK Sápmi: http://www.nrk.no/kanal/nrk_sapmi/ardna/1.7476340 (01.06.2014)

¹⁰² Beivváš Jahkedieđahus 2003: p 3., Lehtola 2008: p.160

¹⁰³ Eilertsen 2011: *Norsk Shakespeare- og teatertidsskrift nr 3-4/2011*, p. 90

¹⁰⁴ Eilertsen 2011: *Norsk Shakespeare- og teatertidsskrift nr 3-4/2011*, p. 90.

3.5 Beivváš' practical and artistic structures

“Our largest challenge is to develop the Sámi theater arts, which we neither have the financial or human resources to, nor physical conditions.”¹⁰⁵

Beivváš has to deal with the financial and administrative framework as well as take care of the Sámi immaterial culture values. How does Beivváš solve the missions they are assigned? The following is a brief description on the daily work, methods, challenges and solutions which deal with economy, administration, language- and culture preservation.

3.5.1 Economy and administration

Beivváš is a touring theater and their tour route ranges widely to strategic places in northern Scandinavia where Sámi lives. In addition, they frequently visit the Norwegian capital of Oslo with selected performances. The theater has often been invited to give guest performances far beyond their regular tour area and have visited countries such as Greenland, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Japan and Russia. The theater is the only professional theater in Norway performing in Sámi language.

According to their Annual Report 2012 the institution has 11 employees on permanent posts, four of them are actors. Except for the director Gunnarsson, all the 10 employees at the theater are Sámi and Sámi speakers. They usually stage more or less four productions in a year. For each production the theater hires professionals to complement the tasks they themselves do not have the expertise in or the opportunity to do. “In the engagement of technical, administrative and artistic personnel are the applicants considered by qualifications and are following the law of gender equality.”¹⁰⁶ As far as I can see from the Annual reports during the last decade; employees on short term commitments have ranged from being Sámi people of high culture expertise to non-Sámi with little or no knowledge of Sámi culture or language.

That the Culture House is not suitable for theater in their scale and by today's standards is undoubtedly a hindrance for their daily operations. In addition, the theater shares the stage with the municipal cinema. Beivváš rent supplementary rehearsing venues at the Municipality's meeting hall when it is available, but it is often occupied with meetings and seminars. It also rents other various premises around the village for the production of

¹⁰⁵ Beivváš-actor 2

¹⁰⁶ Beivváš Jahkedidáhus 2012: p. 12 (My translation. “*Teknihkkáriid, hálddabusbargiid ja dáiddabargiid virgenamahusaid oktavuodas árvoštallojuvvojit gelbbolašvuođa mielde, ja teáhter čuvvo dásseárvulága.*”)

costumes, music, props and storage of equipment. Beivváš is not satisfied being located in the Culture House, neither with respect to the indoor environment or to the working conditions. The company has struggled for years to get a suitable theater building where all the theater activities are gathered under one roof. This year (March 2014) the Norwegian Sámi Parliament finally decided that a new theater building will be constructed for Beivváš, estimated to be completed in 2018. It was on high time because "...without a suitable theater building, the theater will die with us," as one of the actor self-ironically expressed.¹⁰⁷

In connection with the theater's 30 years anniversary in 2011, Eilertsen gave a summary on the challenges facing the theater since its beginning: "Beivváš has through its work for 30 years had an incredibly stable situation. It may be good in some contexts, but the largest problems surrounding Beivváš is related to finance, housing issues and recruitment,"¹⁰⁸ and refers to the unchanged situation since the theater's beginning. Lehtola notes that in 2003 the Culture Ministry transferred the responsibility to provide funding for Beivváš to the Norwegian Sámi Parliament. The theater was promised an increase in the budget, but the Sámi Parliament did not give its support to the development and expansion of the Sámi theater. It seemed like no one was willing to take the responsibility for the theater business. Over the years with no increase in budget and inflation taken into account, the theater budget actually decreased year by year.¹⁰⁹ Lehtola expresses it very precisely: "...Beivváš was awarded the status of a national institution in Norway, albeit the funding that it received never reached the level of even the smallest Norwegian regional theaters."¹¹⁰

3.5.2 Language and culture competence

From the beginning, Beivváš has had Sámi as the stage language and all performances have been shown in Sámi. In recent years the theater has also started translating the conversations to other languages as well. The text runs parallel with the performance and can be read in a text field in scenography. There have been and are still discussions about the language, both internally in the theater or from the audience. One of the actors says these discussions internally in the theater can be endless and explains it with the ensemble's, the author's or translator's various dialects and backgrounds. In productions where the manuscript or author is not Sámi, the drama is translated into Sámi and actors adjust their own lines if needed. The productions in which both the drama and the instructor is non-Sámi, is the most challenging,

¹⁰⁷ Beivváš-actor 2

¹⁰⁸ Eilertsen 2011: p 88-90

¹⁰⁹ Lehtola 2008: p. 160-162

¹¹⁰ Lehtola/Magga 2011: p. 10, Beivváš Jahkedieđahus 2003: p. 7.

the actor says, because a lot more time is needed to discuss, explain and adapt the drama to Sámi issues.¹¹¹ The audience has been both satisfied and unsatisfied with Beivváš language skills, presented on stage.¹¹²

When I was doing field work in the theater, I got a glimpse into the challenges the theater has to face when they get new dramas. In the next paragraphs I present an example on how the theater solves language and culture tasks that follows with a new written drama. The process from being a raw manuscript to a complete performance seemed quite complicated and resource-intensive. The play was originally written by a Sámi author in Norwegian and translated to Sámi.¹¹³

The Beivváš ensemble was gathered around a table in the foyer of the Culture House; the actors, the theater instructor, the stage manager, one technician, the scenographer and costume designer, the producer and the author. They read through the text of the new manuscript and at the same time discussed both practical and theoretical conditions regarding to the play's content. The two actors read while the others were listening, commenting and asking questions. Some challenges occurred during the reading because the two guest workers; the director who was originally from Poland, and the scenographer/costume designer who was from south of Norway, didn't understand Sámi language. The main content had to be briefly explained in Norwegian so they could get a sketch of the play's action.

The following days the actors, instructor, theatre director and author worked together to shorten and analyze the text more thoroughly. The Sámi actors seemed familiar with having a hold on the responsibility of the "Sáminess" of the text and content, and the non-Sámi colleagues seemed to trust their expertise. One of the discussions went on an incantation that the author had written in the play. The rune was a formula used to stop bleeding. One of the Sámi objected to the use of the incantation and said it does not belong to the theatre stage because it is used only in seriousness and utmost necessity. Further he said that it is not all that should be turned into entertainment; something of the spiritual heritage should still remain sacred, respected and left undisturbed for its original purpose.

¹¹¹ Beivváš-actor 2

¹¹² Lehtola 2008: p. 186-188

¹¹³ The play "Guohcanuori Šuvva" was a commissioned work after the instructor Piotrek Cholodzinskis idea to create at theater play where *Yoik* meet the Norwegian traditional dance *Halling*. The play was based upon a true story from the 1700-where Sámi, Kven and Norwegian cultures and philosophies meets, clashes and impacts on each other, (Beivváš Jahkediedáhus 2011: p. 5-6). <http://www.beivvas.no/se/jahkediedahus> (01.05.2014)

The actors' juggling and switching between the cultures and languages to interpret and explain for the other non-Sámi fellow workers, in addition to develop their roles' characters while they were reading, was nothing but amazing. It revealed their competence in balancing, high consciousness in culture management and lifelong experience in acting. As my actor informant said in the interview, it is much more work with performances with non-Sámi or non-Sámi speaking colleagues. With employees without the Sámi culture competence, much more responsibility is put on the actors to protect the Sámi spirit and issues in the productions. In the plays where the actors do not need to assure the quality of language and culture, they have more time to artistic processes and development.

“We automatically think of taking care of the Sámi culture, it comes automatically because we are Sámi. The cultural responsibility lies much on us, especially when working with people who have no knowledge of the Sámi. We can argue, but do not always have an impact.”¹¹⁴

3.5.3 Based on Sámi culture traditions

The Sámi storytelling tradition and the vocal expression yoik are two characteristic ancient elements in the Sámi culture still alive among the people. According to Beivváš, its theatrical expressions are rooted in these ancient Sámi traditions. They claim the theatre's work is based on these traditions, and include these elements in the creation and development of Sámi contemporary theater art.¹¹⁵ The ways in which the modern Sámi theater is rooted on these traditional culture expressions seems unclear. It tends to be a general perception that there are no theater traditions originally in the Sámi culture. Therefore theater is considered as a foreign element in the Sámi culture. Seen from a theater professional perspective, there are several Sámi traditional culture expressions which are very close related to, and can be characterized as classical theater. The following makes up my explanation on the topic.

Theatre is a form of performing art that intends to tell a story to an audience through visual and audible presentations. The theater's fundamental elements are figure, fable, time and space. Explained in a more colloquial way; *who* is it about, *what* happens, *when* it happens and *where* it happens. We can see that these are the universal storytelling elements. The storytelling art exists in all cultures and has several functions and roles. It is basically used for communication, education and entertainment. The storytelling art itself is an oral

¹¹⁴ Beivváš-actor 2

¹¹⁵ Beivváš webpage: <http://www.beivvas.no/nb/om-teatret> (17.06.2014)

method used to transfer traditional and inherited knowledge from one generation to the next. The Sámi scholar Rauna Kuokkanen writes about storytelling: “Throughout history, oral traditions have been and remain the memory of a people encompassing all aspects of life regarded important within a culture. A common view of Indigenous peoples is that stories tell who ‘we’ are.”¹¹⁶ Nils Utsi, the first (Norwegian-) Sámi with formal theater education, claims that there are theatrical effects in Sámi narrative traditions, and explains that the narrator underscores her story with facial expressions, gestures and vocal effects that amplify and interpret the message.¹¹⁷ A theater performance makes use of amplifiers as sound, lighting, costumes, set design and props in addition. In my opinion, theater is rooted in the art of storytelling and can be seen as an extended storytelling form, also in relation to Sámi culture.

Another vocal expression similar to storytelling and theater is yoik. According to Harald Gaski, yoik exists all over the Sámi region with clear patterns for how to compose it, for what purpose and how to present it. “The yoik is a way of remembering - it connects a person with the innermost feelings of the theme of the yoik, and may thus communicate between times, persons and landscapes.”¹¹⁸ The South Sámi musician Frode Fjellheim says that in the yoik “The human voice is used in an onomatopoeic, abstract way and gives an artistic arrangement of the reality.”¹¹⁹ My experience is that yoik can be seen as a communicator between yoiker (performer) and the person being portrayed (the recipient). With tones and words the yoiker is portraying an object, a person, an animal, landscape or happening. Lyrics together with the yoik also reveal the yoiker’s perception and relationship to the object. One can say that yoik are emotions you are urged to express. When all these aspects are taken into consideration, I can easily see the similarities between yoik and theater art; *Beaivváš* and the actors are the instrument that presents a certain story in the way they feel it should be presented to you, in “an artistic arrangement of the reality”. They do it because they have a relationship with you, an urge to convey their message because they think it is important. After my perception of theater art, it can very well be developed from yoik.

