

Xinjie Chen

Lectio praecursoria:
*Rooted Cosmopolitanism of Sámi Music CDs
in the 2000s*

Xinjie Chen, Ph.D. (xinjie.chen@helsinki.fi) has been majoring in ethnomusicology and received her bachelor's and master's degrees in the department of Musicology at the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, China. Her research interests cover the music-cultural heritages and contemporary musics of Indigenous people and minorities. She defended her PhD thesis, "Rooted Cosmopolitanism of Sámi Music CDs in the 2000s", on 20 December 2021 at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki. The opponent was Professor Johannes Brusila (Åbo Akademi) and the custos Professor Susanna Välimäki.

DOI: 10.51816/musikki.115717

Rooted Cosmopolitanism of Sámi Music CDs in the 2000s¹

Xinjie Chen
.....

The present research project concerns Sámi music CDs and their production in the first decade of the current millennium through the theoretical lens of rooted cosmopolitanism. The Sámi are an Indigenous people whose traditional living area, called Sápmi, reaches across northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. Their traditional lifestyles include reindeer herding, fishing, and hunting. Nowadays, an increasing number of Sámi live also in other areas, particularly in cities, such as, in Finland, Helsinki and Oulu. Today, Sámi identity is complex; it is constructed variously based on blood lineage, linguistics, cultural-political contexts, and many other factors. The Sámi is not a homogenous group of people. For instance, there are nine living Sámi languages. According to different languages, livelihoods and living areas, the Sámi can be classified into different cultural and regional groups. This is a factor that I am taking into account when analyzing the Sámi CDs from the point of view of rooted cosmopolitanism.

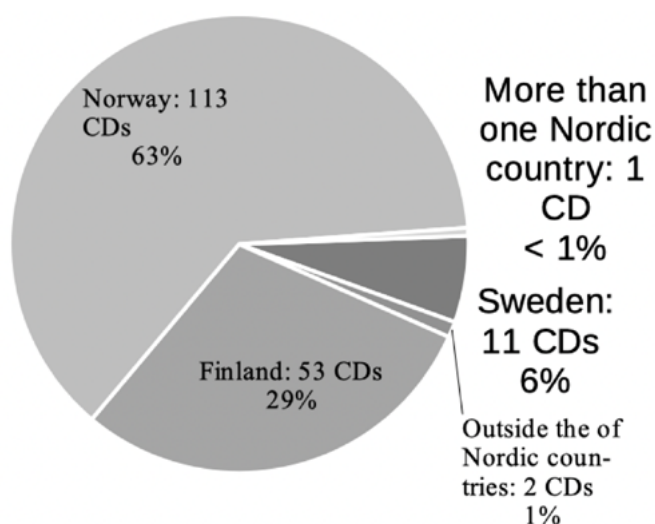
The Sámi have suffered dispossession of their homelands. Their traditional culture has become endangered during the processes of colonization, modernization, and Christianization. The history of colonization and cultural oppression considerably damaged the Sámi people's traditional lifestyles and cultures. For example, during the Christianization the traditional vocal expression of the Sámi, yoik, was stigmatized as sinful and forbidden because of its associations with Sámi shamanism and mythology.

Over the past centuries, the Sámi have continuously struggled for the rights to their lands, cultures, and resources. Since the late 1970s, music

¹ Based on the lectio praecursoria presentation at the public defense of the doctoral dissertation at the University of Helsinki on 20 December 2021. The dissertation is openly available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-51-7636-3>

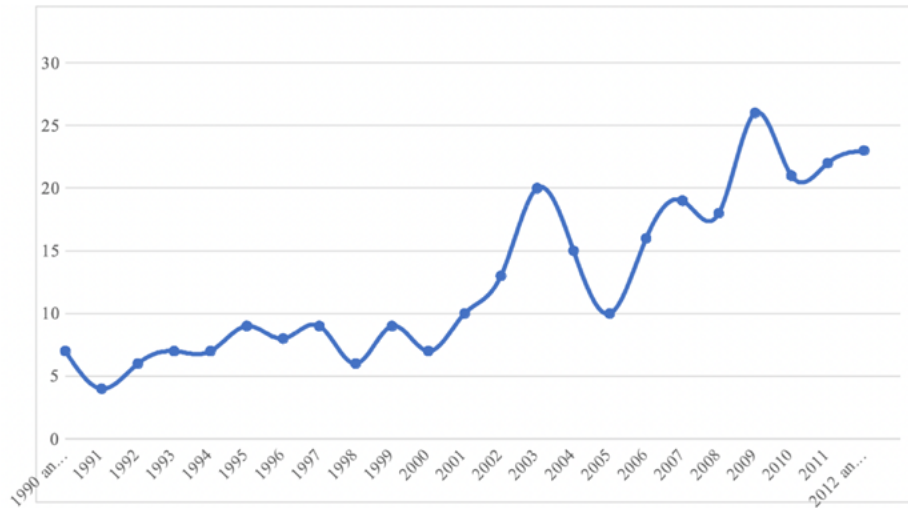
has become an essential part of Sámi cultural revitalization. In particular, yoik that relates to their Indigenous knowledge has been promoted as a representation of Sáminess (Hilder 2015). The Sámi music industry and recordings have developed as parts of the cultural revitalization effort that have links with the global music industry although the Sámi recording industry is mainly associated with the music industries in three Nordic countries: Norway, Finland, and Sweden (Chart 1). The contemporary Sámi music involves both globalized popular music genres and the regional music cultures of different Sámi groups.

