

[Translation into English from North Sámi]

VIRTUAL NORDIC EXPERT SEMINAR: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & PROTECTION OF SÁMI TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE 22 OCTOBER 2020

MODERATED PANEL DISCUSSION ON CURRENT TOPICS AHEAD OF THE EVENT DURING PRESIDENCY OF NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS 2021

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Sami Duodji Searvi is an association for Sami handcrafters, and today I represent it. Something on the net is not ok. Anyway, the Sami Duodji Searvi was established in 1975 in Anar. I will shortly talk about its history. It was a time when the Sami society started to become active and observing the growing threats. The question by then was; in what way can we strengthen our people?

Sami Duodji Searvi is the only organization that is following the development of duodji and tries to improve the situation for handcrafters and promote education in duodji and protect traditional Sami duodji. Now Sami duodji organizations has started to work across the borders. And this is good, when the challenges are getting bigger, especially regarding the protection and management of Sami duodji.

Duodji includes many aspects. The Sami produced all they needed; clothes, ornaments, sledges and so forth. There are so many things connected to duodji; the Sami language, the terminology, norms, traditional knowledge and art. The process of duodji starts when collecting material from the nature. The process starts very early, when observing nature and the moon. The nature must in a way, be prepared for duodji. Duodji is closely connected to the Sami year. And the Sami year organizes the handcrafters' work into certain period of the year. If we look at life here, and the way we live is very much attached to what we observe in nature and to our traditional livelihood.

Making a piece of duodji is not done in one day, two nor in a week. Duodji is made in a certain time of the year, and thus the making is tied to the season. In certain season you can find material, and the way of working too. You also have to take the preparation of the material, for instance drying it, into account. Recently traditional Sami duodji has not been so competitive with products made in fabrics. Those products we do not call duodji, even though they look like it.

A tourist, or a person that wants to buy a cup, can choose to buy a cheap cup made in a fabric, and not from a Sami. We certainly have many challenges. We want to safeguard our common central values. This is self-evident, it is an old tradition. This is an important central value. In a way it strengthens a Sami person. There are other values, like the language, your relatives, understanding nature, the luohiti and the total way of life connects these together.

All these are cornerstones for us existing on this earth. These parts should be protected and developed. For some people duodji is their main livelihood. Is it expected to provide income and food on the table for them. For others is an additional livelihood to other traditional

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livelihood. The Sami languages are endangered and so is duodji. In Finland are the Anar- and Skolt Sami duodji traditions under great threat. In total there are only a few in these groups that has the capacity to make duodji.

Now I will say something about the threats that we meet today. We heard earlier today about plagiarism and about the making of cheap copies. For the “duojar” this becomes a challenge to manage with the marketing of working with hands and in a traditional way. The feeding of stereotypes in social media and the spreading of false information is one of the challenges for duodji. The use of gákti, our traditional dresses, in tourism industry has been going on for a long time. This is a serious issue that would need ethical guidelines that are effective.

The misuse of elements of duodji, for instance the gákti, the shamans drum, spiritual symbols makes it difficult to explain for the outside world about the context that they belong to. Is it permissible to utilize or steal them? Regarding stealing we can discuss that even if it is about concrete cultural property, like duodji. One important piece of duodji is the gákti, a thing that has been stolen.

The Sami definitions, the halted renewal of the Sami Act has been ongoing processes. We have not been able to reach the goals we have put politically. This has had a direct impact on the intangible cultural heritage. One effect is there has been a race in the search of identity and what happens is that the identity markers of indigenous people becomes very attractive to people coming from the outside the Sami society. They also want to obtain the same level of identity as us. It is very strange that you can do this with concrete articles, like with a gákti for instance.

In the slides I am showing some of the symbols. And recently I have not been active in the Duodji- organization. But I can see that the work with the trademark has progressed in good and active way in a Scandinavian level. These are symbols with the Sami trademark. They are established earlier. Next to them there is a mark. It is a guarantee that this piece of duodji is made by a Sami person. But it is not made in the traditional way. The symbol on the left side shows that. It is very important that we can accept that all making duodji not necessarily are making traditional duodji. We can give Sami that want to invent new duodji that is based upon traditional duodji and make new duodji, clothes or ornaments. That they can use this mark as a certificate. This mark is not, to my knowledge, approved. The mark is owned by the Sami Council. The Sami duodji organizations can get license to use it. At the end there is the Finnish duodji organization's new logotype. The organization runs also a duodji- shop. And the shop uses the trademark, the symbol.

As the representative of the Duodji- organization I heard interesting things and I feel very satisfied today. But I want to promote cooperation within the Nordic countries. Often we have discussed what we could say and how strong this protection should be. Do we, as Finnish Sami, have the right to state anything about the duodji's traditions? Because there are also Sami in Norway, Sweden and Russia. And all our traditional knowledge is something that belongs to all of us. And this requires that we have a common view that we follow.

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Infringements in the Sami culture are constantly happening. This also in concrete matters, not only in land and waters, but also in duodji and in our livelihood. And of course we would like that the trademark in the future would encourage duodji- makers to use it more. Even though global trends like fashion, and negative trends like the global climate change are directing the world today. But for indigenous people it is the end the social manners, traditional knowledge and traditional duodji are things that carries the cultures forward. When things go wrong, like in political goals, in developing Sami politics. I can tell for sure that duodji and spiritual parts, intangible art and film are in focus. Here in the end I also can tell you that we want that true information to people and that in the Finnish school system pupils early get the correct knowledge. The Minister of culture has pointed that out activities on the Sami national day in elementary school. Education material should be highlighted. And distribute correct information to all young people about duodji. Sami duodji agrees with Tuomas Mattila analysis, there is the copyright law and classical protection. These could be adapted to duodji and to the gákti.

Giitu / Thank you