Rituals and theater are two practices closely related to each other. The Sámi *noaidi*¹²⁰ rituals are a partially directed process in which a person achieves a trance and gets in touch with the spiritual world. When he returns from “the other side,” he brings with him a prophecy or a response to requests, a solution. This description fits very well with the classic

¹¹⁶ Kuokkanen 2000: p. 421

¹¹⁷ Lehtola 2008: p. 15

¹¹⁸ Gaski 2000: p. 191

¹¹⁹ Fjellheim 2004: p. 8 (My translation)

¹²⁰ *Noaidi* is a Sámi shaman, a healer and spiritual guide, an intermedium between spirits and people.

theater's Aristotle dramaturgical linear model with a beginning, a turning point, climax, solution and conclusion. In addition, the noaidi uses tools such as yoik and drum, bonfire light and heat and a special ceremonial costume which tells who he is, to himself, the audience and the spirits. The most typical theater tradition still alive in the Sámi culture is the *Soagņufárru*, the suitor journey. It is a mix between theater and ritual. There is a story and an action to be performed after a predetermined direction. Participants who have fixed roles and lines, props and costumes reinforce the message. The ceremony is very close to a Western classical theater performance. The only difference is that it takes place on a wide area in a real environment and not on a theater stage. In fact, *Soagņufárru* can be characterized as so called "Live", the modern experimental role-playing game that takes place without audience, but with the sole difference that in the *Soagņufárru* one cannot be sure of the outcome as the girl can refuse.

As I see it, there is no doubt that theater expressions are built into the Sámi culture as well as in all other cultures in the world. Thus we can agree that "Sámi are surprisingly similar to other people," as Ole Henrik Magga put it in a televised debate. Theater and drama lives in all human beings through storytelling, music and other art expressions, as it also does among us Sámi. Seen from a professional theater view, there is no doubt that *Beaivváš'* theater expressions are based on Sámi traditions and communication forms.

3.6 Summary

Beaivváš was established by Sámi for Sámi to highlight the Sámi language and culture, as well as being a mouthpiece for political messages which included Sámi rights. During the nationalistic period, the theater had a role as an identity strengthener in addition to being a therapist for an oppressed people who through the theater healed their psychological wounds, both individually and collectively. This was a period where the theater stood on the barricades and fought for Sámi's rightful place in the society. As the Sámi rights became more recognized by the non-Sámi society, the need to clean up the internal problems in the Sámi society became more current. The theater was now permanent established and went on to become a social commentator who took up the difficult issues within the Sámi community. At the same time, the artistic image of *Beaivváš* became more established and theater was recognized in the theater community in Norway as a professional Sámi theater with distinctive expressions.

After these periods with a focus on placing the Sámi as an equivalent group in the Nordic communities, the job to make the Sámi voice heard was largely taken over by other Sámi institutions. *Beaivváš'* role turned more towards mainstream entertainment and theater

moved away from the core Sámi style. It became a more superficial entertainment institution, but the change helped to revitalize the theater which earned new status as heavyweight in the Nordic theater world. After that it was time to go deeper into the Sámi culture and Beivváš focused more on the development of Sámi theater arts. It had both positive and negative effects. While Beivváš had an important development internally, it externally appealed to fewer people and was placed in the category “high culture”. In the recent years Beivváš can be characterized as inhibited, not only by the budget and physical working conditions, but also by old age among staff and lack of permanent employment of young actors to the theater. Still, Beivváš goes on in anticipation of better times.

Although the different periods have been affected by the various theater managers' program choices and philosophies, there are some things that have not changed. The theater has from the beginning used non- Sámi expertise in the administrative management as well as at the stage. Likewise, with the exception of the very beginning of the theater, it has presented the drama of Western playwrights in Sámi interpretations all the time. Both the Sámi and non-Sámi artists have had impact on Beivváš over the years. There are some choices made in the theater itself that have gone against the original intentions of theater management, creating a basis for the operation of the theater, namely the mentality "by and for Sámi." Although the various theater managers certainly intend the best, one can ask the question whether if it would have been different if they had had deep roots in the Sámi culture. One of the theater directors, educated in theater art, in addition to having Sámi cultural competence, had a short stay and did not form any noticeable or lasting changes.

However, Beivváš has grown from being an amateur theater business to a professional National Theatre of Sámi as well as a window to the Sámi culture for the residents in the Nordic countries. The theater has also become an ambassador for the Sámi people in international arenas. According to Beivváš itself, the theater holds a status as an important institution for the Sámi language, culture and identity, but not always with equal interest and support from the Sámi population. The strained economy and the narrow premises have seemingly always been the main obstacles to the development of the theater. There has not been enough space to unfold, experiment and explore Sámi theater expressions to the extent that is natural for a national art institution. Beivváš has lagged behind in allocations, and despite the fact that the theater was given the status of the Sámi National Theatre, it has in the last decade a lower budget than the small regional theaters in Norway. Beivváš is about to go dark due to poor working conditions, inadequate finances and lack of recruitment.

4 Tibetan culture preservation efforts in the Tibetan Diaspora

Compared to the Sámi people who have struggled to survive as a distinct people with own language and culture for hundreds of years, the Tibetan 65 years long fight has just started. The methods of colonization differ, but the goal is always the same; to gain control over the Indigenous population in order to get free access to, and exploit, its resources. Sometimes the method is centuries' long impoverishing process almost without physical violence, and sometimes the process is short with a brutal method, as in Tibet today. The Tibetans have a strong fighting spirit and have established their most important institutions in one place, in exile in North-India. From there, they plan their survival strategies. Preserving culture and language is considered to be the most important and is highly prioritized.

This chapter is first and foremost about Tibetan culture-management in exile, but it also provides an overview of Tibet's modern history, about the people and today's situation in the motherland and in exile. Further; a presentation of the spiritual leader Dalai Lama and his relationship to the Sámi people, followed by a description of Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts; its mission and the public's relationship with the institution. My focus will be on what I find relevant to form a backdrop for the upcoming discussion where I compare and contrast Beivváš Sámi Teáhter with the Tibetan institution. The chapter information is based on written materials, documentary archive films, informants, in addition to my own observations in Dharamshala and in interaction with representatives for TIPPA.

4.1 An overview of the Tibetan conditions

“Today, we are going through a critical period in time. We are a nation with an ancient culture, which is now facing the threat of extinction. We need your help, the international community's help, to protect our culture. Our culture is one of the heritages of the world. Protecting an ancient culture like this is the responsibility not only of the concerned nation, but also of the world community as a whole.”¹²¹ The Dalai Lama

Tibetans are natives of Tibet, living on "the roof of the world," a plateau north of the Himalayas, Asia, with their own language, identity and religion. Tibet is the highest region on earth, with an average altitude of 4000 meters above sea level and divided in the three

¹²¹ From Tibet House Trust webpage: <http://www.tibet-house-trust.co.uk/programmes/page.php?id=23> (27.08.2014)

provinces, Kham, Amdo and U-Tsang. Tibet's economy has traditionally been based mostly on agriculture and pastoral farming and a large percentage of animal husbandry were nomadic or semi-nomadic. Until 1949, Tibet was an independent state, governed by Dalai Lamas and various spiritual political leaders. In 1950, Tibet was invaded by China and the Communist Party took control of the region. After unsuccessful negotiations between the two countries, Tibet was occupied by China in 1959 and the 14th Dalai Lama fled with a group of Tibetan leaders and followers to India and set up the exile government in Dharamshala.

Dharamshala is a city and a municipality in the northern parts of India in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The city's upper part, *McLeod Ganj*, is located in the steep and beautiful foothills of the Himalayas. It is a Tibetan district and home for approximately 8-9000 of the Tibetan refugees and their descendants. After the Government-in-exile was established here in 1960, Tibetan religious, cultural, social and educational institutions were built up in and around McLeod Ganj, like boarding schools for Tibetan refugee children, hospital, museums, library and a number of monasteries of Buddhist monks and nuns, plus organizations and refugee receptions. The Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts is located here.¹²²

According to The Central Tibetan Administration (the Tibetan Parliament in-exile, hereinafter referred to as CTA) the political situation of the Tibetans is strongly affected by the ongoing conflict between Tibet and China. The parliament describes the situation as terrible and intolerable. The Norwegian religion professor and tibetolog Per Kværne claim that from the occupation and until today, China has systematically tried to wipe out the Tibetan culture from history. Monasteries, historic buildings, library, art collections have been destroyed and language, clothing and customs have been -and are still suppressed. Furthermore, they claim that over 1 million Tibetans have died as a result of starvation and execution since the invasion in 1950 to the present day. Amnesty International has thoroughly documented that there has been systematic torture of detained Tibetans.¹²³

The Chinese are a strong majority in Tibet and have all political, military and economic power and the Tibetans are barely considered second-class citizens. Tibetans have become a minority in their own country and suffer segregation in which the Chinese are favored in all areas, according to the CTA.¹²⁴ The statement from CTA is accusatory against

¹²² Information from CTA, literature as Piburn, Kværne, Bornstein, Ross, Dalai Lama, from informants and own observations in Dharamshala.

¹²³ Kværne, Per 1989: *In Dalai Lama. Mitt liv og mitt folk* (My land and my people. 1962) Preface page III-IV, and Den Norske Tibetkomite webpage, <http://tibet.no/fakta-om-tibet/> (29.01.2014)

¹²⁴ CTA webpage <http://tibet.net/about-tibet/issues-facing-tibet-today/> (26.11.2013), Per Kværne 1989: *Dalai Lama. My Land and my people* : preface p. III-VII

China: “Under the guise of economic and social development, Beijing encourages the migration of Chinese population to Tibet, marginalizing the Tibetans in economic, educational, political and social spheres.”

The total Tibetan population in China is approximately 6 million and more than 70% of them live below the poverty line. It is estimated that 130.000 live in exile abroad. “Every year thousands of new refugees come from Tibet to India, mostly via Nepal. Many are monks and nuns who seek to escape from persecution by the Chinese authorities in Tibet. Others are children and youth who hope for education in Tibetan schools in India,” writes The Norwegian Tibet Committee.¹²⁵ The CTA affirm the political status of Tibet to be an “Occupied country and without United Nations’ representation.”¹²⁶

The news coverage on Tibet over the past year has been mostly about Tibetans who have self-immolated in protest against the communist regime's control on Tibet. China is strongly criticized by the UN for the brutality against Tibetans and for the violations of human rights, which they reject.¹²⁷ They respond by further tightening the grip on Tibet, where regions are locked to the outside world, tourism stopped, journalists or UN observers have no access, and telephone and internet are strictly controlled and censored.¹²⁸ The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy’s annual report for 2013 writes: “The Party Secretary for Tibet Autonomous Region, Chen Quanguo, recognized that there were two new battlefields in Tibet the CCP needed to control: traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, television, and journals; and the internet.” The report describes the human rights situation in Tibet as intolerable.¹²⁹ Today there is no Amnesty International presence in China.¹³⁰ All these references taken into consideration, Dalai Lama is right; the ancient Tibetan culture is vanishing in Tibet.

4.2 The relationship between Sápmi and Tibet

It is not possible to write about Tibet without mentioning the Dalai Lama. After he received the Nobel Peace Prize 1989 for his anti-violence policies in the struggle to save his people’s

¹²⁵ Den Norske Tibetkomite webpage: <http://tibet.no/fakta-om-tibet/> (17.06.2014) (My translation)

¹²⁶ CTA webpage: <http://tibet.net/about-tibet/issues-facing-tibet-today/> (21.11.2013)

¹²⁷ UN News Centre: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43399&Cr=China&Cr1=#.U6B_Lfl_vxt and Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/22/us-china-rights-idUSBRE99L01220131022> (10.12.2013)

¹²⁸ Global Journalist: <http://globaljournalist.jour.missouri.edu/freepresswatch/2013/10/china/chinese-government-clampdown-in-tibet-undermines-press-freedoms/> (27.08.2014)

¹²⁹ TCHRD Annual report 2013: p.1

¹³⁰ Financial Times: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6196a3f0-0946-11e1-8e86-00144feabd0.html#axzz2n6BxGxbO>, (10.12.2013)

historical and cultural identity, he has gained great influence around the world with his simple, good-hearted philosophy and indefatigable work and belief in humanity. He has become the whole world's symbol of peace, love and compassion. For the Tibetans the Dalai Lama are the supreme religious leader and the most important figure for Tibetan Buddhism.¹³¹ Tibetans consider the Dalai Lama a free and enlightened soul who of compassion repeatedly and voluntarily have reincarnated among the Tibetan people to help and serve it.¹³²

The Dalai Lama has visited Sápmi several times and established friendship with the Sámi people. During these visits he has observed and stated that Tibetans and Sámi have much in common. This kinship seems to be acknowledged by both Tibet's spiritual leader and at that time Sámi Parliament president Ole Henrik Magga. After the Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo 1989, he took a trip up to Sápmi where he visited, among other, De Sámiske Samlinger (the Sámi museum) and the newly opened Sámi Parliament in Kárášjohka.

