

**PART II:
INDIGENOUS SAMI RELIGION
RESEARCH HISTORY AND
SOURCE CRITICISM**

4. Indigenous Religions in the Sixth Missionary District: The Case of the Hillsá Drum

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Introduction

Sámi drums are central in understanding the indigenous religions in earlier Sámi societies.¹ The recently reported find of the *goavddis* (drum) from Hillsá opens for a view into a complex religious world in a period of religious change and transformation. We believe the *goavddis* is an important object that can help shed light on Sámi cultures in the past and present, as well as contribute to new perspectives.

Written sources from clergymen and missionaries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are commonly referred to as the most relevant source material when studying Sámi drums. This material derives from a period that witnessed a process of religious change, and the various sources are highly dependent on each other.² The drum from Hillsá is a silent object and impossible to interpret without support from the written source material. One of our intentions is to look at the drum from an ecological perspective, as an expression of the cohesion of the Sámi landscape, habitat and development. The drum itself rests in a static state. From a living religious symbol, it is in this paper turned into an object of examination, and through a process of classification and (re)arrangement we seek to explore how the *goavddis* opens for insights into a complex religious world at a time of religious confrontations. We argue that the *goavddis* speaks clearly of the tenacious structures of Sámi religion, but at the same time also of adaptation and development.³

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The Hillsá *goavddis* – A Fragile Cultural Expression

Sámi drums are well known from written sources beginning around the end of the twelfth century. The first manuscript to include a description of the use of a drum is the medieval manuscript *Historia Norvegiæ*.⁴ The Sámi drums are often divided into two types based on construction. Bowl drums are referred to by the north Sámi word *goavddis* and frame drums are in the south Sámi language called *gievrie*. Most frame drums are from the south Sámi areas, while the bowl drums in general come from central and northern Sámi regions.

The drum from Hillsá is a bowl drum (*goavddis*) and it is one of the northernmost drums ever discovered (Fig. 4.1).⁵ The bowl drums often have a characteristic frame, and the Hillsá drum is decorated with carvings. It has two coarse handles and six paral-



Figure 4.1. The Hillsá drum (TSL 4013). Photo: Adnan Iagic, The Arctic University Museum of Norway. License: CC BY-NC-ND.

lel and double triangles with a crossbar in the middle. From the crossbars, there were probably originally hung garments, trinkets and metal objects of various kinds. According to Lars Olsen from Njaarke (Vesterfjella), who is one of few Sámi who has described the use of a drum in a written record, at the initiation of the drum sexually mature women were obliged to attach a trinket to it.⁶ We cannot know if the ritual Olsen is referring to has been common all over Sápmi, but several of the drums that are known are equipped with garments, trinkets and metal objects.⁷

The drums have also been categorized based on the figures painted on the drum skin.⁸ Since the membrane of the Hillsá drum is long lost, we will not be able to identify any of the religious symbols on the skin. Several researchers nevertheless emphasize that there is a great diversity in the visual art on the membrane as well as in the mode of construction, and that it is not possible to make an unambiguous and indisputable categorisation of the drums.⁹

According to the written sources, the drum was a means for communication with supernatural powers. Furthermore, it is said that the drum was used as an instrument of divination. This way, the *noaidi* (a Sámi religious specialist) could both foretell the future and communicate with devine powers. However, it is likely that using the drum for divination was not a right reserved for the *noaidi*, it could be done by a number of people.¹⁰

In most research literature, these are religious practices that are known in relation to the use of the drum. Still, we agree with Marisol de la Cadena who points out that, '[c]reating a similarity both enables understanding and loses sight of the difference [...]'.¹¹ We can describe practices in forms that make them easily apprehensible by creating equivalences. But, to create equivalences, de la Cadena argues, is to wipe out differences.¹² This one can say is precisely what has happened and still happens in many exhibitions on Sámi religion. Drums are among the most treasured items in museum contexts, and were and are sought after as means for visualising indigenous religions. The ways in which objects are selected and put together have political effects, and the staging of the *goavddis* can serve to enhance the image of the Sámi as 'the other' in a cultural and religious context. This is a context that we,

through the Hillsá *goavddis*, hope to challenge by targeting time and place specific conditions.

