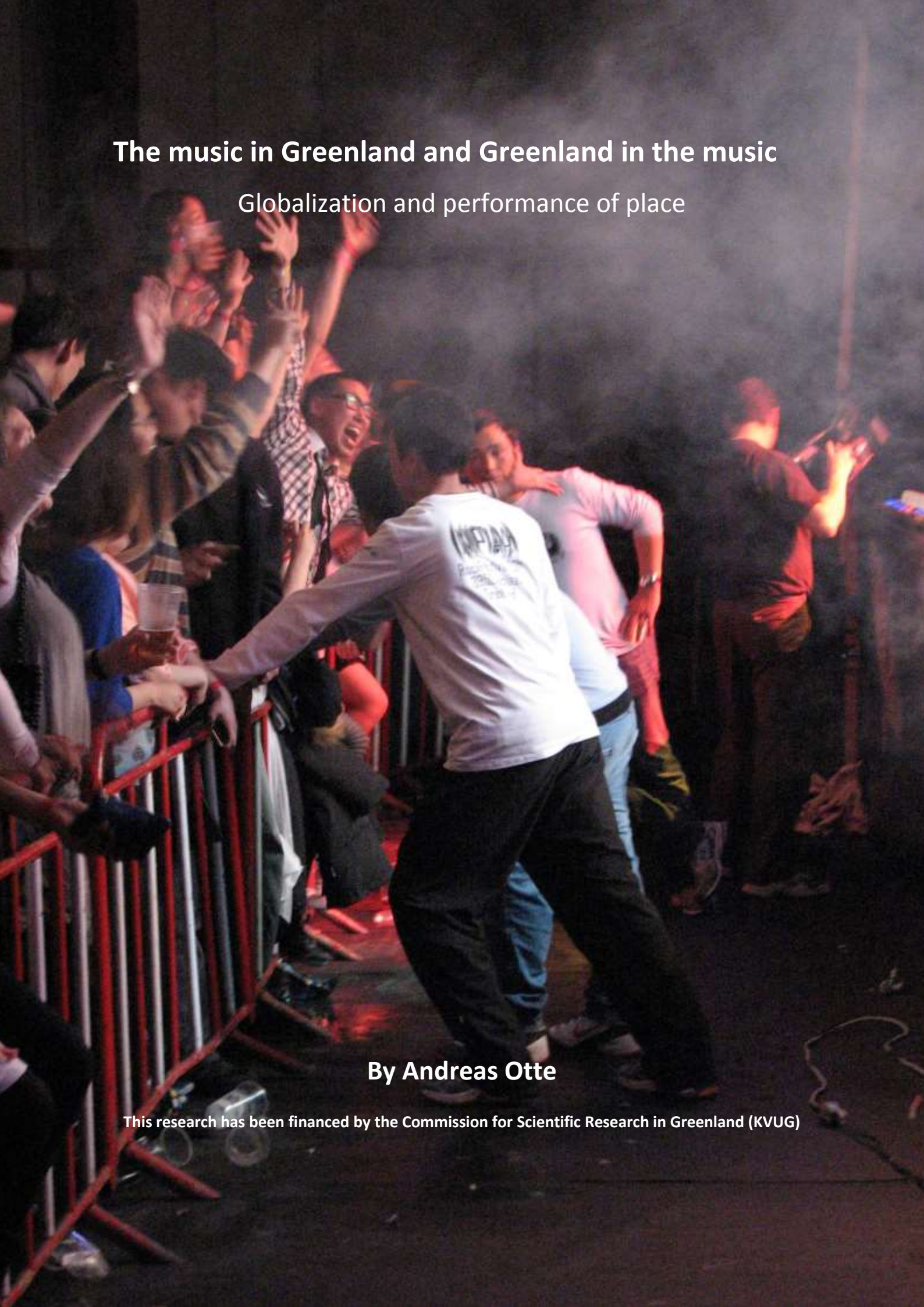


# The music in Greenland and Greenland in the music

Globalization and performance of place

By Andreas Otte

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## **Abstract**

The history of Greenlandic music is one of cross-local interconnectedness. Styles and trends have evolved as a result of globalization, but there is a significant trend amongst popular music artists in Greenland to perform a sense of local and national identity in their music, and to produce music that is relevant to a national context. Through a look at how musical styles have evolved in Greenland, and how popular music trends have changed over time, in this article, I trace the presence of a broadly acknowledged repertoire of sounds and lyrical themes for performing place in music. Through a discussion of the role of place in music that draws on Massey's 'global sense of place' (1994), I suggest that in music, places are best understood as meeting points, and that place as meeting point is in some form or another always noticeable in music. I furthermore argue that place in music is often connected to local contexts both by drawing on locally developed particularity, but also by being affected by the history of globalization in local places.