His trip to Sápmi was breaking news in the Norwegian press. Through newspapers we were presented for a Dalai Lama who highly appreciated the visit. At the Sámi museum he immediately identified several items which were similar things from his own culture.¹³³ In conversations with Magga, Dalai Lama found more similarities between Tibetan and Sámi culture and lifestyle. This applied to both practical chores and relationship with nature and fellow human beings.¹³⁴ Magga pointed out that the Sámi are peace-loving people too, and therefore feel a deep affinity with the Dalai Lama and his people. Magga explained that the cultural repression that Tibetans are exposed to, a Sámi can easily identify with after “a hundred years in which Norway has tried to erase everything that is Sámi”.¹³⁵

In 1994, the Sámi Parliament with Magga in the lead gave official political support to Tibet where they condemned China's occupation of the country.¹³⁶ The Chinese embassy in Oslo replied that Sámi Parliament were ignorance of the actual conditions in Tibet and made it clear that they did not want interference in internal affairs.¹³⁷ The Norwegian Tibet Committee describes the situation as follows: “Tibetans have fought a tireless battle for

¹³¹ Dalai Lama official website: <http://www.dalailama.com> (29.01.2014)

¹³² Bornstein 1989: p. 13.

¹³³ Norwegian newspaper Nordlys 14.12.1989

¹³⁴ Norwegian agency NTB, 14.12.1989

¹³⁵ Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten 14.12.1989. (My translation) “I hundre år har Norge prøvd å utviske alt samisk. Denne politikk er nå forlatt, og vi kan stå sammen med de nordiske lands myndigheter i arbeidet for minoritetenes rettigheter»

¹³⁶ World Tibet Network News, 1.

http://www.tibet.ca/en/newsroom/wtn/archive/old?y=1994&m=8&p=27_1 (21.11.2013)

¹³⁷ World Tibet Network News, 2. http://www.tibet.ca/en/library/wtn/archive/old?y=1994&m=8&p=27_2 (21.11.2013)

independence since 1950 while the Chinese on their side, equally tirelessly, have defeated the Tibetan demand for independence.”¹³⁸

This deep and bitter conflict between the two nations Tibet and China is still ongoing. Tibetans claim they are occupied by China and accuse the occupying power of "cultural genocide" and "destruction" on their nation,¹³⁹ while the Communist Party for their part calls it "democratic reform" and "development."¹⁴⁰ The Chinese deem the Dalai Lama an agitator and "terrorist in disguise" and hold him responsible for the conflict.¹⁴¹ The Sámi Parliament is still giving official political support to Tibet and the Dalai Lama, and in Oslo in May 2014 the Sámi Parliament president Aili Keskitalo had an official meeting with him.¹⁴²

4.3 Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, - a culture management in exile

Due to the spiritual and political significance of preserving Tibetan religion, culture, custom and tradition, TIPA was founded in 1959 in Kalimpong by the Dalai Lama. A group was quickly formed by the resources that were obtainable, like artists, both professionals and amateurs, as well as valuable costumes smuggled out of Tibet whose owners donated to TIPA.¹⁴³ The group toured and held day-long performances to bring joy and good spirits to the Tibetan refugees around the refugee camps in India.¹⁴⁴

TIPA, located at the top of the hill in McLeod Ganj since 1960, is considered as a craft center in the Tibetan diaspora for its maintenance of culture and identity. TIPA is affiliated the Department of Religion and Culture of CTA and is entrusted with the responsibility to preserve and promote the unique cultural expressions of Tibet. TIPA operates in the Tibetan settlements in India and neighboring countries, but also abroad. In the school area they have both indoor and outdoor stage, various rehearsal rooms, classrooms, studios, workshops, stores, and a department of administration as well as housing for the students and members. On the campus is also a museum where traditional folk dresses and costumes from different areas in Tibet are collected and exhibited.

¹³⁸ Den Norske Tibetkomite's webpage: <http://tibet.no/en/about-tibet/politics/international-law/> (21.11.2013)

¹³⁹ BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-15617026> (10.12.2013)

¹⁴⁰ World Tibet Network News: http://www.tibet.ca/en/library/wtn/archive/old?y=1994&m=8&p=27_2 [21.11.2013]

¹⁴¹ The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/19/dalai-lama-prayers-tibetans-terrorism> (20.01.2014)

Aftenposten: <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/Den-historiske-sannheten-om-Tibet-7071474.html#.Ut1ijRDsTIU> (20.01.2014)

¹⁴² NRK Sápmi: http://www.nrk.no/video/keskitalo_motte_dalai_lama/B7FA0252D987224F/emne/Sámisk (08.05.2014)

¹⁴³ TIPA-Artistic Director, TIPA-Operamaster.

¹⁴⁴ Ross 1995: p. 6, TIPA booklet p. 4.

TIPA was the first institution the Dalai Lama established after his arrival to India in 1959 for preserving the culture and identity among the Tibetan refugees before it was lost forever. The institute has grown to be the most important Tibetan culture institution in exile today, educating a significant amount of artistes to teach language and performing arts in the Tibetan settlements in India and around the world.¹⁴⁵ There are many different art forms, practitioners and professionals located at TIPA who “work with a clear sense of direction towards the preservation of our ancient culture.”¹⁴⁶

There are about 112 members associated with the TIPA's daily operations, including artists, instructors, administrative staff and craftsmen. The institution educates youth in the traditional arts, music, opera (Lhamo), dance and a wide range of handicrafts. In addition to skill training, the TIPA also have a section for research that is assigned the responsibility for documenting and keeping records of Tibetan performing arts. This section also produces educational materials on the various art forms. The institute produces the necessary equipment for internal use at TIPA, as well as creating products for sale to external clients that are interested in buying authentic Tibetan traditional clothing, costumes, shoes and musical instruments, among other artifacts.¹⁴⁷

Tibetans have long-standing traditions in the performing arts. Their Indigenous opera Lhamo is from the 14th century. In the 19th Century before the occupation, each major district in Tibet had their regular performing troupes that performed at festivals and in official functions. The well-organized state-funded performances held at the Dalai Lama's summer palace was particularly popular and “were eagerly attended by the whole population of Lhasa.”¹⁴⁸ In a way, TIPA has taken over many functions of the traditional troupes in Tibet. In addition to participating in the Dalai Lama's and Government-in-exile's official ceremonies, TIPA performs on the major festivals and regularly tours to the Tibetan settlements throughout India. They yearly tour abroad and have visited the United States, Africa, Europe, Asia and Australia.¹⁴⁹ The book *TIPA 50 Years History* sums up:

“...since the inception of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts on the 11th August 1959 to date, a total of 360 members have lived and worked here at the institute. The artistes at Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts were able to visit 31 different countries and performed at more than 100 different venues. Through theatrical presentations,

¹⁴⁵ TIPA-Operamaster, TIPA-Artistic Director

¹⁴⁶ TIPA webpage: www.tibetanarts.org (21.11.2013) TIPA-Artistic Director, TIPA-Operamaster.

¹⁴⁷ TIPA webpage, History book about TIPA 50 years anniversary. TIPA-Artistic Director, TIPA-Operamaster.

¹⁴⁸ TIPA's booklet, page 5

¹⁴⁹ TIPA's booklet, p. 5-6

they have managed to facilitate the revival and presentation of Tibetan religion, culture, tradition and have also raised awareness about Tibet globally."¹⁵⁰

The performing art has always been important for the Tibetan culture with their deep roots in history, religion and social life. Originally, the Tibetan performing arts was practiced outside, and was open to everyone who wished to participate. It can be characterized as a public rejoicing, lasting for hours and days with various performances of songs and dances. The performances were means of worship, celebration, communication and education and were enjoyed by the entire population. It was arranged as a natural way of passing traditions from one generation to the next.¹⁵¹ The Tibetan opera Lhamo is today on the UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritages to safeguard this ancient world heritage.¹⁵²

According to CTA, TIPA, Ross and informants, today the culture in the motherland Tibet is about to be totally destroyed by Chinese influence and distortion. They claim that after China occupied the country – as a method in the assimilation policy – Chinese have taken over the Tibetan culture, reformed it and adapted it to the Communist Party's ideology and philosophy. It is no longer an expression of Tibetan history, religion and social life, recognized by Tibetans themselves, they state. “In Tibet Tibetan people dance like Chinese way of dancing. They are transforming Chinese culture in Tibetan culture,” says a private art school principle in Dharamshala.¹⁵³ TIPA states that although the Tibetan performing arts is now institutionalized and modernized by TIPA, the institute is considered by exile-Tibetans to be most important to preserve and promote the culture, and are named to be the carriers of the original Tibetan culture which are unaffected by the occupants interference and influence.¹⁵⁴

4.3.1 The role and mission of TIPA

The role and mission of TIPA is very clear from the institute's side, but does it harmonize with the audience's opinions? In this paragraph I will let both parties be expressed by my informants to form a picture of TIPA as experienced in the exile-community in Dharamshala. This review is important to create a comprehensive and accurate picture of TIPA, for use in the upcoming discussion of TIPA and Beaiuváš where I compare whether the TIPA model

¹⁵⁰ History book about TIPA, *50 Years Anniversary*, index.

¹⁵¹ Ross 1995: p. 3,4

¹⁵² UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00208> (27.08.2014)

¹⁵³ Tib 6

¹⁵⁴ TIPA-Operamaster, TIPA-Artistic Director.

can be a guide for the Sámi theater's development. The informants show different aspects of TIPA's function.

TIPA management says their work of conservation, education, performing and development of cultural expressions is to keep the culture alive and pass it to coming generations to safeguard the existence of the Tibetan nation. TIPA provides education in several subjects concerning Tibet. The Tibetan culture and way of life is rooted in Buddhism and Buddhism is therefore present in school subjects in many contexts. The artists are taught to master theoretical and practical skills in the fields of dance, music, songs and acting from the different regions of Tibet. Naturally, the subjects intertwine with each other. Thus, history, language and customs are obvious parts of the program together with the various fields of arts and handicraft related to the producing of the performances. The opera Lhamo, "a wonderful display of colour, gaiety, music and laughter"¹⁵⁵ is the principal focus of TIPA.¹⁵⁶ The play is characterized as the most precious part of the performing arts and unique to Tibet. Dalai Lama calls it "a tradition that profound demonstrate our unique identity."¹⁵⁷

In addition to preserving the old Tibetan theater traditions, they offer modern theater plays in a naturalistic style that reflects the society they live in, also with a critical view on their own community. Unsurprisingly, language is one of the main subjects at the school. To emphasize in practice how important language is for culture and identity, they use Tibetan language on stage and even discuss the language issues in their plays. One example is the student's performance Yarkyi 2013. This particular production shows a blend of tradition and modernity, with a clear message about how important language, Buddhism and culture are for the Tibetan identity. Through this performance we get a glimpse of the Tibetan struggle for preserving language in Tibet and in exile. It presents an interesting antagonism where Tibetans under Chinese rule risk everything to preserve the language and must flee to India to save life and health, while Tibetans in exile and freedom willingly give up the language and mixes it with Hindi and English.¹⁵⁸

TIPA's own assessment of its importance to language, culture and nation appears to concur with the local population in Dharamshala. All of my Tibetan informants of the audience rated TIPA to be the most important cultural support for the Tibetan population, second only to the Dalai Lama. One 24 years old female informant wished TIPA could yet be

¹⁵⁵ Ross 1995: p. 34

¹⁵⁶ TIPA- Artistic Director, TIPA-Operamaster.

