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Storytelling as a way of knowing and gulahallan as a method

According to Sámi epistemology knowledge is formed together within and during the discussion (Kuokkanen 2009). Often these discussions take a shape of storytelling. Sámi storytelling tradition has a crucial role in passing on, getting and building the traditional knowledge. Stories are kind of discussion arena where Sámi tradition remain, vary and renew. (Negård 2006.)

Sámi word for discussion is *gulahallat*, but the meaning of the term is broader. It can be translated either discuss or understand. But actually, when you *gulahallat* you do both: discuss and understand. As well when listening stories, also reading and interpreting stories is kind of discussion with the text: it is interaction between the reader and the text, where the understanding of context and culture are crucial (Fredriksen 2013).

I study storytelling as an upbringing method in the Saami *muittašangirjjálašvuohta* – reminiscence literature. *Muittašangirjjálašvuohta* is a genre of the Saami autobiographical literature that is based on the oral tradition. When I read the *muittašangirjjálašvuohta* I have chosen to study for the first time, I noticed that they reached experiences that I have lived only through my dad's and relatives' stories. Even though these experiences weren't my own, they formed a big part of my childhood's experiences. I got to know my late relatives: my grandfather Elle Biehtár, his brother Elle Ánde and Ánde's wife Iddá. Also my great grandmother Lasse Máret became familiar to me. Beside the people, I also got to know their livelihoods, living circumstances, way of thinking and values. These storytelling situations had a big role in forming my knowledge of the Sámi culture. One point I noticed that my relatives told the same stories but little different way. These stories form collective memory of the family.

When I discuss or *gulahallat* with *muittašangirjjálašvuohta* I utilize the knowledge (*diehtu*) and the abilities (*máhttu*) of the Sámi culture that I have absorbed over my life. I have lot of knowledge about the conversation habits, the debates and the storytelling situations. I can't say that I'm good debater or storyteller but I have knowledge about these situations, about people's behavior, ambiguity of discussion, humor and irony. These knowledge and abilities form the cultural

understanding and knowing of the context. They work as the main sources when I interpret upbringing and storytelling situations.

I could also use the term 'reflect my own experiences' to describe my method but I have chosen to use the term *gulahallat* since I feel it is a broader term than reflecting. The term *gulahallat* bears also values. Reflecting own experiences is an individual process, instead *gulahallat* is an interaction. I don't interact just with the books, but rather with my family's collective memory and my experiences as a receiver of this knowledge.

In the presentation I consider how knowledge is formed in storytelling situations and how *gulahallan* works as method when researching Sámi narration. I have chosen one storytelling situation from *muittašangirjjálašvuohta* which I utilize to demonstrate how I use *gulahallan* for interpreting.