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Globalization and performance of place

Andreas Otte



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## Introduction

This article is a study of the interplay between globalization, music and place in the history of music in Greenland, with a particular emphasis on popular musical forms. Through a brief introduction to styles and trends in Greenlandic music, I illustrate how in particular geographical locations, globalization manifests as an unmanageable entanglement of places, histories, people, goods and information, but that this interconnectedness takes place differently in different places, thereby shaping these places and the cultural forms produced there. Thus places earn their particularity by being meeting points, as cultural geographer Doreen Massey has pointed out (Massey 1994: 154). Such a sense of place often finds its way into music production and perception, and music is also sometimes used to narrate places in particular ways, highlighting some connections and ignoring others, thereby performing a particular experience of that place. Through a brief introduction to styles and trends in Greenlandic music history, this article thus illustrates the importance of music and musical styles as symbols of national culture. It also looks at how different ways of performing place in popular music relate to the history of globalization in Greenland, and how music continue to play a significant role in the creation and negotiation of the nation Greenland and of Greenlandic identities.

Connection between music and place as an area of research curiously seems to be both thoroughly studied and somewhat neglected. On the one hand, one of the founding fathers of ethnomusicology, Alan P. Merriam, has identified the discipline as one occupied with studying ‘music in culture’ (Merriam 1964: 6), and these cultures have traditionally been seen as confined to certain geographical spaces (Hastrup 2003: 11-2). Most ethnomusicological writing studies music in places delimited by scaled geographic places, my own being no exception to this trend. But while connections between music and place seem to act as a backdrop in many of these studies, the connection is only rarely theorized (cf. Krims 2012: 142, 147). One exception to this is the work of ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes, and the papers from other researchers featured in his edited book “Ethnicity, identity and music – the musical construction of place” (1994). Another important contribution to the theorizing of music and place is the book “Sound tracks – popular music, identity and place” (2003) by geographers John Connell and Chris Gibson. Like this article, their book draws on Doreen Massey’s theory of a ‘global sense of place’ (Connell and Gibson 2003: 14; Massey 1994).

A field outside of traditional academia where music and place is heavily debated is music journalism. Music journalists often make connections between bands and artists, places, nations and sounds (Connell and Gibson 2003: 91, 124), but the connection is often treated as direct and natural, which is an essentialist view that offers limited agency to bands and artists in terms of musical production or identity construction. Though a band or artist’s cultural roots no doubt affect their musical choices and production, producers also have agency in what music they make and this is not necessarily limited by the places to which they

‘belong’. Popular essentialist discourse is concerned with authenticity and reflects the sometimes problematic way that people think of places and cultures. I often encounter this discourse in my own work, as people (both in and outside academia) question the fact that I am researching popular music in Greenland rather than focusing on ‘traditional’ music. However, the population of Greenland has over the decades produced a large body of popular music, and I consider this cultural field worthy of study, despite essentialist thinking that suggests that Inuit popular music is inauthentic, while ‘traditional’ styles are authentic.

Place does however remain a source of identity and meaning (Connell and Gibson 2003: 70), even though some theories on the impact of electronic media has called the continued existence of place into question (cf. Meyrowitz 1985: 308, Connell and Gibson 2003: 270), and music simultaneously plays a part in the way places are performed. Therefore music, just like place, is subject to political practices (cf. Oakes and Price 2008: 5). How places affect music and how they are performed in music, thus remain important questions in critical understandings of societies.

## **The politics of performing place**

Drawing connections between music and place is one of the ways in which both producers and consumers make sense of music (Bennett 2005: 2). This happens despite that most scholars today reject the popular notion that local place, in the form of some shared knowledge and experience, will inadvertently shine through musical production in the particularity of its sound (cf. Cohen 1994). If we attempt to search for meaning in music, connecting music to the geographical location of its producers can be a frame for interpreting music, just as place can be a resource for musical production (cf. Bennett 2005: 7), but this is more relevant in some cases than others. While Stokes has suggested that “...music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them” (Stokes 1994: 5), I suggest that this is truer for some styles at some times than others. In his writing on the Brazilian heavy-metal band Sepultura, sociologist Keith Kahn-Harris has described how the importance of place can change in the field of popular music (Kahn-Harris 2007). While music producers may or may not explicitly try to make music that has a connection to geographical places that are of significance to them, those consuming their music may or may not attempt to imagine such a connection independently of the producer’s intentions, and in some cases the producer and consumer might not share common meanings and symbols that can be used to represent places in music. With music, as with all media, there is no guarantee that the audience will interpret work in the way that the producers intended. Cohen has documented such cases in which connections made between music and place were quite different between producers and consumers (Cohen 1994: 127).