¹⁵⁷ Ross 1995: Foreword

¹⁵⁸ TIPA Yarkyi 2013: <http://youtu.be/-OPQczcacNM?t=28m43s> and http://youtu.be/nQ8l_AYXvk?t=25m55s (27.08.2014)

even more uncompromising in their contemporary performances in Dharamshala, and not meld it with Indian and Western culture. She thinks TIPA should not have started to perform in a modern style because it comes at the expense of the ancient culture. She was concerned it can result in that the youngsters considering TIPA as entertainment and expect and prefer the modern shows only. But even she gives critics, she appreciates TIPA's presence, because without any entertainment, the value of community vanish, she said and adds that "Here all the entertainment happens through TIPA or with TIPA". She also praises TIPA for promoting and building identity to the emigrated Tibetans by performing genuine Tibetan culture while they tour abroad.¹⁵⁹

Another informant, a woman on 80, born in Tibet, acknowledges TIPA's work. In contrast to the young female informant, she claims TIPA performs all ancient traditions in singing, dancing and dramas, dressed up like original Tibetans, without mixing it with modern Indian culture. By showing the authentic Tibetan culture, she says TIPA is "damn important" for the Tibetan identity and it safeguards the old traditional epics, and depicts the ancient culture of a nation.¹⁶⁰ I consider her acknowledgement of TIPA to be quite powerful because she lived in Tibet and experienced the genuine culture before the invasion. However, she emphasized that she has not been to their shows very often because the entrance tickets are too expensive.

The third informant, employed at Tibetan Women's Association, confirms that TIPA together with other Tibetan organizations is doing a great job. "We have a jewel in the knowledge of Buddhism" she explains, and stresses that Tibetan culture and religion are interlinked and one follows the other. Further, she states that one cannot hand over to the next generation only history and storytelling; culture must be shown in practice, too. She believes TIPA has a positive impact by performing, especially on the younger generation by visualizing both inner and outer culture. She explains that with inner culture she means the way Tibetans are thinking, which is anchored in the Buddhism; the outer culture is the visible part of the culture, represented by language, clothing, songs and dances etc.¹⁶¹

The fourth informant, a young male refugee who arrived to India as child, expresses he doesn't have much information about TIPA. Yet he admits that without TIPA the culture will not survive in the long run. As a schoolboy, he was trained by TIPA. Because TIPA-students once a year travel on their own around to remote Tibetan settlements and gather

¹⁵⁹ Tib 1

¹⁶⁰ Tib 2

¹⁶¹ Tib 3

information from old people, they constantly supply new knowledge to the schools. Without this inflow, there would be a risk of stagnation, he said. Although he does not remember what he saw in Tibet, he claims that the Chinese are changing everything, – that the culture in Tibet is turning more Chinese. “It’s important you should feel who you are” he says, and explains that TIPA is not only important for Tibetans, but also to promote the culture for the whole world.¹⁶²

My fifth informant, a monk, points out that the original culture lies in the community among the people, but TIPA is distributing it through performing arts. “If we don’t preserve our arts, our identity will vanish” he said and emphasized that their culture preservation is important for all Tibetans, not only for the exile-communities. The responsibility for this lies in the exile government due to the Chinese manipulation of the original culture in Tibet, he says. He gives his acknowledgement to TIPA because they have worked very honestly for many year, the artistes are well-trained and perform from all parts of Tibet, in addition to teaching in the schools. About culture management he recommend the present community to make it (culture) interesting, especially for the youngsters; “...in that way we can preserve culture in the long run.”¹⁶³

4.3.2 Life behind the masks

TIPA has about 30 artists yearly attending their training programs. The permanent students often join TIPA at a very young age, between 11 and 17, and stay for more than ten years. There is constant recruitment of new students for TIPA, mainly from exile-communities in India. It rests much responsibility on the artists. Not only are they TIPA's public face, but they represent the Tibetan people and culture worldwide. They are important cultural ambassadors, but also have a role to inform about the Tibetan political situation while they tour.¹⁶⁴ After my observation, the TIPA artists have a high status among the Tibetan people. Their knowledge, performing and dedication in the subject culture are highly appreciated in the community, and one can get the impression that they are regarded as Tibet's living national treasures.

Behind this superstar status are many years with hard work and sacrifices. A female junior artist says she attended an audition with 300 students where 20 of them are chosen to TIPA. The institution is very important to her, because here she gets the opportunity to learn

¹⁶² Tib 4

¹⁶³ Tib 5

¹⁶⁴ TIPA- Operamaster

about and preserve the culture. In the Tibetan settlement in south India where she is from, she did not have these possibilities. She says she is very happy and proud to show Tibetan tradition to the world, and emphasizes that TIPA is not only for entertainment or to earn money. She mentions the three most important missions of TIPA: “The main thing is first and foremost to preserve the culture and traditions; the second is to inform everyone that Tibet has its own culture and that it is still alive. The third mission is to show and display Buddha’s life and philosophy.”¹⁶⁵

During the education, students are living permanently in dormitories at the campus with very limited freedom of action, separated from families and daily life in town. Not until you are a senior artist (25 years or older), can you combine the artist employment with family life, like a spouse and children, a male student noted. There are two factors that are negative with TIPA, he said. “One is the lack of facilities; the other is the modest salary that forces senior students to quit school to find work. They often have to move to Western countries to provide financial support to their families at home.” Both of these conditions are due to the financial problems of TIPA, he says.¹⁶⁶ But in spite of these criticisms from inside, the institute seems to be very attractive to the students who take the responsibility and appreciate the opportunities to preserve, promote and develop Tibetan culture’s various expressions.

4.4 Summary

Informants from TIPA and the audience are very satisfied with TIPA’s work. All information taken into account, TIPA seem to master both the tangible and intangible values of Tibetan culture. The institution has several roles. Its job is to preserve and promote the ancient Tibetan culture within the performing arts and make it available to all, including the outside world. Embodied in these traditions is also the doctrine of Buddhism. Another important function is to be an informational and educational body in the Tibetan exile community to treat both social and political issues. For this it uses the classic Western theater model where the theater provides a reflection on the society and addresses the current issues. In other words, TIPA works as a social commentator on contemporary issues concerning Tibetans. TIPA educates while they entertain, both themselves and the public from many walks of life. In addition, they have a significant social responsibility of arranging traditional festivals and anniversaries, holding concerts and being a meeting place for Tibetan events in general. They

¹⁶⁵ TIPA-student 1

¹⁶⁶ TIPA-student 2

also have an important role in the major religious ceremonies with the spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

In general, arts and Buddhism is obviously the intellectual foundation of the Tibetan exile-community, and encompasses most of the immaterial and material values that provide quality of life for the Tibetans in exile. To put it in a globally Indigenous perspective, the life style of Tibetans is similar to that of many other Indigenous cultures; they don't emphasize "a radical duality between the sacred and the mundane" and their "social and political institutions are a part of the cosmic order, and it is on the basis of their worldview, beliefs, values and customs..."¹⁶⁷ TIPA is an example of that. With the task to preserve, promote and develop the Tibetan's cultural, religious – and to some extent – the political life, the multi-functional and complex cultural institution TIPA seems to have a major role. Its culture management is protective for both inner and outer culture, and creates an environment of belonging and community which provides an identity - the Tibetan. From this research, based on interviews, conversations, observations, literature and publications, one can deduce that TIPA is a very successful and a solid instrument in the culture-keeping, identity-strengthening and nation-building work which embraces all the Tibetans ultimately. It seems that TIPA has found a good strategy that works satisfactorily for the mandate they are assigned: When you have a culture, you have an identity. When you have an identity, you belong to a community. When you have a culture, an identity and a community, you can build a nation.

¹⁶⁷ SOWIP 2009: p.52

5 The role of Beaivváš

“If we don’t get a new building, it is the end of Beaivváš,” said one of the actors recently.¹⁶⁸ Beaivváš theater is approaching a crossroad in their almost 33 years long history. If the theater shall continue it obviously needs a new building, but a reformation of the whole institution seems to be necessary as well. Beaivváš has received criticism for its choices over the years and many theater-goers have asked themselves what separates Sámi theater from a Norwegian theater, except from the Sámi language. It may be an unfair criticism due to the housing and budget that has limited Beaivváš, but its intentions have not always been responsible when it comes to Sámi culture management. Under guidance of diverse theater directors, Beaivváš has to a large extent rejected the criticism and reserved the rights to make choices and decisions based on the theater’s own perceptions of what is good Sámi theater. The responsible authorities have been conspicuous by their absence and have left the Sámi National Theatre to take care of itself like an orphan child.

Beaivváš’ role in the Norwegian Sámi community is discussed on the basis of informants and all background sources provided in this thesis. In addition Beaivváš will be compared and contrasted with TIPA’s strategy for language-, identity- and culture preservation to analyze whether the TIPA can be a model for Sámi culture management. The concept of culture I use in this connection must be understood by the definition of Boas and SOWIP used in chapter 2.4. I also refer to the Tibetan informant’s definition in chapter 4.4.1, where inner culture and outer culture respectively are the abstract and concrete that characterizes a people.

5.1 Is Beaivváš an important culture institution in Norwegian Sápmi?

In the chapter on TIPA we were presented with the Tibetan strategy for cultural management. The TIPA itself and the Tibetan exile community in Dharamshala are mostly satisfied with TIPA’s efforts to protect, preserve and develop their ancient Indigenous culture. TIPA is profoundly rooted in the Tibetan culture and has good support in the Tibetan exile-community. But how is it going with Beaivváš? What is Beaivváš role in the Sámi community in Norway today?

¹⁶⁸ Beaivváš- actor 2

“From the very beginning, the aim of the theater has been to strengthen Sámi language and identity, with additional aim of informing others about the Sámi culture and mindset. In using the Sámi language, Beivváš has acquainted Sámi with various theatre traditions from across the world, such as European and Japanese traditions. In using strong visual imagery, it has created a form of expression that appeals also to those who do not understand Sámi. (...) The impact of theater on the development of the Sámi culture is indisputable. It has especially influenced the identity and self-esteem of Sámi youth.”¹⁶⁹

This is the picture they give of themselves, but does it match the reality? One of the theater's founders said that it was in order to raise the status of the Sámi language and culture that the theater originated. “I think Beivváš have had a larger community-supportive role than people realize,” said another of the actors and pointed to Beivváš’ influence on Sámi awakening process in areas where the culture has been down for decades. (This is also mentioned in Lehtola.¹⁷⁰) Moreover, they have been a major contributor to the development of Sámi art forms, said the actor. Whether the informants are from the theater or the public, there are large gaps between all points of view on the language, identity and culture topic.