Chart 1



Sámi CDs were the dominant commercial products of Sámi music, which was also distributed by internet streaming and live performances, in the first decade of the 21st century (Chart 2). In my study, Sámi CDs refer to CDs recorded mainly by Sámi musicians, regardless of the sung languages, music genres or styles. My research material consisted of 180 CDs. It includes solo albums, singles, and EPs performed only by Sámi musicians, compilation albums including also other than Sámi musicians, and CDs of music ensembles with at least one Sámi leading vocalist. Sámi musicians have played the core roles in conceiving the CDs as well as recording, performing, and producing them.

Chart 2



Defining who is Sámi is, of course, a politically disputed question. When identifying Sámi CDs, I relied on self-categorizations made by Sámi people themselves as well as categorizations made by several official institutions and academic archives, including the Sámi Cultural Centre of the Giellagas Institute, Sámi Kulturarkiiva, the Sámi Cultural Centre, Sajos, and the office of the Finnish Sámi Parliament in Inari, Finland.

My dissertation takes the theoretical perspective of rooted cosmopolitanism, which advocates equality for all citizens of the world and recognizes the multiple roots of different groups of people who nevertheless can find a common ground (e.g., Appiah 1997; Cohen 1992). I adopt a perspective from the cultural dimension of cosmopolitanism and build on previous discussions of rooted cosmopolitanism in music studies as they relate to intercultural interactions within the music industry. I am aware that within the Indigenous studies of cosmopolitanism, the very concept of cosmopolitanism is criticized as being Eurocentric and ethnocentric, but it has also been found to be useful in an Indigenous context. According to Sámi scholar Harald Gaski (2013), the idea of cosmopolitanism helps to discover the common values among different Indigenous cultures and encourage Indigenous peoples to participate in the international scholarly debate about Indigenous research with their specific experiences and knowledge. Besides Gaski, many other Indigenous scholars, such as Aref Abu-Rabia (2008) and Craig Proulx (2010), speak for cosmopolitanism as an approach to Indigenous cultures with respect to

their traditional lives, worldviews, and knowledge as well as changes in their contemporary political, cultural, and social environments.

My study draws on the idea of rooted cosmopolitanism in three ways: firstly, by respecting people's cultural identities and their links to some specific cultural characteristics (e.g., Appiah 1997; Hannerz 1990); secondly, by recognizing that cultural differences are the necessary conditions for intercultural dialogue and interaction in cosmopolitan contexts (e.g., Hannerz 2006; Vertovec and Cohen 2002); and thirdly, by highlighting the multiplicity of "roots" and confirming that every individual has different affiliations, such as ethnic or national affiliations (Cohen 1992).

The main research question is how Sámi CD productions represent the idea of cosmopolitanism while at the same time articulating Sámi ethnic, regional, and national roots. The research furthermore investigates how Sámi CD productions are involved in the music industries in Sápmi, the Nordic countries, and the larger global context; how their musical sounds are rooted in the Sámi people's traditional musical expressions while interacting with global music genres and other local music styles; how Sámi CDs articulate ethnic and regional roots through the use of Sámi languages as well as Nordic languages and English for purposes of intercultural cooperation and interactions; and how attachments to Sápmi are presented through the aural, textual, and visual expressions in the CDs.

Sámi CDs cannot be obtained from only one source. I collected 292 Sámi CDs released from 1990 to 2012 from many different sources, including the Sámi Music Centre (a library) in the Sámi Parliament in Inari, Sámi Kulturarkiiva at University of Oulu, and the National Library of Finland in Helsinki. I also got some Sámi CDs in record shops, from online retailers, and during the fieldwork in Sápmi, such as Sámi Easter Festival 2017. For the purposes of this dissertation, 171 Sámi CDs released between 2000 and 2010 constitute the bulk of the research materials. In addition, I analyze nine exceptional CDs published one to three years either before 2000 or after 2010 to enrich the analysis. Together, the study concerns 180 physical Sámi CD products and their enclosed sounds. The reason for focusing on Sámi CD productions from the first decade of the current millennium is the exceptional productivity of the Sámi recording industry during that period. The number of Sámi CDs released in the 2010s is significantly higher than any decade before it.