Sámi cultural expressions like the drum from Hillsá contain important, repressed and often painful stories and experiences. As Jonas M. Nordin and Carl-Gösta Ojala point out, the systematic destruction and looting of Sámi objects, especially religious objects, during the early modern period must be recognized as a serious assault on the Sámi people and Sámi indigenous religions.¹³

Drum repatriation is an important act of decolonization that opens for a reconnection with traditions and practices that were forcibly suppressed. In this processes drums become means for changing power relationships, for creating identity and memory. As Marit Myrvoll, former museum leader at Várdobáiki Sámi Guovddáš (Sámi Centre) at Skánik (Evenskjer), where the drum will be displayed, argues, the drums are also agents in contemporary struggles for Sámi identity and history. Each time an object, a building construction or other items of material culture are identified and made visible, there will be less to explain for the individual Sámi about why one should be allowed to call a particular area Sámi.¹⁴

Searching for Lost Paths

On the 10th of May 2016, Dikka Storm, Trude Fonneland, and Marit Myrvoll set out for Hillsá to retrieve the drum (Fig. 4.2). In Hillsá we met the finder at his childhood home. The artefact was brought out from the root cellar where it had hung for several years. The finder gave us a detailed account of when the drum was discovered. He explained that he and his brother were going cloudberry picking on an August day in the early 1990s. They took their regular route up from the sea, but the brother was short of breath and quickly became tired in the hilly and steep landscape. The finder began to look for a place to sit down for a rest, enjoying the views and taking shelter from the rain. He discovered a spot beside the track, and described it to us as a ‘rock with an overhang’. While his brother smoked a cigarette and contemplated the view, the finder restlessly turned around and started to inspect the formations behind them. He explained that there was a small area which was completely dry as the rock protected it from



Figure 4.2. Regional map with a red circle marking the location where the drum was found. Map: Dikka Storm and Trude Fonneland, The Arctic University Museum of Norway. Screen dump from Norgeskart.no, accessed 6 Dec 2021. License: CC BY-NC-ND.

the rain, and he could see red sand in a cleft in the rock. This was when he saw what at first sight appeared to be a round, mossy stone, but on closer inspection turned out to be a wooden object. The finder removed a thick layer of moss, and the wooden texture became more visible. His first thought was that it must have been something left behind from the days when his family cut the grass on these slopes for hay, but he was unsure about what use it could have had.

Back at the museum, we handed the drum over to the lab for conservation. According to the curator of the Arctic University Museum of Norway, the *goavddis* is 32 cm long, 26.5 cm wide and 9 cm deep. Further, dendrochronology specialist Andreas Kirchhefer asserts that the drum is fashioned from a pine burr (*Pinus sylvestris* L.).¹⁵ The famous drum that belonged to the Sámi Poala-Ánde (Anders Poulsen), who was sentenced to death, but killed while in custody in Finnmark in 1692, is also made of pine.¹⁶ Poala-Ánde himself is believed to have said that ‘den lidet

at kunde tiene. Om den ey aff fyrretræ bleff udarbeidet' ('It cannot serve anyone, unless it is made of pinewood').¹⁷

A survey of the area where the drum was discovered was carried out on September 7, 2016, in the hope of locating the exact find spot. The finder took part in the expedition as a guide. He had given us a description of how he remembered the place, but had not had any luck trying to find it again earlier. Our strategy therefore was to inspect the hillside looking for rocks or cliffs where the finder and his brother might have been sitting 17 years earlier. Rocky outcrops could be seen in several locations on the hillside. We inspected each spot along with the finder, however they were all quickly rejected, except one.

The place that corresponded with the finder's descriptions lies in a larger, rocky area just above the old farm track. We saw a small level area below an overhang, large enough to provide shelter for two people. In the rockface behind it was a small crevice, around 20 cm high, that narrowed inwards. It was clear that an object had been lying in this crevice at some point before. An oval patch with no moss was discovered, its length and breadth corresponding to the measurements of the drum (cf. Fig. 4.1).

Dating

A small wood sample of the pine burr has been radiocarbon dated to 1110 ± 30 BP (Beta-454998). The radiocarbon calibration curve intersects 1110 ± 30 BP in two broad intervals, of which the latter is a long, practically flat section (cf. Fig. 4.3). This results in a given probability, where an age range between 1800/1810 and 1920/1940 is the most likely. However, this is unlikely given the historical context. The construction of Sámi drums is not mentioned in the sources during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in either written sources or oral traditions. For example, the well-known linguist and folklorist Just Qvigstad (1854–1957) has not described or referred to the construction of Sámi drums in his works. We also know that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most of the drums were either forcibly rounded up by missionaries, or they were hidden in the mountains and later found and presented to collectors or museums. Many drums were sent to *curiosa* cabinets in Central Europe