5.1.1 Is Beivváš strengthening Sámi language and identity?

Beivváš uses Sámi language on stage in every performance. Other languages are also used where appropriate in relation to the content of the show, but Sámi has always been the primary language. One of my informants representing the audience, a Sámi woman 46 years with Norwegian as her native language, says Beivváš has not been most important for her part when it comes to identity. She explains that it probably depends on her limited Sámi language skills, but because they are good at visualizing, she manages to keep up. In her social circle, the language excludes her more than it includes her when it comes to Beivváš, she says. However, she firmly believes that Beivváš is important, especially for Sámi children who get the theater on their own, parents’ or grandparents’ language, which creates ownership of culture. She states that although the language marginalizes Beivváš because they perform in a language that the majority does not understand, the Sámi language is important for identity and Sámi community structure, just as the Norwegian language was in the Norwegian theaters after the severance from Sweden. “For those without Sámi language, it is even more important to see and experience the Sámi culture,” she states and comments

¹⁶⁹ Lehtola/Magga 2011: p. 28, 30-31

¹⁷⁰ Lehtola 2008: p. 186

that it is important to support Beivváš.¹⁷¹ In contrast to this woman who felt excluded because of Beivváš' use of the Sámi language, a Sámi student from the Finnmark coast I met at the Sámi University College said that Beivváš was what triggered her to learn the Sámi language. When the theater visited her home town and she heard Sámi live for the first time, a new world opened up to her and she understood what riches were stolen from her. She began studying the northern Sámi language and participated at the Sámi University College for the second year.

Another informant, a man 58 years with Sámi as mother tongue believes that the language is limiting Beivváš. "...for as soon as one has it in Sámi language, the market is reduced." However, the theater has a responsibility for the development and maintenance of the language, in the same way as other public Sámi institutions, he said. Yet, it was obvious that, for him, the language was what separated the Beivváš from other theatre: "I am unable to see the difference between the Sámi and Norwegian theater, apart from the language" he said. He admitted he is not one of the regular theater-goers in general any longer.¹⁷²

Internally at Beivváš, language issues have gone both ways, too. Without a doubt, the actors have become very conscious about language, whether it is Norwegian, Sámi, or other languages practiced in the theater, (referring to chapter 3.5.2.). In Lehtola's book we read of the young Sámi actor who does not consider Beivváš as a language strengthener for her part. On the contrary, it was in Beivváš she learned to speak better Norwegian under cooperation with the non-Sámi speaking colleagues.¹⁷³ For me, with Norwegian as native language, Beivváš was the place where I learned to speak Sámi out loud and in public. Prior to that I did not have the guts to speak Sámi, but on the theater stage I had to. The Sámi-language screenplays were both theoretical and practical language teachers; first learn and understand the text's content, then drill the lines during the exercises in which the lines and the character's emotional expression have to match. There was no better language exercise than theater because I automatically got a multidimensional feeling with the language. For me Beivváš has been one of my best teachers in Sámi language.

It seems like the Sámi language is clearly a dilemma for Beivváš internally and externally; it works both with and against the theater. For some who do not fully understand Sámi, the language can both be an identity-strengthener and something that segregates. For some who are native Sámi language speakers, I believe Beivváš is not of great importance

¹⁷¹ Sámi 2

¹⁷² Sámi 1

¹⁷³ Lehtola 2008: p. 186

when it comes to language training. However, the main purpose of using Sámi on stage is that the language makes the theater a representative of the Sámi public voice. I believe this applies to all places Beivváš tours since the situation is more or less similar in Scandinavia when it comes to Sámi language. Even if the issues treated in the theater can be similar in both the non-Sámi and the Sámi community, the language is what makes it a Sámi case and not just something that concerns "the other". "The other" means the majority's voice which for centuries has represented the domination, oppression and the assimilation, and for some Sámi it might still apply. Sámi language has obviously different importance to different people, but there is an agreement that the Sámi language represents the Sámi voice. The Norwegian mother tongued informant explains: "It is important to tell who we are. The work is not fulfilled yet, there are still strong forces against the Sámi." By producing Sámi original dramas and presenting it in Sámi language on stage, Beivváš is undoubtedly a powerful contributor to strengthen the Sámi identity. In addition, it keeps the Sámi language alive in both retrospective and contemporary connections, whether the dramas are of Sámi or Western origin. The language might limit the theater, and works against it individually, but it certainly works *for* the Sámi identity collectively.

If we compare the language situation in the Tibetan exile community in Dharamshala, there are some similarities which can be drawn to municipalities in Sápmi where the Sámi population is in minority. Through TIPA we see exiled Tibetans fighting a battle to preserve the Tibetan language which is under great influence of Hindi and English. TIPA itself, in contrast to Beivváš, seems to be more uncompromising when it comes to language use within the institution where the daily language is Tibetan. Obviously, TIPA has a great advantage in the language education within the institution. Another advantage is, in general, the Tibetan written language is presented and preserved through millennia-old Buddhist texts and their cultural expressions have flourished undisturbed until the occupation. A teacher at TIPA expresses: "Preserving of performing arts is also preserving language. Good in performing arts means good in language and dialects."¹⁷⁴

Beivváš does not have these benefits since Sámi primarily has been a spoken language, suffered centuries' long oppression in addition to be a minority's language. Moreover, Sápmi is lacking the traditions in terms of performing ancient dramas as Tibetans have. Our language situation is more similar to the one currently in the Tibetan areas inside Tibet where China has actively driven assimilation since the occupation. Still, there are some

¹⁷⁴ TIPA-Operamaster

choices that can be made in strengthening the language situation in Beaivváš. TIPA automatically strengthens language and identity when both staff and students are Tibetans who speak the language. Beaivváš has not been as uncompromising as TIPA when it comes to language or culture competence. Regularly, non-Sámi workers with no Sámi language and culture competence are filling jobs at Beaivváš which Sámi could have had. Actually, because we don't have all these benefits as TIPA has, our culture stands much weaker than the Tibetan. Also, because we do not have these uninterrupted culture resources as Tibetans, it is even more important to be very conscious about how to put a culture preserving strategy in place. Besides, we don't "have a gem in Buddhism" as the Tibetan woman was so thankful for. Since we Sámi lack a common religion or philosophy which glues the people together, we are split and easier to mislead.

5.1.2 Is Beaivváš a culture keeper?

There are large discrepancies in how the informants see the importance of Beaivváš as competent culture-bearer, too. Here are some of the extremes from the parent generation: The woman 46, states that Beaivváš preserves Sámi culture because they have Sámi property masters, costume designers and equipment, and equipment used in the right context prevents it from becoming only museum pieces. Further, she thinks that Beaivváš enriches the community and in the long run it probably costs not having culture if we lose that dimension of society that Beaivváš represents. She denies that Beaivváš is out, but it needs to renew itself. She questions why the theater directors are not Sámi. Still, she thinks it is a mitigating factor that he is Icelandic as the director probably knows the minority issues and consciously preserves the language, even if he is not Sámi culture competent.¹⁷⁵ Man 58, who was active in the Sámi movement in the 70's and 80's, sees Beaivváš' role changing because it has adapted to the social development in Sápmi. "Now, Beaivváš is more artistic than political. One can certainly do without Beaivváš, now as before, it may not be as vital. It will be replaced with something else. I'm not sure if the theater has managed to take root in the Sámi community."¹⁷⁶

My informant from the younger generation disagrees to the Beaivváš statement that Beaivváš is important for the identity of the Sámi youth, at least in Guovdageaidnu. She says that there is not much interest for Beaivváš in her circle because her friends are not as culturally interested. She explains that it might have something to do with how they grew up.

¹⁷⁵ Sámi 2

¹⁷⁶ Sámi 1

“Mom and Dad took us on the theater when we were kids, but my friends were never to see there.”¹⁷⁷ If this view is representative for Guovdageaidnu, it leaves a picture which is quite typical for youth in general in Norway. For the younger generation of Sámi and others, theater is not the most interesting entertainment or culture activity. For the Sámi community, when the Sámi youth are not included as daily part of *Beaivváš*, their lack of interest is easy to understand. The young woman answers *Beaivváš*' complaint about the lack of recruitment as self-inflicted:

“I think we had been more eager to become actors if it had been auditions and if there was an offer. It's always just the same group there, and then suddenly it pops up an occasional *rivgu*, I don't know how she came in. I have waited a long for audition.”¹⁷⁸

As we see, *Beaivváš* cannot only blame the economy or unsuited theater premises for their choices of staff or lack of young recruitment. The theater's short-sightedness in this field is not breaking news. From the debate in Lehtola's book we were presented to a Sámi duojár who already for 17 years ago complained about the theater's hiring policy. She noted that it is apparently more expensive to hire employees from the south than those found in the surrounding area. She pointed out that the employment of these workers leaves the Sámi without the chance of building up competence.¹⁷⁹ The duojár and other Sámi are conscious about the problem and touch a very important topic for the Sámi community building. As my informant said: "It's difficult to fetch expertise out from the blue, you have to build up competence"¹⁸⁰ We can imagine how much competence this duojár or other Sámi could have built up after years in the Sámi theater if they were given the possibility.

Beaivváš is recognized as a culture-keeper first and foremost for its use of Sámi language. Beyond that, *Beaivváš* is today more recognized as an art institution in the entertainment genre than a genuine culture-keeper for the Sámi community. This conclusion is not in line with the perception of an actor who says that if *Beaivváš* were only entertainment, they would have had more spectators. Still, the actor claims that *Beaivváš* has a stronger role in the non-Sámi community than at home. This observation may indicate that *Beaivváš*' theater offer is more accessible and interesting to a non-Sámi audience than a Sámi audience, or the theater interest is low among us Sámi in general. However, she explains it with:

¹⁷⁷ Sámi 3

¹⁷⁸ Sámi 3 (*Rivgu* is Sámi for a non-Sámi woman)

¹⁷⁹ Lehtola 2008: p. 124

¹⁸⁰ Sámi 1.

"The Sámi, somehow, I have the feeling of, are looking down at Beivváš. We Sámi have a tendency to look down at our own institutions. We have a kind of low self-confidence inherited in the spinal cord."¹⁸¹

5.1.3 Is Beivváš managing or mainstreaming Sámi culture?

Beivváš has increasingly followed mainstream theater art, influenced by the theater environment in Norway. This has been Beivváš' own choice and probably the easiest way. It may come from the fact that Beivváš was not planned as a cultural institution in the beginning. It arose as a free theater group by a spontaneous reaction to the Alta conflict in a time when it was most important to show the outside world that the Sámi are present. There are some factors which might explain why this "emergency solution" has remained. The non-Sámi theater directors and guest workers are hired and employed because of their expertise in theater art, not Sámi culture competence, and they have (had) significant influence on Beivváš' ideology. Another contributing factor can be that Beivváš is formed by the audience's preferences and responses to the theater performances. A third factor can be that there are no tradition of theater and performing arts in the Sámi culture to the extent that it has an establishment basis.

It might seem unfair to compare Beivváš with TIPA because TIPA is well rooted in the Tibetan Buddhism and the ancient performance traditions of Tibet. In contrast to Sámi, Tibetans have good links to the past and still a rich culture "bank" to pick from. However, their cultural preservation work has not taken care of itself, and it is struggle with time before China succeeds with the "cultural genocide" in Tibet as the Dalai Lama puts it. A very great example of establishing an Indigenous theater is the Maya group Sotz'il from Guatemala I mentioned in Chapter 2.4. It is a group of young Mayans who the last decade formed a culture center much like the TIPA model, only that they started completely from scratch to revive their culture. Sotz'il researched and explored old rituals and artistic expressions on the basis of archives, museums, sites and ancestral traditions and stories, to preserve, strengthen and promote their culture, language and identity.¹⁸² Of course, we do not have as dramatic conditions in Sápmi as in Tibet and Guatemala, but cultural preservation is not happening automatically even if you are no longer subjected to active pressure. On the contrary, it appears that culture and identity have been most important during crisis, while it is becoming increasingly irrelevant in a materialistic welfare society where everything should provide economic returns to be appreciated.

¹⁸¹ Beivváš-actor 2

¹⁸² Sotz'il webpage: <http://gruposotzil.org/qasamaj-nuestro-trabajo/> (18.06.2014)

There are some economic aspects in the management of Beaivváš that has to be reviewed, too. It is strange that we Sámi who live in the world's richest countries lack funds for cultural management, while Tibetan refugees in India and oppressed Mayan people of Guatemala manage to establish vital cultural institutions and make it work. I think we lack initiative rather than money. Here we have to go up to the governing level. The Beaivváš company has been almost left on its own to manage the institution. The Norwegian Sámi Parliament, which took over the responsibility for Beaivváš in 2003 from the Ministry of Cultural affairs, has been quite absent in both economical and administrative issues.