This research project analyzes Sámi CDs as texts that carry meanings. I apply "textual analysis" to view my data as representations of expressions created to be listened to, read, and interpreted. The texts analyzed in this research project are recorded or audio texts that refer to the music tracks, written or printed texts that include liner notes, lyrics, credits, and

other printed words, and visual texts that refer to pictures and iconic information included in the CD sleeves and booklets. Specifically, I employ the method of categorization by locating and grouping these texts into different units relating to the ethnic, regional, and national roots as well as cosmopolitan features.

The musical analysis of audio tracks as “texts” is done by assessing the melodic and rhythmic features, musical arrangements, and the use of non-human sounds, such as those of nature and animals. After listening to each track on all the CDs, I classified the individual tracks according to music genres and local styles, for example different globalized popular music types, yoik dialects, and other ethnic music genres. I also made musical transcriptions, which illustrate specific musical features to support my identification of musical “roots.”

Regarding the literary material, I have made a content analysis of the printed texts included in the CDs, produced by Sámi musicians, producers, and record labels for the assumed or expected audiences. I analyze how these texts relate to Sámi ethnicity, places and cultures, or with the nation-states, and how they present intercultural interactions between Sámi and non-Sámi people as well as between the Sámi and the global music industries.

I also adopted an iconographic approach to analyze the visual contents by making an inventory of the figures and forms representing the Sámi people and Sápmi. The aim was to consider what information the images and visuals on Sámi CD covers and in the booklets convey about different Sámi roots as well as other local and global cultural contexts.

My research also makes use of quantitative analysis to describe and summarize certain characteristics of Sámi CD productions, including, for example, the types and numbers of publishers, and in-kind supporters as well as music genres and styles, sung languages, and languages used in liner notes. Moreover, the musical transcriptions are helpful for analyzing music tracks. I also obtained some supporting materials through ethnographic fieldwork in Sápmi and other places in the Nordic countries.

Overall, my dissertation interprets rooted cosmopolitanism in Sámi CD productions by analyzing their publishers and sponsors, music genres and styles, language uses and attachments – on the one hand – to Sápmi, pan-Sáminess, and different kinds of Sáminess, and – on the other hand – to other ethnic and global cultural spheres. Sámi CD productions are “cosmopolitan” because they involve various intercultural collaborations between Sámi and others and include globalized popular music genres and styles. These intercultural interactions reflect a cultural openness of

the Sámi in local, national, and global contexts of various music industries. Simultaneously, these CDs articulate different Sámi roots. Pan-Sámi ethnic roots refer to the shared ethnic identity of the Sámi, which crosses national borders. Regional roots are indexed via the different musical traditions, languages, living environments, and livelihoods of various Sámi groups in different regions. The national roots discussed in my study relate more to the financial, cultural, and political associations of the Sámi music industry with the Nordic governments and state-sponsored music industries. These “roots” support Sámi CD productions in the effort to develop and form intercultural interactions in Sápmi-wide, national, Nordic, and global music contexts.

Theoretically, my dissertation is located at the interaction of rooted cosmopolitanism, musical cosmopolitanism (Stokes 2007), and Indigenous cosmopolitanism. It contributes to ethnomusicological studies on Indigenous music by exploring tangible CD productions as combinations of visual, aural, and written texts in ways informed by content analysis rather than using ethnography conducted among musicians. It contributes to the idea of rooted cosmopolitanism by critically discussing the multiplicity of roots – expressed by artistic means – among a distinct ethnic group. It may also further Indigenous studies of cosmopolitanism by demonstrating the involvement of an Indigenous music culture in a global context.

References

Abu-Rabia, Aref. 2008. “A Native Palestinian Anthropologist in Palestinian-Israeli Cosmopolitanism”. In *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism, Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives*, edited by Pnina Werbner, 159–72. London: Routledge.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1997. “Cosmopolitan Patriots”. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (3): 617–39.

Cohen, Mitchell. 1992. “Rooted Cosmopolitanism”. *Dissent* 39 (4): 478–83.

Hannerz, Ulf. 1990. “Cosmopolitans and Locals in a World Culture”. *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (2): 237–51.

Hilder, Thomas. 2015. *Sámi Musical Performance and the Politics of Indigeneity in Northern Europe*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.

Proulx, Craig. 2010. “Aboriginal Hip Hoppers: Representin’ Aboriginality in Cosmopolitan Worlds”. In *Indigenous Cosmopolitans: Transnational and Transcultural Indigeneity in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Maximilian C. Forte, 39–61. Berne: Peter Lang Press.

Stokes, Martin. 2007. "On Musical Cosmopolitanism". *The Macalester International Roundtable 3*. <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/intlrtable/3>.

Vertovec, Steven, and Robin Cohen. 2002. *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.