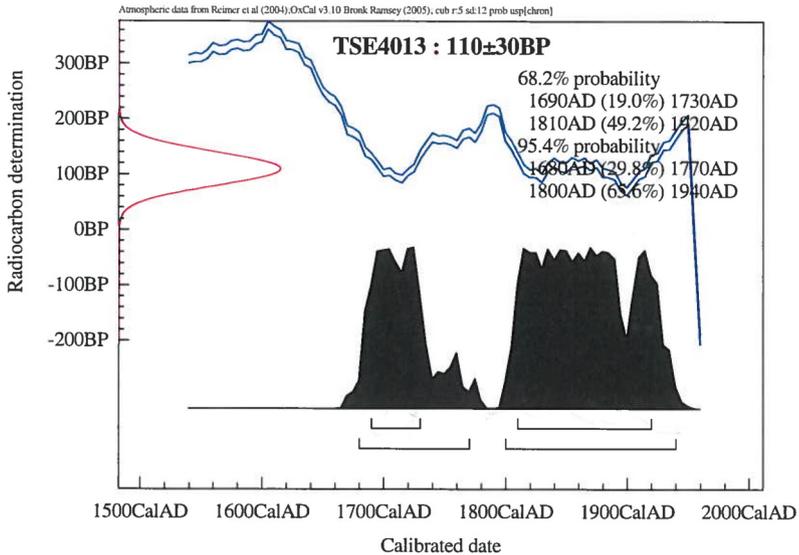


Figure 4.3. Calibration curve for the dating of TSE-4013 to 110±30BP (Beta-454998). Based on atmosphere data from Reimer et al. (2004). In *OxCal Program v3.10* (Bronk Ramsey 2005). License: CC BY-NC-ND.

and to the Missionary Collegium¹⁸ in Copenhagen, where more than seventy drums were lost in a fire in 1728. In the 1850s, the introduction of Læstadianism and heavy norwegianization and assimilation politics had a strong impact on cultural life, identity and religion in Sámi areas. During the last radio carbon dating period from 1810 and until the 1940s, the knowledge about the construction and use of the *goavddis* had decreased among the majority of the Sámi population. In *Muitalus sámiiid birra* (1910) Johan Turi describes the drum through the word *meavrresgárri*. The descriptions are referring to a past and to practices that used to be connected to the religious specialists, the *noaidit*, ‘Ja dainna lágiin sii daid noaidegoansttaid dahket’¹⁹ (‘And then they were performing their noaidi arts’).²⁰ Emilie Demant Hatt, who stayed with Turi and his family for a longer period in 1907–08, writes, ‘Blandt Torne- og Karesuandolapper er erindringen om trommen kun vag og uklar’ (‘Among the Torne- and Karesunando Sámi the memory of the drum is only vague and unclear’),²¹ but she also adds that the remembrance of the drum is stronger in southern parts of Sápmi.²²

As follows, a date between 1680/1690 and 1730/1770 as suggested by the calibration curve needs to be critically evaluated. The construction of and the use of the *goavddis* is still known at the beginning of the eighteenth century as well as from the seventeenth century and further back in time. In the period between 1680/1690 and 1730/1770, the Pietistic Mission gradually exerted great influence on the local Sámi community in the surrounding area of Hillsá. The drum still provided influence and was considered a key instrument both by the missionaries who sought to destroy what they perceived as a diabolic symbol and by the ones who used the drum as an instrument for divination or during trance journeys.

The radiocarbon date suggests that the drum was made after the worst witch-hunts in northern Norway were over. During the seventeenth century, about 125 people were sentenced to death and to burn at the stake in the three northernmost counties of Norway. As Rune Blix Hagen argues, compared to the low population, the witch-hunts in northern Norway are some of Europe's most extensive witch processes.²³ One reason is probably that according to the demonologists, the north represented the centre of evil.²⁴ Even though the witchcraft trials were not directed primarily against the Sámi population, King Christian IV wrote in a letter in 1609 to the provincial governors Hans Kønningham and Hans Lilienskiold that those who practiced Sámi witchcraft should be killed without mercy.²⁵ The fact that drums were made after these persecutions bears witness to the durable structure of religion. The missionary Thomas von Westen in 1726 managed to convince the king to abolish the death penalty for witchcraft. He argued that if the Sámi were punished, one could not obtain their confidence, and it would not be possible to alter their religious beliefs and practices.²⁶

The period of religious encounter and confrontation is, as Håkan Rydving argues in relation to one Lule Sámi tradition, referred to precisely as 'the time when one had to hide the drums'.²⁷ This is probably also the case for the Hillsá *goavddis*. The drum from Hillsá is one of the few to escape missionary hands, and it was probably hidden away during a time of religious confrontation.

The Religious Conditions in the Areas Surrounding Hillsá at the Time of the Drum

Several researchers underline that the drums have to be regionalised and typologised and that one cannot compare all the drums with one another, without really considering where they came from, but comparisons must be restricted to within regions.²⁸ In the region where the Hillsá drum is found, there are oral traditions handed over to Tromsø Museum during the 1950s, which tell of a drum and its use at Rensok (Renså) in the neighbouring fjord Roabavuotna (Grovfjord) in the same time period as the Hillsá *goavddis*. The sources state that Bealjehis Jovdna (deaf Jovdna, John Øreløs), lived in his *darfegoahti* ('turf hut') at Darfegoahtelatnja (Storlemmen) – above the farm at Rensok. He owned a drum made of brass, in the shape of a bird with garments. The oral tradition tells us that the resident farmers had complained to the local bailiff about deaf Jovdna beating his drum too loudly. When the bailiff went to seize the drum, he was first allowed to try it and his body immediately felt light and happy. Jovdna explained to the bailiff that the drum would reward him if he allowed the deaf man to keep it. The reward was a great whale that would be stranded on the shore, and sure enough, when the bailiff arrived at the waterfront, the whale came swimming straight towards him. Bealjehis Jovdna's drum is also described in detail by Qvigstad and Sandberg in 1888:

The drum was made of brass and moulded in the shape of a bird with a brass plate on which the bird was standing. From the bird's right wing, seven pairs of rings were hanging: one pair of brass; one pair of copper; one pair of pewter; one pair of silver; one pair of zinc; one pair of gold; and one pair of steel. In this way, there were seven colours on the right wing of the bird, and on the left wing all kinds of coloured threads hung, red, green, black, blue, yellow, white, and grey. These threads formed many tassels on the left wing. He [Bealjehis Jovdna] also had a horn which was curved both against and from the sun and, and with that he beat the drum's wings (left and right). From the bird a sound of several tones arose. This was one of the reasons why some of the persons who lived at the farms along the coast were angry with the deaf man, because he was so powerful.²⁹

The drum at Rensok has never been found. It was, according to oral traditions in the area, lost in a fire where Jovdna's *goabti* burned to the ground, but the remains of the turf hut can still be made out as a mound in the terrain. How is this story relevant for the drum at Hillsá? The oral traditions tell us that the use of drums was known in the area in this time period. The story about Jovdna's drum might also reveal, as Håkan Rydving emphasises, that 'an awareness of the regional differences is not however sufficient, as there also were distinct types within the different regions, in addition to great individual variation'.³⁰

We have no sources that can directly illustrate how the process of transition to Christianity progressed in the area. However, as Lars Ivar Hansen underlines in *Astafjord bygdebok: historie 1*, what happened in relation to the chieftains at Bjarkøy / Runášši (Trondenes) has probably played a central role for the religious practices in surrounding areas like Hillsá.³¹ Runášši served, in the late medieval period, as the main church centre of Northern Norway.

What do we know of the conditions in Hillsá and Rivtták at the time? Archaeologist Marianne Skandfer, who took part in the search for the drum find spot, was able to identify three groups of house remains, one on the hillside and two just above the location of the find, and she suggests that they could all be part of the same cultural environment. On a plateau, slightly higher up in the terrain is the remains of a rounded structure and all along the southern foot of the mountain, the foundations for buildings can be seen (see Fig. 4.4). In this period, the sources are complex and do not give an overview of the population as a whole, but rather an insight into parts of the settled population. Demographic sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tell us that Norwegians, Sámi and Kven people lived in Hillsá. The Fjellfinne and Lappeskatt from 1714 to 1753 furthermore shows that in the period, there were 76 reindeer owners in Ásttavierda (Astafjord) County, and seven in Rivtták (Gratangen).³² On the peninsula Skávhlenjárga, between the fjords of Rivtták (Gratangen) and Roabavuotna (Grovfjord), a Sámi settlement is known from the late medieval period.³³

Close to the site where the drum was found, we saw the remains of a house. According to the finder and other local informants, a Sámi man named Åne lived here until the middle of the nineteenth

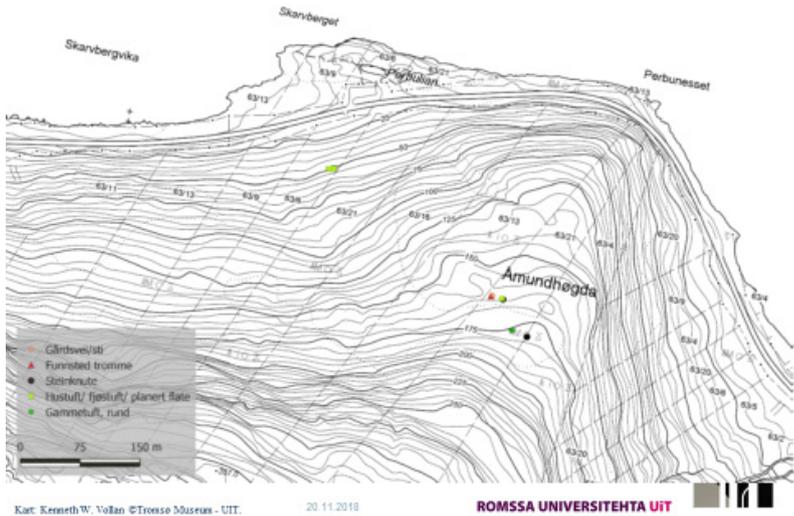


Figure 4.4. Archaeological site map of the Amundhøgda area (Kenneth W. Vollan, The Arctic University Museum of Norway). License: CC BY-NC-ND.

century. What his connection to and knowledge of the drum might have been we do not know, but it is likely that the drum belonged to one of the Sámi families that had a connection to or lived in this area from the period of time when the drum was made. Per Högström in his *Beskrifning öfwer de til Sweriges Krona lydande Lappmarker* (Descriptions of the Lappmarks of the Swedish Crown) [1747] points out that in the 1740s the drum had been silenced, but not gone completely out of use. He writes: ‘Those who use it do such in silence, that scarcely even their own people get to know about it, as they know it is a matter of life and death, and that they could easily be reported by others who do not use them’.³⁴ Even though the death penalty was revised in Norway from 1726, the situation Högström is referring to was probably also a reality at the Norwegian side of Sápmi. Considering the time, the Hillsá drum most probably was constructed during the period 1680–1770, and hidden in a crevice at a distance from the dwellings as it was likely used in secret or in strict confidence within a small group.