In comparison to the exiled Central Tibetan Administration, the Sámi Parliament's culture obligations are weak and superficial and do not show a clear responsibility for administration of our culture heritages. The Tibetan culture ministry, which TIPA is affiliated to, "has responsibility of supervising works aimed at reviving, preserving, and promotion of Tibetan religious and cultural heritages." Its primary aims are to preserve and promote Tibetan religion and culture which is threatened by extinction by the Chinese regime in Tibet, writes the CTA.¹⁸³ The Norwegian Sámi Parliament's main task in cultural policy is to "facilitate Sámi arts and cultural activity and the development of this."¹⁸⁴ There is a vital difference between revive and facilitate. CTA's perspectives are to revive, preserve and protect the culture from extinction, while Sámi Parliament's perspectives is how best to develop and make use of the culture in modern art contexts. In conjunction with Beaivváš it means that no one has the overall responsibility for the theater's culture management. All the information provided in this research points mainly in one direction: If Beaivváš is to *mainstream* the Sámi culture, we are on the right path. If Beaivváš is to *manage* Sámi culture, the policy must be changed.

The threat the Tibetans have seems to be a strong motivator for the survival of their culture. There are about as many Sámi as exile-Tibetans. When we look at what efforts the exiled Dalai Lama, CTA and TIPA have done for the preservation of their culture; our culture appears to not be very valuable to us Sámi in comparison. Sámi Parliament stresses that the ultimate responsibility for culture development lies with the state government, and here is probably the core of the problem: No one takes the full responsibility for Beaivváš or Sámi cultural management; it is lost in the democratic bureaucracy. (A small, but important detail appropriate to mention in this connection is; *yoik*, which is considered to be the oldest still living vocal music expression of Europe, is not on the UNESCO's Intangible culture Heritage

¹⁸³ Central Tibetan Administration: <http://tibet.net/religion/about-us/aims-and-objectives/> (27.08.2014)

¹⁸⁴ Sámediggi: <http://www.samediggi.no/Kultureallin> (27.08.2014)

list.¹⁸⁵) We do not have an occupying power such as China that works systematically to wipe out our culture, but we might manage to do it ourselves by being careless, irresponsible and inactive. The danger with this indifference-Stállu is that he is invisible.

5.1.4 Results

If we put the information from all the sources together with the Beivváš history, the developments in the Sámi community, establishment of other Sámi institutions and Beivváš situation today, it seems like Beivváš' role has changed. The Sámi National theater role as an important culture institution is decreasing among the Sámi audience and is on track to be more useless than useful. From their side there seems to be an agreement that Beivváš goes towards a niche entertainment where the Sámi language is used on stage and is the most appreciated element. Although there are some individual preferences among both Beivváš and its audiences, there is an agreement that Beivváš is strengthening the Sámi collective identity by using Sámi. There seems to be a high degree of indifference towards Beivváš among both audience and the authorities. Still all things considered, Beivváš is a necessary institution —like the other Sámi institutions— to build up a Sámi community. With regards to the audience, we must keep in mind that indifference can be difficult to distinguish from an old Sámi way to disagree, which is to respond with silence and omission. This silent disagreement method should not be applied by the authorities.

Beivváš has not been eager to invite the audience into a debate about what Sámi theater should be. On the basis of my informants who were specific asked about Beivváš, it seems like the institution gets more displeasure than support from its own community. This may be because the audience feels they are not heard, since the few official debates on Beivváš are not taken into consideration by the Beivváš' management. The sovereignty from Beivváš' side might have had a negative impact on the audience which answers with silence, no engagement or low interest in Beivváš. The theater is indeed limited by unsuitable premises and restricted budgets and has not had the fair opportunity to unfold. Still, when both administrative and artistic personnel remain unchanged for years, the institution is in danger of operating as a private company in which a small group or individuals make the decisions alone. Eilertsen expresses that the wear of the employees and

¹⁸⁵ UNESCO ICH *"Intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage."*
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002> (27.08.2014)

the (lack of) opportunities for diversity and innovation can also be a cause of the stalemate.¹⁸⁶ According to Lehtola, Beaivváš is the leading Sámi art genre which has built the Sámi common experiences of today's world with the help of theater art. These two statements are both true and describe Beaivváš at its weakest and strongest.

Beaivváš is still an important, but to some extent, a neglected institution. Beaivváš as theater is important because it makes art from the Sámi culture visible and expresses Sámi language which is important for the Sámi people's identity. In addition, it presents the Sámi intangible values which enrich the community's social life and elevate self-consciousness. Beaivváš as an institution is neglected because the authorities have not taken the responsibility for developing the institution in an appropriate direction. The employees in the company seem to have been the main driving forces for operating and developing the institution, with varying success and expertise. But at least they have been active, with the abilities and powers they possess. It is important to distinguish the theater art competence and the competence of operating the institution. In most cases it seems like the Beaivváš ensemble of 11 people have been left to control both tasks, more or less willingly.

5.2 Beaivváš towards a sustainable cultural development

Beaivváš institution has development potential in many fields, but three basic fields are urgent; Sámi theater art, economics and housing. Not much progress has happened within these fields the last years. The situation today is that the institution is virtually at standstill when it comes to artistic development. When it comes to economic development it has declined. The housing situation is unchanged. Beaivváš is still located in the old, unsuitable premises it has rented from the Guovdageaidnu municipality since 1981. The four permanent actors who have been involved from the start are now nearing retirement. This year (2014) Beaivváš has been promised a new theater building that will be completed in 2018, and the need to manage the development of the institution in the appropriate direction will soon apply. It means that a supply of workers to the theater has to be planned. In addition to administrative staff, artists with Sámi cultural competence will be needed. According to the Beaivváš' application for preliminary planning on the new theater building, the prospects goes more towards a commercializing of the Sámi culture for profit and less towards a sustainable culture management for the culture's and people's own value. In this last chapter I will provide a prospect on the future of the Beaivváš Sámi National Theater and discuss the

¹⁸⁶ Eilertsen 2011: p. 90

TIPA institution as a possible model for the new theater institution. In the introduction of this thesis, I presented the noaidi who applies to the Sun, his father, with request to get strength so he and his people can fight the dangerous forces threatening his people during all ages. To be able to discuss Beaivváš' future I want to first identify the forces or powers that are threatening our culture institution today.

5.2.1 Analyzing Beaivváš with a traditional knowledge's method

To be able to solve an important task, one takes all appropriate and available resources one possesses in use. This I did. First, from my innate resources: I am a Sámi, and according to Sámi mythology I am a daughter of the Sun. According to my family tree, I descend from a noaidi like most other Sámi. As Sámi I am a part of the Sámi culture.

Then my acquired resources: Through my people's Norwegianization history, I have realized that an explanation must be provided in an intelligible language to have meaning. At home I have experienced that traditional knowledge is valuable, but works best in the society who created it. In Norwegian primary school, I was taught that mind maps can provide a good overview of what thoughts you have about an object, put in a non-linear form. Through my work as stage artist, I have learned that art can often be the most effective messenger. As a former illustrator I have found that illustration complements the text and explain the message better.

When all these resources were added together, the ancient tool *meavrresgárri*, the Sámi shaman drum came as an example of visualization of my thoughts. But it is perhaps not so surprising; it is in line with the traditional use of Sámi knowledge. The linguist in Sámi language J. A. Friis explains in the book *Lappiske Eventyr og Folkesagn* (Sámi Fairytales and Legends) from 1871 that the Sámi had pictured on the shaman drum everything that interested him or all he wanted to know something about. The drum was both the people's bible and the people's oracle and also a kind of land map over this and the other realms.¹⁸⁷ The Norwegian religion historian Brita Pollan characterizes the shaman drum as a "non-literary source of knowledge on the Sámi shamanistic cosmology."¹⁸⁸ The drum was, in other words, consulted on important issues that had an impact on the existence in the world Sámi lived in. These are both excellent descriptions of my intent with the use of the drum here. I mean the *meavrresgárri* is more than just an object for the use of a shaman's journey, everything is really in it. In fact, it represents our tangible and intangible values, our history, religion,

¹⁸⁷ Friis, J.A 1871 (In Pollan 1993: p 40)

¹⁸⁸ Pollan 1993: p. 40-42, 54-55

culture and cosmology.

If the drum is to make sense in today's society, I have put the Sámi's ancient land map or mind map in a new context. To update the drum is actually not a new idea: When Christianity started to have impact on the Sámi people, the noaidi added symbols such as the church and Virgin Mary on the drumhead. My updating can be seen as a revitalization of, or innovative use of, an old method to study something you are passionate about, or want to find the answer to. This use can be an advantage for us Sámi, including me. One advantage may be that we rediscover the value of an ancient ritual tool of an almost totally extinct religion. Another advantage is that this use of traditional knowledge is in line with Indigenous methods to analyze and interpret data. But it can have strong disadvantages too. I am aware that this use brings also worries if our traditional knowledge becomes mistreated in different ways. Kovach warns: "The difficulties of bringing such knowledge into the academy, is the risk of them being appropriated or diminished."¹⁸⁹ SOWIP explains:

"Indigenous peoples around the world are concerned about the on-going appropriation of their spirituality. In many countries, people who appropriate Indigenous peoples' spirituality have a desire to (re-) spiritualize themselves (and possibly others) by using the sacred traditions of Indigenous cultures."¹⁹⁰

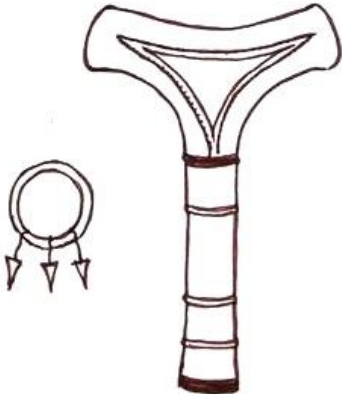
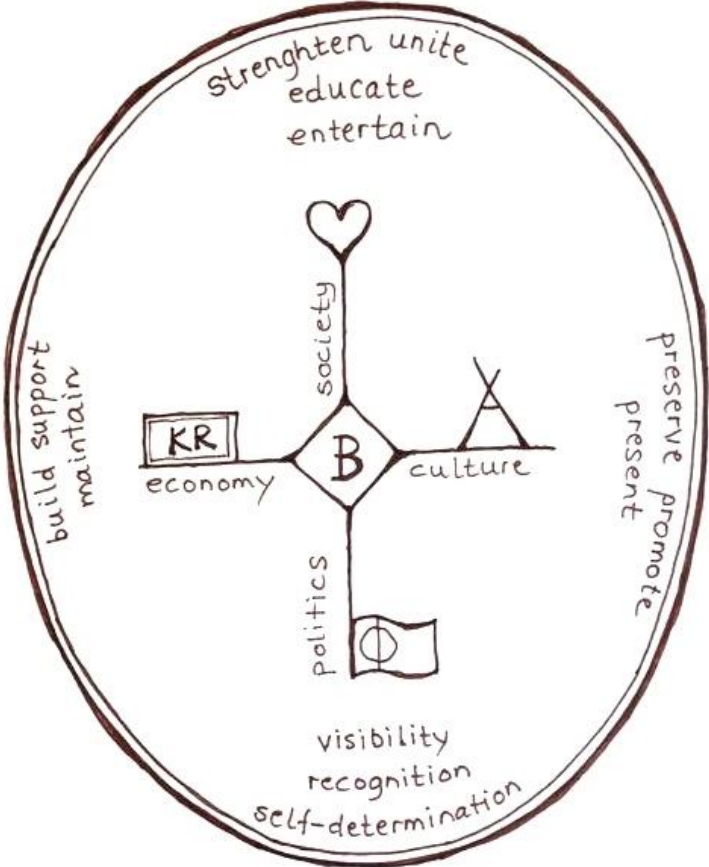
I hope this will not happen. With all respect for our culture and our ancestors, I allow myself to transfer the old knowledge to modern use for this purpose only. With the hope that the ownership of traditional culture knowledge is respected, I continue the explanation.

