The Máinnasheargi research project – Modern viewpoints on Saami oral tradition

Ph.D. Marko Jouste

Historical Turning Points of Multilayered Music Tradition among the Skolt Saami in Finland

Skolt Saami in Finland - Historical turning points in the 20th century

Until the Second World War, the traditional living areas of the Skolt Saami were located in the cultural melting pot of Northern peoples in the Western Kola Peninsula. The research is based on an idea that the Skolt Saamis have lived in a multicultural environment and their music tradition is inherently multi-layered with "indigenous" and "adopted" genres coming from neighbouring Saami, Karelian, Russian, Norwegian and Finnish music cultures.

This multicultural environment, which had existed in this area for centuries, broke down as the borders of Norway, Finland and Russia/Soviet Union were reorganized. Three Skolt Saami areas, Pocjakk, Peđcam and Suu'nm'jel were incorporated to Finland in 1920 and contacts between Finnish Skolt Saamis, Russian Skolt Saamis and other ethnic groups began to decline. After the Second World War, these three village areas were ceded to Soviet Union and Finnish Skolt Saamis were forced to migrate to new areas in Finland, namely to Sevettijärvi and Nellim in Inari district.

Topics of the research

The history of the collecting Skolt Saami music

• A review of the history of fieldwork and research on the Skolt Saami music.

Structural analysis of the music

• By analysing the vast collections of historical music material preserved in archives, we can understand the structures of the music and how different genres differ from each other and what are the characteristics of local traditions in Pocjakk, Peđcam and Suu'nm'jel.

• With sufficient amount of analysed material, it is possible to see out "rules" of how Skolt Saami music was traditionally "composed" and performed.

Skolt Saami music culture

• The study is the first comprehensive survey of Skolt Saami musical culture in Finland and its historical and cultural context during the 20th century.

• Skolt Saami music and specially the texts of individual songs called leu’dd hold notable amount of cultural data seen from a Skolt Saami point of view.

• Skolt Saami music tradition can be seen as a medium of commenting the happenings in the Skolt Saami society, expressing Skolt Saami worldview and personal feelings of the performers.

Changes in Skolt Saami music culture

• From the archive material one can examine how the cultural change of dividing the traditional Skolt Saami land by borders, forced migration and settling to new living areas affected the Skolt Saami music culture and what was the impact on musical genres, subjects of leu’dds and structures of traditional music.

• The study of the Skolt Saami musical culture after the Second World War will offer exact cultural information on how Skolt Saamis experienced the loss of their original homelands and settling to new areas in Finland.

Research methods and material

The research is a part of Saami Cultural studies as well as Ethnomusicology, which are both multidisciplinary fields of science. The main methods are cultural and musical analysis. However, since the material is historical and consists of several different types of musical traditions, the methods of historical research and Folkloristic studies of genre are incorporated in the analysis.

In the centre of this study is the analysis of the existing archive material. The earliest informants, who have been recorded, were born in the 19th century and therefore the cultural memory stretches back over a hundred years. Research data is gathered both from archives and by fieldwork in Finland.

Co-operative work with present Skolt Saami generations

Due to a strong cultural change during the last decades, the Skolt Saami music tradition has not been transferred sufficiently from old generations to present ones.

There is a growing need for data on the traditional Skolt Saami musical tradition for purposes of teaching and revitalising the culture. It is also important to note that archive material can be used to strengthen and revitalise the Skolt Saami culture.

A part of this project is co-operative work with present tradition holders and Skolt Saamis learning traditional music as well as repatriating archive material to Skolt Saamis. (See Jouste & Mosnikoff & Sivertsen 2007)

The research project is active 2015–2018 and it is funded by the Academy of Finland.

Sources


Archives