The site where the drum was found has a good view over the fjord, and one is able to see all the way to Ivvárstádik (Ibestad)

and the church from this point. One might imagine that whoever used the drum did so in a context where he or she had a direct view of a parallel and intertwined religious world.

The Sixth Missionary District

The church at Ivvárstádik was built as early as the thirteenth century, and a new church was raised on its foundations in 1881. As Hansen points out,

like the church of Trondenés (Runássi sic), the church that stood at Ibestad (Ivvárstádik sic) until the 1880s, was a medieval stone church. The Trondenés (Runássi sic) and Ibestad (Ivvárstádik sic) churches were the two northernmost stone churches in the country, and the only ones north of Steigen.³⁵

In 1756, the bishop Fredrik Nannestad gave the Ivvárstádik church the following characteristics ‘the northernmost stone church in the inhabited world (is) a very strong and solid building’.³⁶ Hansen further notes that it is reasonable to assume that also the Ivvárstádik church, situated in a mixed ethnic and boundary area, was dedicated to significant missionary activity directed towards the Sámi, while at the same time highlighting the presence of the Lutheran Church of Denmark-Norway.³⁷

Even though the post-reformation authorities regarded the Sámi more or less as heathens, the Sámi in the Hillsá area had for a long time had contact with the Catholic Church. Already in 1313 the Norwegian king, Håkon Magnusson, issued a royal decree where it was stated that Sámi should be granted a reduction in penalty fines for 20 years if they converted to Christianity.³⁸ While some Sámi people (primarily coastal Sámi) seem to have been under regular Christian influence and missionary activity already from the High Middle Ages, there are indications that their contact with the Catholic Church occurred only at a minimum level: baptizing their children and attending mass once a year.³⁹ Recent research, based inter alia on court cases from the late 17th and reports from the early eighteenth century, has shown that many Sámi were probably able to combine church attendance with continued indigenous practices, and thereby alternated between, and combined, religions.⁴⁰ As Håkan Rydving argues,

The main problem for the Church authorities turned out to be that of making the Saamis abandon their indigenous religious customs, not making them believe in, or at least learn to repeat Christian dogmas by rote, or getting them to perform certain rites in the churches. From the end of the 17th century, an intense period of propaganda and coercion began to make the Saamis abandon these non-Christian elements in their religion. Special attention was accordingly paid to the drums.

The role of the drums as symbols of Saami resistance is well attested in the sources from the 17th and 18th centuries. For the Saamis, the drums represented their threatened culture, the resistance against the Christian claim to exclusiveness, and a striving to preserve traditional values [...]. For the Church authorities, on the other hand, the drums symbolized the explicit nucleus of the elusive Saami 'paganism' – i.e. 'the evil' that had to be annihilated.⁴¹

The character of religious interaction in the local community changed along with the reformation with its new demands for more uniform national standards. The introduction of Pietism had consequences for the social, religious and political conditions in the area of study. During the eighteenth century, Ivvárstádik (Ibestad) became a centre for Thomas von Westen's missionary collegium.

Clergyman and writer Hans Hammond states that Thomas von Westen made three journeys in Northern Norway between 1716 and 1723.⁴² It is also said that when von Westen passed Nærøy vicarage on his way south, he had in his possession 100 drums given to him by converted *noaidis*.⁴³ Initially, von Westen was supposed to concentrate on evangelism among the Sámi population in Finnmark, but as he travelled south, he realized he would have to expand his mission. On his second journey in November 1718, von Westen arrived at Ivvárstádik. Within each missionary district, von Westen stationed a missionary, a schoolmaster, and sometimes one or two adjuncts. During his stay in Lodek (Lødingen), von Westen employed Kjeld Stub (ca. 1680–1724), as a missionary in the sixth mission district from 21 Nov. 1718 to 1720, and Peder Berthelsen as a schoolmaster and interpreter with a wage of 13 rdr.⁴⁴ The Sixth Mission District of Sázzá (Senja) and Viester-Alás (Vesterålen) stretched from Gielas (Kjølen), the mountain range in the east, to the North Sea in the west. The district was vast and encompassed high mountains, valleys, fjords, and big islands.