On the basis of the old shaman drum that I am referring to earlier in the task, (the one with the Sun in the middle), I have designed a new and simplified model adapted to a current image of our society (see illustration page 72). This explanatory model is a multi-purpose model where any object that you would like to shed light on could figure prominently in the middle. Instead of the traditional Sun, I use the Beivváš- theater as the center point. Instead of the old symbols of gods, goddesses, and other powers, I use the symbols we recognize from our modern society. On the traditional drum led the four solar roads to the four corners of the world. Here, I call them *the four paths of development*. These roads lead to the powers that control and develop our society and that we in fact have self-determination within, namely culture, politics, economy and social life. Religion is not a powerful force in our society and therefore implied in the categories of culture and social life. Connotative it is

¹⁸⁹ Kovach 2009: p. 147

¹⁹⁰ SOWIP: p. 61

pretty trivial stuff, but now as before we shall see that the drum and its symbols can have magical power. That these forces are located in each specific direction is to a certain extent not random. But this, I come back to later.



A Sámi shaman drum is worthless as a consulting instrument without *árpa*, pointer and *vežir*, hammer. The hammer and the pointer are unchanged and serve their purposes to activate the power of the drum, now as before. The noaidi adds the pointer or ring on the middle symbol, hit the drum skin with the hammer so the ring moves around on the different symbols. Out from the ring's movements on the drum the noaidi can read and interpret the

message. I take as a starting point that my drum is positive, that to move on the powers (the words) derived from the specific symbols have a positive effect for Beivváš.

Soon we are ready for a journey of Beivváš future. But first, let us take a quick look back at how the process has been from the Beivváš' rise and until now. According to Beivváš' history we see that the ring has touched all four symbols or powers and sometimes been astray. If we pursue Culture direction first: Here Beivváš has been a lot, also according themselves. But in the recent past perhaps mostly on *promote* and *present*. *Preserve* has not been so much affected as it was at the beginning of the 80's. Another symbol that Beivváš has touched much is the Society. The ring has been mainly on *entertain*, but also *educate* and *strengthen* have in short periods been within the ring's eye. *Unite* has not been particularly touched since the 80's. In this social field Beivváš has not been given the attention they deserve, according to their statements. When it concerns Politics, Beivváš has quickly stopped by on its journey, but long enough to have made visible the Sámi culture and community life. It has also been recognized as a national theater institution, but without help from the Norwegian state and support from the Sámi Parliament to practice self-determination in the development of the theatre. The ring has been almost absent on the Economy power, and the times it has been there, it has mostly been on *maintain* and not on *build* or *support*. Money, or the lack of such, seemed to have had the most power when it comes to the development of Beivváš. The ring has stopped only on the symbol for the economy and not moved further on, to the powers. Here the development of Beivváš has stopped.

It could be that the wrong forces have held in the hammer, or that the "noaidi" has been weak and without perspectives or interpretation gifts. There are methods that can help to prevent destruction. Let us continue to follow the mythological storytelling track: In Pollan's book, we are introduced to the story of a man whose only son was ill with a life-threatening disease. Although his father was a noaidi himself, he could not help his son since he was too closely related to him. He wanted so desperately to salvage his only son from death, and asked another noaidi to consult with the drum. But no matter how much they tried, the ring was stuck in the path of death and did not move until the father promised a sacrifice which was in accordance with the value of the son, -his own life. Then the son was rescued.¹⁹¹ Whether this story is true or not, one thing is certain, (that does not need either divine or scientific explanation) - you have to give to get. For Beivváš it may indicate that we have not sacrificed enough for the development of the theatre. Admittedly, the permanent employees

¹⁹¹ Pollan 1993: p 43-45

have sacrificed hard work for over thirty years with keeping Beivváš alive, but there is no value in this work if the theater is going to die when they retire. There is also no sense in still keeping Beivváš on the smallest possible existence basis when there are other and better solutions in the immediate vicinity. Those sacrifices I will come back to soon.

Now we are ready to see the future of Beivváš. Let us go to the noaidi in the beginning of the thesis, the one with the prayer to the Sun, his father, about the forces that threaten. We give him the knowledge that is provided in this thesis as background, give him the drum, the hammer and the ring and let him start the ceremony with his prayer.

«Beaivi Áhčážan, váldde mu vuostái. Mun bođan oaččundihte vuoimmi, dan vuoimmi maid mii dárbbášit go vuot galgat dusttet daid fámuid mat ledje várálepmosat min álbmogii – dološ áiggiid rájes otnáš ráddjái. Váldde vuostái mu, Beaivi Áhčážan».¹⁹²

Now, we will not disappear totally into "the other world" and stay there, but come back to this realm and do an analysis on the challenges Beivváš has ahead. Based on the information that has emerged in chapter 5.1, it may indicate that the most dangerous forces, the most dangerous Ogre for the Sámi community are *inaction* or *passivity*. Someone with culture preserving perspective has to take responsibility and pick up the hammer and activate the forces around Beivváš. The certain death for Beivváš is not doing anything at all. It must be added pressure on our elected politicians to get the institution up and running. The Beivváš' journey of development must go through all powers in the right direction to achieve a sustainable management and development of the theater. With its origins in the people and the Sámi culture, the road should go through the political forces in order to continue to the economy and then get out in the community again achieving maintenance of the culture. This cycle or consultation activities must take place continuously in the daily operation of the theater. It is as simple as the need for heart, soul, brain and body to exist as humans.

The most powerful sacrifice would probably be *time*. We need to spend time and have a commitment to develop an institution, and it must be done by all four powers combined; people, culture, politics and economy. The Sámi culture is not only a Sámi responsibility because we have not achieved the degree of autonomy where complete control is possible. The Norwegian authorities in collaboration with the Sámi politicians should take responsibility to initiate planning for the sustainable development of the cultural institution. The economy must conform to the cultural mission imposed on the institution and not starve

¹⁹² The noaidi's request to his Father, the Sun, in the theater play *Váikko čuođi Stálu...*

the theater of resources. Culture is probably the only “power” in which we have a high degree of autonomy, but it can go completely wrong under wrong guidance. Therefore, it is necessary that all members of Sámi communities engage and give of our time and expertise to establish a permanent cultural institution that serves first and foremost the Sámi people. Here is the circuted circle of a sustainable development, when the head meets the tail.

On my revitalized and modern shaman drum I have intentionally placed the Sámi people up in the North (according to our standard notion of map-reading) because this is where we live. That dropped the other forces naturally into places one at a time, in the Sun's direction after the dependency principle. That the Culture ended up in East, the Politics in South and Economy in the West was beyond my power to determine; there were no other opportunities. That is maybe the magic with the drum, that it even has its own truth or prophecy?

5.2.2 Power in East

I have already shed a light at the administrative development that will be needed to make Beivváš into a functional institution, but what about its content? There are four players who have a role in Beivváš' development; the Sámi society, the institution itself with its employees and board members, the Norwegian Sámi Parliament and finally the Norwegian government. Beivváš Sámi National Theater has *status* as an important cultural institution, but not a stage or a profound resonance in the Sámi community. Let us go back to my Sámi shaman drum. One may ponder why Beivváš 'culture is in the East. Maybe that is where Sámi originally come from or have their kinship, or does it reveal something about the present Japan-inspired theater director Gunnarsson? Even though these questions might have more value as entertainment, they are worth a thought. When it comes to a culture management strategy, there is certainly good reason to look to East: The Dalai Lama considered the importance of culture so high that he established TIPPA once he came to India after the escape from Tibet. It is possibly the Dalai Lama and his spiritual influence has governed the Tibetans in the right direction when it comes to culture preserving, but I do not think it is just that. There are some choices exile-Tibetans have taken in full awareness of the effect it has on people and identity. Their priorities are interesting and apparently effective: Culture (with religion included) is at the top, the other is subordinate.

The Tibetan exile-government have apparently succeeded with their strategy for sustainable culture management, (in spite of unstable budgets) and TIPPA seems to have all of what Beivváš is lacking when it comes to recruitment, expertise and acknowledgment.

According to my understanding, TIPA's model is a very good idea for the survival of ancient culture heritage. The TIPA staff and students are making archives while researching, educating while producing, promoting while entertaining. That is not only protecting culture from extinction, but generating culture in a long-lasting perspective for the benefit of the Tibetan people. Before I come back to this topic later in this chapter with a more thorough discussion, I will introduce you to a Beivváš actor's future dream for the theater institution:

“I wish for a new theater house with all facilities, where it seethes with life, a creative center that is filled with art and cultural activities that inspire... to build up the Guovdageaidnu community with culture. That is my dream.”¹⁹³

I think this actor should be taken seriously. After three decades of community service for the Sámi people in the whole Scandinavia, I believe the actors and stage workers are the ones connected to the theater who best know the society. They are in directly contact with the people at the grassroots level. Not to forget, they have had a lot of responsibility for the Sámi contents of the plays during the years and have acquired considerable culture knowledge. It is perhaps time to modernize Beivváš and give the institution a more fundamental role than entertainment, a role which is more extensive than a theater is allowed to have. If conditions are right, the Sámi in Norway can build up a solid cultural institution benefiting all Sámi people in the long run. The Norwegian Sámi Parliament's culture perspectives today are quite promising. This is the heading from their Culture Section pages:

“A versatile culture life strengthens the Sámi cohesion and identity, and contributes to vibrant communities where people want to live. Cultural activities have an important role in the Sámi community, including for the settlement. Sámi cultural practices help to create a sense of belonging, well-being and quality of life as well as culture-based jobs.”¹⁹⁴

Unfortunately, it can be few and far between theory and practice. This promising perspective is not in proportion to the efforts they have made in relation to the Sámi theater so far. It does not seem to improve either. Beivváš' application to the Norwegian Ministry of Culture is designed by a hired external consultant, approved by the Board of Beivváš and the Sámi Parliament. If they get approval for the plans, a totally new Beivváš will occur within 5

¹⁹³ Beivváš-actor 2

¹⁹⁴ Sámediggi webpage: (My translation), <http://www.samediggi.no/Kultureallin> (01.05.2014)

years. Beivváš and the Sámi Parliament have the chance to start over with building up the institution and make it an important and versatile powerhouse permanent rooted in the Sámi culture. In collaboration with all the various Sámi expertise which has grown in Guovdageaidnu and Sápmi in general the last decades; it can become a solid institution for Sámi culture education. There are some good ideas for the theater in the application, but some ideas are immediately alarming in my eyes. The theater director Gunnarsson enters the application with the words:

"The new theater house shall provide Norway a dignified, productive and flexible venue for art and creativity. It shall be the Sámi national theater home as the beautiful National Theatre on Karl Johan is in the capital. Our building will house more than the performing arts: it should be a venue for art and cultural forms that will be developing exciting encounters and moments of northern Norway. The Theater House in Kautokeino shall be open to expression and art with local, regional, national and international anchorage. In addition, the building will underpin the future industries in the north: traveling and adventure tourism. " ¹⁹⁵

At first I will discuss the ideas I find destructive for the Sámi culture's development.