As the following description of trends in Greenlandic popular music over time show, neither bands and artists in Greenland, nor audiences, have consequently showed interest in connecting locally produced popular music to a sense of place. This is probably true for many other places as well. The trend in Greenland in the last few decades (as elsewhere) is however that while some musical forms have been globalized, in the sense that they are produced and consumed in many parts of the world, this has been accompanied by a localization of cultural identity and accompanying claims to authenticity (cf. Cohen 1994: 113). Both music producers and consumers may therefore have an interest in connecting music to a sense of place (and the culture associated with the place), because it can render the music and its producers more authentic. This in turn can rub off on the consumer.

While carving an authentic image might help bands and artists in their quest for commercial success, there can also be a more political side to performing place in music. As musicologist Adam Krims has argued, both producers and consumers can use music to “...help build notions of the world and its spaces” (Krims 2012: 45), which echoes a previous argument by Stokes, that music can be a part of the process of how places are constructed with notions of difference and social boundaries (Stokes 1994: 3). Through its connection to place, music thus engages with political, economic and cultural relations of power around the world. Locality, as Cohen notes, must therefore be viewed as a potential political strategy that exercises territorial power, and frames public and private spaces or domains (Cohen 1994: 133). Based on these observations I then argue that performing place in popular music cannot be detached from the politics of place because music is part of what produces place. Place in music must therefore be discussed in relation to other discourses on the topic, as the following account of Greenlandic popular music will illustrate.

While it is assumed that place can have an impact on music producers and their productions, the notion that music in turn can produce place may seem more abstract. In order to explore this notion, we must distinguish between places in their noumenon existence, and the human experiences and imagining of landscapes and places. While we can sing all we want about a mountain, tree or ocean without ostensibly changing the physical appearance of these, our subjective experiences of these features of a landscape can be highly influenced by music. We can recall music that we associate with such features, and these recollections shape our emotional experiences of landscapes. I am thus taking a Kantian position that we can never know things as they really are, as they exist in themselves independent of our observation (cf. Smith 1983: 31). Different people can describe a tree in a similar way, but their subjective experience, how the sight of the tree makes them feel, how they will recall the tree and what they associate with it, can be quite different and can change over time. Culture is part of what shapes our experiences of the world and how we construct it in imagination, and in that sense is a part of how the world sounds, smells, feels and looks to us (cf. Wilde [1891] 1982: 320).



Sociologist Andy Bennett has written, that one of the most explicit ways music can affect our experience of place, is through narrativization of places. Through this, music comes to play an important role in defining the relationship people have to their local everyday surroundings (Bennett 2005: 2). This, I argue, is a reason why locally produced music remains relevant to many people even in the global media age. Connell and Gibson have speculated that one of the lures of pop songs seems to be their ability to create imaginary identification between producers and consumers, and I expect that speaking the same language and living in the same landscape can strengthen such identification between producers and consumers, and invest places with shared meaning. Identification with sense of place in music, is however not the only lure of pop songs noted by Connell and Gibson, they also consider myths of faraway places mediated through music as potentially part of what makes music appealing, and in some cases these can become myths about the musicality of places (Connell and Gibson 2003: 6, 71, 115). Just think what musical associations cling to places like Nashville, Liverpool and Ireland. We might even associate these places with artists and sounds, and if we would go there, these associations could conceivably affect our experience and behavior.

The place this article is concerned with is mainly a national one, and one of the aims is to illustrate how popular music can be deeply embedded in the creation and maintenance of nationhood (cf. Connell and Gibson 2003: 118), thereby supporting an observation done by others, that music can be a symbolic activity which is highly important to nation-states (Stokes 1994: 15). We would actually need only to think of the triad of official symbols that identify nations (an emblem, a flag and a national anthem) to grasp the potentially strong patriotic value of music (Mach 1994: 61-2), but the role of music in shaping ideologies of nationalism can be much more complex. In Greenland, as elsewhere, popular music can unofficially, and perhaps mainly internally, act as a strong symbol of national culture (cf. Thisted 2011: 569-72). It is also entangled in constructing the meaning of the national by implementation of national symbols into popular musical styles. That which can symbolize Greenland in different ways has however been appropriated through a history of this nation and its music. This history needs to be examined to understand the processes through which symbols and their national meanings have been constructed, and thus to examine the impact of music in constructing the meanings of a national Greenlandic place by use of symbols.