While Stub served as a missionary, he worked close to von Westen and accompanied him on his first (1716) and second journey (1718). Von Westen characterized him as eager to work with a capacity for building good relationships towards both old and young people, as well as to the clergy. Von Westen also emphasize that Stub contributed to a growing knowledge among the Sámi. The missionary Erasmus Wallund (1684–1746) from Denmark succeeded Stub. Both Stub and Wallund valued education as a task within their positions and privately hired a schoolmaster, paid by their own wages. Through the missionaries' establishment of educational arenas in the various missionary districts, the Sámi were enrolled in a school system more than thirty years before the rest of the population in Northern Norway.⁴⁵ Hammond notes that during Wallund's stay more than fifty of the Sámi at Ivvárstádik could read, and some had bought books.⁴⁶ Thomas von Westen described Wallund's work with the following characteristics, 'he has [...], cut a hole on the walls of idolatry, and found everything full of false gods, the hammer of Thor, altars, and sacrifices'.⁴⁷

On his third journey (1722–23), von Westen travelled through the same areas and ascertained that despite the missionaries' and schoolmasters' work, there was little progress and understanding of Christianity in the area. Hammond, who chronicled von Westen's travels, points out that 'some profess that they have served and honoured God as well by the drum as the Norwegians do by their Psalms'.⁴⁸

In the neighbouring fjord Roabavuotna (Grovfjord) people are described as especially reluctant. Hammond notes that 'the abominable heathens are plentiful'.⁴⁹ Through organized and systematic use of threats, violence, punishment and destruction of holy sites, the State mission sought to bring an end to the Sámi perception of life. In this situation, where Sámi religion was so intertwined with all practices in life, it was no wonder that many felt their very existence was under threat. In 1722, it was said that some Sámi in Skievvá (Skjomen) planned an attack on Thomas von Westen.⁵⁰

Lennart Sidenius (1702–63) from Jemtland, Sweden, succeeded Wallund. According to what is noted in Hammond about the idolatry in the area, Sidenius had a large task ahead of him.

The missionaries were part of a religious network and the correspondences between them are a concretization of this network. The missionaries also sent reports to von Westen about the local communities. The correspondence shows demand for information about the population, economy, the religious situation, and the missionaries' activities. Von Westen forwarded the reports directly to the Mission Collegium in Copenhagen. At Ivvárstádik, Sidenius corresponded with missionaries such as Jens Kildal, Thomas von Westen and, on the Swedish side, the rural dean Johan Tornberg in Čohkkeras (Jukkasjärvi). In a letter to Tornberg dated 1726, Sidenius enclosed a record of Sámi idols that he had become aware of, and which were worshipped among the Sámi in the areas he served as a missionary:

Rariet [...] Radien [...] Maderakkæ [...] Sarakka [...] Rana Neida [...] Beive [...] Torden [...] Biegs Olmai [...] Gissen Olmai [...] [three] Ailikes Olmai [...] Leib Olmai [...] Kiase Olmai [...] Maderakka [...] [with her three daughters] Sarakka [...] Uxakka [...] Juxakka [...] Saivo-Olmai [...] Saivo Neide [...] Saivo-kiatse [...] Saivo-serva [...] Saivo-lodde, Saivogvelle [...] Nemo-gvelle [...] Jabmiakka [...] [and] Ruta.⁵¹

The male and female deities and their helpers are located in different spheres: high up in the starry sky, further down in the air, on earth, a bit down into the ground, and deep down into the earth.⁵² The way the Sámi deities are positioned probably firmly connects them to the missionaries' Christian worldview, more than a Sámi cosmology. Sidenius and his colleagues represented the State and King and belonged to the colonial system and their interpretations and descriptions of Sámi religion must be seen as texts of cultural appropriation.

Scholars hold different opinions about whom Sidenius builds on and from which Sámi community the information about the listed deities originates. Rydving states that Sidenius probably paraphrases Kildal, who had studied the 'idolatry' in Viester-Álás (Vesterålen) and Ofuohtta (Ofoten) on his travels to Viester-Álás (Vesterålen) in 1725 and 1726.⁵³ What we do know is that the missionaries influenced each other and their correspondences coloured the way they saw and interpreted the Sámi worldview in the local communities in which they served. This is also the case

in Ivvárstádik (Ibestad) where von Westen, Stub, Wallund, Sidenius and the one who used the drum from Hillsá were part of the same local and religious context and religious frames, but with different approaches, needs, experiences, and strategies.

The names of the deities that Sidenius included in his letter to Tornberg in 1726 thus do not represent an exact mirror of the religion practiced and the deities worshipped by Sámi people in the surrounding area of Ivvárstádik (Ibestad), but they say something about the frames that coloured the missionaries' interpretations of Sámi deities and Sámi worldviews. They might also say something about in what way the missionaries would have interpreted the membrane of the drum if they had gotten hold of it – how the *goavddis* from Hillsá would have been translated into the learned spheres of an eighteenth-century elite.