According to the application, Beivváš and Sámi Parliament want to continue and expand the old and Western theater model which is not working satisfactorily. Further, they express that the theater house should not be a gesture to the Sámi, but a gift to whole Norway.¹⁹⁶ In addition it will be advanced with Sámi culture's art expressions as a commodity for traveling and adventure tourism. Cultural management is not mentioned in the application. If everybody consumes it, no one generates it. I find these ideas alarming because:

First, Indigenous minority culture cannot be compared to the majority or dominating population's culture existing in an independent state. An Indigenous peoples' culture has a different challenge than the dominating population's culture because the dominating population's culture is never threatened by anyone other than themselves. The Sámi, as other Indigenous cultures, are threatened by extinction, exploitation and the dominating or mainstream society's worldview and perception of welfare. Therefore, if the Indigenous peoples' cultures are to benefit the Indigenous peoples, it cannot function in the long run as just entertainment or a tourist attraction. Therefore I see it as essential that the Indigenous

¹⁹⁵ Beivváš Theater building application to the Ministry of Culture: p. 1, (My translation)
http://www.beivvas.no/media/wtsnews/files/Beivvas_Strategidokument2014_NOR_offisiell_versjon.pdf
(10.06.2013)

¹⁹⁶ Beivváš Theater building application to the Ministry of Culture: p. 2

people's cultural management is not using the majority population's model or strategy, but creates its own management model that maintains the culture first and foremost to preserve the identity and character of its own people, not for the pleasure of attraction or tourism.

Second, for Beaivváš, the tourist perspective can result in a superficial and highly unpredictable form of show or entertainment, as it may be at risk that the market determines the production. This can contribute to further exploitation and impoverishment of the Indigenous tangible and intangible assets for economic purposes, where the Sámi themselves are the exploiters. Besides, the tourist industry is not settled, has not particularly succeeded or brought common wealth to Guovdageaidnu, so far. Seen from my point of view, the application to the Ministry of Culture is irresponsible, short-sighted and not down to earth in relation to the Sámi interests. The wording might be a way to appeal to the Norwegian government's politics for achieving financial support, but the plans presented in the application are binding. Obviously, there is a discussion about choice between a sustainable culture management and culture show. Selecting culture show, it works as long as there are people paying to watch. Selecting education and culture management, it lasts as long as the institution wants to. In both cases the institution need financial support to sustain in our remote part of the country. What do we most benefit from?

Now to the ideas I find good and constructive for Beaivváš. Let us start with the actor's wish about a theater house, full of creative people and art, the active center which builds up the municipality with culture. Add it to Gunnarsson's future perspective about a creative and flexible venue for local, national and international various art expressions. Include the Sámi parliament's reference to culture as a founder for quality of life and identity, a contributor to revitalize a local community and culture as an employer. Together these three perspectives are very close to the TIPA-model for culture management, it is only missing the educational part that I can see. If Beaivváš and the theater house becomes an educational culture institute, many problems with regard to the Sámi culture management, recruitment and jobs are solved in Sápmi.

TIPA generates culture by educating youth in multidisciplinary performing arts. Through targeted education and training, the Tibetan youth gain a solid culture and language competence and can later work as teachers and performers in all disciplines in the Tibetan settlements. A similar targeted culture education is needed in Sámi communities to counteract the lack of Sámi professionals in schools, after-schools activities and other culture-related employments. It will also contribute, if not secure, a lasting recruitment to theater, film, music and other artistic activities within the subjects. This education of cultural professionals and

establishing of jobs for our own development's sake is more durable for a Sámi municipality in the long term than the tourist industry and for example the mining industry. In addition, it might prevent the youth from leaving Sápmi to gain similar education and jobs.

I see only benefit with a local educational culture institution instead of a pure theater activity where we have to send our youth away from Sápmi to gain relevant education. Some of them never return with their competence. In the application to the Culture Ministry, Beivváš uses the lack of educated Sámi speaking actors as an argument for establishing an external Sámi actor education.¹⁹⁷ It might work to some extent regarding to recruitment, but the collaboration they plan with the Norwegian theater schools has some weaknesses: In Norway we cannot on the basis of ethnicity avoid or refuse non-Sámi students from becoming Sámi actors if they want to. If Beivváš' only criteria is that the actors should be able to master the Sámi languages, our Norwegian speaking Sámi youth will formally not have advantage in their identity, cultural competence or local belongingness. In addition they will have to compete with non-Sámi for work in their own community. I see this issue as a possible dilution of the Sámi culture. It is better to place the education where the Sámi already are. As mentioned in chapter 3.4.2 a formal Sámi performing art education was planned and initiated by Haukur Gunnarsson and Harriet Nordlund in 1996, but was rejected by the Culture Ministry. Why not continue this plan and go for an establishment of a Sámi theater education in Guovdagaidnu?¹⁹⁸

Guovdageaidnu (not to mention the whole of Sápmi) already has most of the expertise of both administrative and artistic personnel to assist a Sámi culture institute, it only needs the premises and goodwill from the Norwegian government. The Norwegian government now has the chance to make up for some of the injustice and culture deletion caused by the Norwegianization policy. It can share its experience and expertise in nation-building strategy in addition to provide financial support to build up again what it once dismantled. According to the Norwegian constitution and the international laws and conventions the Norwegian state has signed, the state is responsible for the Sámi population to equal the Norwegian population. It does not necessarily mean that the Sámi should have a National Theatre identical to the Norwegian, but that the Norwegian state should actively "pave the way" for the Sámi to develop their language and social life, on the Sámi's own terms. Thus it is not just symbolic politics when it comes to supporting the Sámi population, but concrete measures

¹⁹⁷ Beivváš Theater building application to the Ministry of Culture: p. 13

http://www.beivvas.no/media/wtsnews/files/Beivvas_Strategidokument2014_NOR_offisiell_versjon.pdf

¹⁹⁸ Lehtola 2008: p. 115

that will allow Norway to live up to the reputation as a pioneer when it comes to Indigenous policy,—not only on the paper, but also in practice.

The Tibetan inner and outer culture and the social life flourish with and around TIPA. Where there are youth, there are always spectators like parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, friends and schoolmates, in an all-generations participating. “When we have performance, many Tibetans come to watch, but also a lot of westerners are so interested, especially in the traditional opera,” said the female junior artiste at TIPA.¹⁹⁹ Their performances in Dharamshala attract tourists too, but on the terms of Tibetans, not tourists. With basic education in many fields, these youth are capable to perform and promote the ancient unique Tibetan culture all over the world. If Beivváš reforms to an education institute like TIPA, in addition to remaining a high quality theater, a large area of needs is covered in Sámi society. It can get Sámi recruitment in all disciplines; actors, technicians, musicians, dancers, craftsmen, everything that belongs to a theater. In addition it will provide culturally-educated Sámi speaking workers where it is needed in Sápmi. Whether the youth afterwards decide to continue with arts or not, they will always have a solid Sámi cultural competence with them, to pass on to next generation.

5.3 Conclusion

Beivváš is an institution both managing and mainstreaming Sámi culture, but there are very strong indications showing that Beivváš is increasingly moving towards a pure entertainment role in the Sámi society. Beivváš is very important for the Sámi language, but is no longer as important as Sámi culture-keepers or identity strengtheners as it was for some years ago. The institution could have had much more responsibility in the culture preserving role because of all the resources are present; they just have to be organized and activated. With a similar role as TIPA has in the Tibetan community, Beivváš could be a vital cultural power center in Sápmi, based on the Sámi tangible and intangible values. We need a culture management institution for the Sámi people’s existence, as well as preservation of the ancient culture heritage of Northern-Europe.

In this chapter I have let the old Sámi spiritual heritage help me to explain the management and development of Beivváš. I have let the model of an old social map be my tool for analysis in a modern academic text. Pollan asserts that the drum had two functions; to induce trance and to predict.²⁰⁰ I think it was more. Here it may be appropriate to infer that

¹⁹⁹ TIPA-student 2

²⁰⁰ Pollan 1993: p. 41

our ancient religion is not necessarily based on divination and superstition as it is described by scientists of all time. The noaidi was maybe only a learned person who by experience, mind maps and an inherited as well as newly acquired knowledge of his own culture and society, had the capabilities to analyze the forces that affect the community and its people. Or a person, who felt responsible, had great faith in himself and his own influence to steer the development of the society he was a part of, and who used theatrical means to gain power for his theories and prophecies. Maybe his trance was a state where the ego was put aside in favor of an open-minded consultation. – Or maybe not.

I will not demystify the noaidi totally because we humans need something to believe in, something that is beyond our comprehension. Something that takes care of the phenomena we cannot explain with science; the feelings in the heart and soul. We need our spiritual dimension; otherwise we run the risk of ending up in the long queues of uninspired and lost souls in front of the stands and temples in Dharamshala on cultural and spiritual shopping trips. But mystery or not, it is quite obvious that the noaidi was a valuable and important public servant. Just like Beaivváš was, is and should be. If Beaivváš disappears, a dimension of society disappears too, as one of the Sámi informants said. The Tibetan young woman also believed that without TIPA, the value of the society in Dharamshala disappears. For Indigenous peoples, the cultural institutions are probably more important than the political and social institutions because people can retain their identity regardless of the state they happen to live in. For Indigenous peoples who are occupied or colonized and divided in several states, culture can be the unifying power which maintains the individual as well as the collective identity of a people. I believe that is why Dalai Lama founded TIPA so quickly. We Sámi have something to learn from our cousins in East about culture management.

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Informants

Tibetans

	Informant	Age	Gender	Profession
1	Tib 1	26	Female	Work in a shop
2	Tib 2	80	Female	Retired farmer
3	Tib 3	52	Female	TWA- Employee
4	Tib 4	25	Male	Student
5	Tib 5	39	Male	Monk
6	Tib 6	-	Male	School principle, teacher
7	TIPA Artistic Director	-	Male	Artistic Director, teacher
8	TIPA Opera Master	-	Male	Opera-Master, teacher
9	TIPA-student	21	Male	Junior- student
10	TIPA-student	24	Female	Junior-student

Sámi

	Informant	Age	Gender	Profession
1	Sámi 1	58	Male	Scholar
2	Sámi 2	46	Female	Customer service
3	Sámi 3	24	Female	Student
4	Beaivváš-actor 1	-	Male	Actor, theater employee
5	Beaivváš- actor 2	-	Female	Actor, theater employee

Maps and photos



The Sámi people is divided by four borders



China, Tibet and India



Guovdageaidnu – a culture and education center in Sápmi (Photo: Wikipedia)



The Culture House of Guovdageaidnu is not suitable for theater in Beivváš scale and by today's standards.
(Photo: Beivváš/Mienna)



Theater dramatics from the Western world have been performed at Beivváš' stage for decades. Here from Shakespeare's Mac Beth in the clown version. (Photo: Harry Johansen)



Beivváš has Sámi as stage language
(Photo:Beivváš)



The Sámi theater is a mix between traditions and modernity. (Photo: Beivváš)



Theater where other indigenous cultures are presented. (Photo: Beivváš)



McLeod Ganj, The Tibetan settlement in Dharamshala, is located in the steep foothills of Himalaya, India.
(Photo: Marie Kvermo)



TIPA – a culture institution in exile (Photo: TIPA)



The interdisciplinary trained TIPA-students are important culture ambassadors for Tibet. (Photo: TIPA)



Tibetans have long-standing traditions in Performing Arts (Photo:TIPA)



Sámi -Tibetan performance at Indigenous peoples Day 9th August 2008 in Stockholm. (Photo: Roland Storm)



There are similarities between the Sámi and Tibetan cultures. (Photo: Ylva Sarri)



Lisandro Guarcax from the Maya group Sotz'il, in Norway, August 2010. (Photo: Sotz'il)

“Sun, my Father, please receive me.
I'm coming for getting strength,
the strength we need
when we once again shall resist the powers
that are most dangerous for our people
- from ancient days to the present.
Please receive me
Sun, my Father.”