## ***Qilaat* – The Greenlandic frame drum**

The frame drum (*qilaat*) is the only known musical instrument in Greenland from before colonization and encounters with European sailors. A diverse repertoire of songs existed before colonization, and some of these were accompanied by this drum (Petersen and Hauser 2006: 11). The drum itself has been dated back more than 4000 years in Greenland, and it is assumed to have migrated with the Inuit from the areas



we know today as Siberia, across Alaska and Canada to Greenland. It is however in Greenland that the oldest remains of a frame drum have been found (Grønnow 2012).

The Greenlandic frame drum has taken different shapes from region to region, and there are also differences in how the drum has been used. However, it basically consists of a frame made of bone or wood, attached to which is a short handle. On this frame, a membrane – usually made from intestines or skin from animals such as seals or polar bears – is suspended. The drum is played by hitting the rim with a small drumstick. The result is a treble sound made when the beat on the rim resonates in the membrane (Petersen and Hauser 2006: 63, 86; Hauser 1992: 29-1, 177-8; Lynge 1981: 16). A frame drum performance is usually a combination of drumming, dancing and singing. There are also often elements of altered appearance and acting in such a performance (Petersen and Hauser 2006: 25, 58, 89; Hauser 1992: 53).

Prior to the colonization of regions in Greenland, the frame drum was used in various ways both as entertainment and as an important tool for the Greenlandic shaman called *angakkoq* (Petersen and Hauser 2006: 22; Lynge 1981: 17). The frame drum was however also part of a system used for managing conflict through the use of duel songs. This system prescribed that antagonists of the same sex could duel with each other, using songs that were meant to incriminate and ridicule the opponent. Song duels often included elements of violence. The antagonists could slap each other in the face or do a wrestling-like dance, but the main purpose of the duel was to cleanse the air between them while maintaining set guidelines for accepted behavior. It was not considered kosher to kill your opponent once he had challenged you to a song duel, and tradition and religion prescribed that you had to accept the challenge.

During a song duel, the aim was to ridicule the opponent in front of the audience, but since both antagonists would bring their friends and family, it could be difficult to pick the victor. In some cases a humiliated opponent would move away from a settlement as a result of a duel, but usually cleansing the air and reviving an acceptable relationship between the antagonists was the aim of the song duel. It even seems that antagonists often gained a better and more intimate relationship afterwards. Song duels thus functioned as a form of conflict management, and were used to resolve problems such as adultery, but in some cases they acted as alternatives to murder and vendetta. Song duels could also be arranged purely for entertainment in social gatherings (Petersen and Hauser 2006: 68; Hauser 1992: 18-21, 79-82; Lynge 1981: 18; Larsen 1982: 68-82).

When the missionaries arrived in Greenland in the year 1721, and began the project of converting Greenlanders to Christianity, many attempted to ban certain forms of drum dance and song because they considered these a heathen practice. Some used physical punishment to achieve these ends, and this almost led to the disappearance of the frame drum (Hauser 1992: 116-8). But a degree of self-policing or monitoring has also been recorded in east Greenland, because frame drum performance along with long

hair and indigenous names became symbols of paganism and primitivism amongst east Greenlanders after the arrival of the missionaries (Thalbitzer 1906 in Thisted 2004: 268-70; Sejer Abelsen in Wilhjelm 2008: 430, 436)

Today, performing with the frame drum has become an emblem of an imagined authentic culture that is supposed to have existed prior to external cultural influence in Greenland. As such, it is used as a marker of ethnic and national identity. It has, according to literate Kirsten Thisted, become 'the sound' of Greenland (Thisted 2002: 92). Such processes of appropriation of folk culture, is a very well described phenomenon within ethnomusicology (Baily 1994: 46-7; Bohlman 2011: 5).

The use of *qilaat* is today governed by rules. This was illustrated by the somewhat provocative band Small Time Giants when in 2011 they started having their drummer Jonas Lundssgaard Nilsson (the only member of the band not from Greenland) perform drum dance at live concerts for the introduction to their song "Profit Singer". Nilsson did this reluctantly and quite poorly to begin with, but within a year he got much better and more confident performing with the frame drum. The band nonetheless received complaints about this feature of their live performances, from people asking them to refrain from having Nilsson perform with the *qilaat*. I expect that these complaints were grounded in a discourse on ownership of the tradition and hence access to perform with this instrument. This discourse was present when the national newspaper Sermitsiaq posted an article on a seminar for frame drum performers in Nuuk in May 2014. The title of the article read "*Den grønlandske tromme diskriminerer ikke*" ('The Greenlandic drum does not discriminate'). While the need for this title suggests that discrimination has happened within this musical style, the title actually refers to statements by participants in the seminar who emphasize that it is also proper for West Greenlanders to perform with the frame drum, despite that the style was abandoned in this region during colonization. The article does not even address the question of whether foreigners have access to this cultural form (Sørensen 2014). The discourse underlying this article thus indicates the potential provocative impact it can have, to have an untrained Dane perform with the frame drum. However, the complaints Small Time Giants have received have not made the band change their minds on the issue (personal communication with Miki Jensen, 28 August 2013).