The location of the drum hiding place also tells us something about the power structures in the local community. The one who used the drum for divination or in other religious practices did so with an imminent threat of being sentenced and punished for idolatry. He or she thus had to hide the drum in a location where it was available, but at the same time concealed and out of sight for the Christian authorities and elite.

Dual Religious Identities

The reformatory processes, and the missionaries' and schoolmasters' entry into local communities, contributed to new religious thoughts and ideas leaving their mark on the landscape as well as the people. At the same time, many people had learnt to live in and between religious spheres, and developed strategies to uphold elements of their Sámi religious practices.⁵⁴

Sidenius in his letter to Tornberg gives a description of how the Sámi both adapt to new customs while still clinging to the local religion. He writes,

Dät är befundit hos os, at de som hafwa både kunnat läsa i bok og anstält sig utwärtas helligt hawa warit de allerstörsta Noider og Afgudspræster: [...]. Lapparne hafwa p[*l*]aisir deruthaf at de kunde hålda samtahl med sine geniis og Laribus, som komma til dem antingen i dröm hällär wakande, hvarigenom de får kundskap og oplysning om åthskilligt: De meena, om de forlåtha

afgudatiänstan, at de aldrig skola få vidare lycha til Reen, skytterij, fiskerij,⁵⁵

It has been confirmed to us that those who have both been able to read a book and externally have behaved sacred, have been the greatest *noaidis* and idolaters. [...] The Sámi are pleased to be able to converse with their spirits and house gods, who come to them in dreams or awake state, and through this they gain knowledge and enlightenment about many things. They believe that if they give up the idol worship, they will never achieve further happiness, either in terms of reindeer, hunting or fishing.

(Our translation)

Sidenius's letter gives a picture of a complex religious situation in which the tenacious structures of Sámi religion are revealed. That practitioners of Sámi religion were able to alternate between different religious worldviews is also expressed on several drum membranes where elements of Christian practice are depicted as well as Sámi religious symbols (Fig. 4.5).



Figure 4.5. The Hillsá drum (TSL 4013). Photo: Adnan Iagic, The Arctic University Museum of Norway. License: CC BY-NC-ND.

This point is among other things highlighted in relation to the drum that belonged to the *noaidi* Poala-Ánde (Anders Poulsen), who in court explained the various symbols himself.⁵⁶ Poala-Ánde is believed to have said that one of the figures on the fourth row on the drum skin shows people on their way to church, as well as the church itself. The membrane of the Hillsá drum is long lost, and we will never know what imagery it contained or how it was organized, but one might wonder whether Christian symbols are expressed also in the wooden structure of the drum.

A figure, which can resemble a cross, has been carved on the inside and on the outside of the drum's frame. These symbols might speak of a meeting of religions and point to an exchange of ideas and concepts. One explanation of Christian symbols appearing on the drums is that when using the drum for divination, one needed symbols on the drumhead representing the encounter with the other religion's participants and religious system. Another interpretation is that Sámi religion was an inclusive religion, which could easily incorporate Christian and other religious ideas in its own conception of the world.⁵⁷ Both of these explanations are reasonable, and one does not exclude the other.

What is important to emphasize is the way that these symbols have been interpreted and communicated. While the Christian clergymen to a large degree described the symbols from a narrow perspective, the one who used the drum might have had no problems in perceiving the Sámi and Christian worldviews, cosmology and deities as something entwined and complementing.⁵⁸

Another approach is that the crosses might relate to a Sámi iconography, speaking to a Sámi cosmology and worldview. The deity whose name is spelled *Radien* in Sidenius's list from 1726 is sometimes symbolized by a cross.⁵⁹ It is still impossible to state anything regarding the crosses on the Hillsá drum with certainty. We here only point to possible interpretations relating to a cohesion of the local Sámi landscape, habitat and development.

Conclusion

Considering the period in which the drum had been fashioned and the long history of Christian presence in the area, a potential hypothesis is that the one who once used the drum, acting on behalf

of a community or a family, continued and/or developed religious strategies for exercising new capacities for handling his or her everyday life, for memory, concealment, performance, translation, and transformation in negotiating indigenous religious survival under difficult colonial conditions.⁶⁰

What we can state with certainty, is that the drum from Hillsá unfolds an exciting field of research. It opens for insights into, and offers images of, a complex religious world at a time when religions met and were reshaped. It speaks clearly of the tenacious structures of Sámi religion, but at the same time also of adaptation and development.

The *goavddis* from Hillsá also has a value beyond its role as a spotlight for possible aspects of Sámi religious practices, and can serve as a site where a complex web of demands and articulations is expressed, negotiated and contested. From such a perspective, the *goavddis* from Hillsá is still powerful and might act in ways that can neither be foreseen nor controlled. Attributed to an agent, it has social consequences – such as creating, maintaining and changing power relationships, identities, categories, and memories.

Notes

1. Kildal [1730 and later] 1945: 166 f.; Kjellström & Rydving 1988: 4; Hansen & Olsen 2014: 222–225.
2. See Rydving 1993; Rydving 1995.
3. We would like to thank archeologist Marianne Skandfer for taking part in the search for the drum find spot, and for carefully reading our manuscript and providing constructive comments. We would also like to thank archeologist Kenneth Webb Berg Vollan for the production of the archaeological site map of the Amundhøgda area. Acknowledgment also goes to Stephen Wickler who took on the English editing task, and to the editors for their valuable comments. The research group Creating the New North (CNN) at the Arctic University of Norway generously helped us finance the radiocarbon dating.
4. Hansen & Olsen 2014: 222, 345.
5. See Manker 1938: 104–108; Christoffersson 2010.

6. Olsen 1885, according to Bjørklund 1997: 3. See also Pareli 2010: 39 f.
7. The museum's archaeologists examined the site where the drum was found with a metal detector in the spring of 2017, but no remains of possible metal objects were found.
8. See Manker 1938; Manker 1950; and Kjellström & Rydving 1988.
9. See Kjellström & Rydving 1988; Hansen & Olsen 2014.
10. See Kjellström & Rydving 1988: 6; Christoffersson 2010: 32.
11. de la Cadena 2015: 26.
12. de la Cadena 2015.
13. Nordin & Ojala 2015: 114.
14. The point was made by Myrvoll at a seminar at the then Tromsø University Museum (now The Arctic University Museum of Norway), February 2017.
15. Kirchhefer 2016.
16. See Manker 1938: 813–819.
17. Lilienskiold [1698] 1942: 164.
18. The Mission College, Misjonskollegiet at <http://www.arkivportalen.no/side/aktor/detaljer?aktorId=no-a1450-01000002749574> (accessed 22 Oct. 2018).
19. Turi [1910] 2010: 139.
20. Turi [1910] 2012: 151.
21. Demant Hatt 1928: 53.
22. See also Kroik 2007: 80
23. Hagen 2012: 2; see also Willumsen 2012: 12–18.
24. See Hagen 2015.
25. Hagen 2015: 78 f.
26. Hansen & Olsen 2014: 332.
27. Rydving 1991: 28.
28. Rydving 1991: 43; Olsen & Hansen 2014.

29. Qvigstad & Sandberg 1888, referred to in Hansen 2003: 366; translated by authors.
30. Rydving 1991: 43.
31. Hansen 2000: 135.
32. Qvigstad & Wiklund 1909: 306–315.
33. See Andersen 1999; Hansen 2000. Today this area is included in the Roabat / Grovfjord reindeer herding district.
34. ‘De som sådant bruka, göra det i sådan tysthet, at nåpligen deras eget folk få veta derutaf, emedan de veta det kommer på lifvet an, och at de af andra, som sådana ej bruka, lätteligen kunde blifva angifne’ (Högström [1747] 1980: 203).
35. Hansen 2000: 135; our translation.
36. ‘den norderste stenkirke som finnes i den ganske bebodde verden, (er) en meget sterk og fast bygning’ (Nannestad cited in Hansen 2000: 135).
37. Hansen 2000: 145.
38. Hansen & Olsen 2004: 318.
39. See Rasmussen 2016.
40. Rasmussen 2016.
41. Rydving 1991: 29.
42. Hammond 1787: 259 f., 334 f., 418 f.
43. Kalstad 1997.
44. Storm 2011: 74; see also Storm 2014, and Storm 2016.
45. See Hansen 2003: 372.
46. Storm 2016: 190.
47. Hammond 1787: 832.
48. ‘nogle paastode, at de ved Ruunebommen, ligesaa vel havde tient og æret Gud, som de Norske med deres Psalmebøger’ (Hammond 1787: 419 f.).
49. Hammond 1787: 420.
50. Kalstad 1997: 25.

51. Sidenius [1726] 1910: 56–59.
52. Sidenius [1726] 1910: 56–59.
53. Storm 2016: 190.
54. Friis (1613) 1881: 399–403.
55. Sidenius [1726] 1910: 53 f.
56. See Lilienskiold [1698] 1942; cf. Willumsen's chapter in this volume.
57. Hansen 2000: 309–312.
58. See Rasmussen 2016.
59. 'I. Radienatzje betegnet under et simple Kors' (Skanke [1728–31] 1945: 245); Sidenius explains 'Radien' in Swedish: 'Radien er nogot ringare än *Rariet*, som skal nedsända andan til Menniskians undfångelse i Moders livet, og överleverar dän *Maderakkæ* i händer, som åther igiän straxt åt dätteren *Sarakka* antvarder samma anda, som låther växa kiöt på Andan, intils dät blifwer til et fullkomligt foster. Radien optager de döda til sig, när de effter döden en tid lång hafwa warit i dödningernes land' (Sidenius [1726] 1910: 56).
60. See also Chidester 2018.

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