The positioning of the frame drum within an ethnic and traditional space lends tremendous significance to the object and its use, but simultaneously limits the possibilities for innovation within the tradition. As such, there is the risk that stability and authenticity will become the only signifiers of value attached to it.

Fig. 1: Anda Kuitse performing with the frame drum, for tourists in Kulusuk in East Greenland.



## ***Kalattuut* – Greenlandic polka**

The first documented foreign influence on Greenlandic music culture came when European whalers and a few expedition ships engaged in regular contact and commerce with Greenlanders, starting from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Contact between the Inuit in Greenland, and people from the European continent like the Norsemen, does however date much further back (Gad 1954: 157). Besides introducing foreign goods in Greenland, the European sailors brought with them a style of music and dance that was quickly appropriated by Greenlanders, and emerged into a style that is today known in Greenland as *kalattuut*, a word that means ‘in a Greenlandic manner’, but is usually translated as ‘Greenlandic Polka’. The original music and dance introduced by the sailors were however probably in the style of reel or jig (Ringsted 1997: 38-44), since the couple dance polka, which is the most popular dance in the *kalattuut* repertoire today, did not emerge in Europe until the 1840s (cf. Hucker and Spahr 1996) and must thus have reached Greenland long after colonization began, in a time when commercial whaling in the North Atlantic was coming to an end (cf. Fogsgaard 2013: 62).<sup>1</sup> In order to perform the musical repertoire for *kalattuut*, new musical instruments such as the violin, accordion and the organ were imported to Greenland and in some cases built by local craftsmen (Ringsted 1997: 47, 57).

Today in Greenland, *kalattuut* is a common music and dance style used at festive occasions and it is practiced and taught in some formal societies. Even though this style emerged through an adoption of music and dance brought into the country by European sailors, an origin that is evident in the similarities of the repertoire of music and dances to repertoires used elsewhere, there are some unique traits to the Greenlandic versions. First, *kalattuut* is more up-tempo than most of its European counterparts, and second, there are some steps have been added to the dances which, it has been speculated, probably originate from the frame drum dance style (Ringsted 1997: 64, 79, 88).

As the name indicates, *kalattuut* is highly valued as a national cultural style, and it is often included in national or communal celebrations at which the dancers can wear their national costumes, but the style is also performed at more informal festive settings like *dansemik* (‘with dance’) in village halls across the

coast. Today many different instruments are used for performing the *kalattuut* repertoire, among these digital keyboards with programmed virtual drums.

*Fig. 2: A dansemik session in Ilulissat.*



## Greenlandic hymns and choirs

In 1721, the Norwegian missionary Hans Egede arrived at the west coast of Greenland close to what is today the country's capital Nuuk. Frederik IV, king of Denmark-Norway, had given him permission to set up a mission in Greenland (Fægteborg 2009: 42), and with this mission a protestant hymn tradition was introduced in Greenland (Lynge 1981: 24). In 1733, a small group of Moravians was sent to Greenland to support Hans Egede's mission. But the Moravian mission took the form of a competing mission instead of a supporting one, and had a significant impact on the course of history in Greenland in the centuries that followed. The Moravians differentiated themselves from the mission of Hans Egede and his family, by displaying a more emotional relationship to their religion and placing a high emphasis on the use of music when preaching. Their mission remained in Greenland until the year 1900, at which time they, following a decrease in the size of their congregation, left Greenland (Wilhjelm 2000: 203, 206, 209).

Some of the hymns sung in Greenland today are translations of European hymns, but from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Greenlandic composers, starting with Rasmus Berthelsen (1827-1901), have contributed to the hymn and song repertoire. These hymns and songs can be found in *Erinarsuutit* ('The song book') which was first published in 1908 (Langgård 2011: 124). Choir singing in Greenland has become an important element in Greenlandic national culture. Many towns have one or more choirs that perform at special occasions and often release recordings of their repertoire of hymns and romantic national songs (Johansen 1991: 48). In Denmark, where a significant number of Greenlanders live either permanently or while getting a post-secondary education, several Greenlandic choirs function as a leisure activity and an affirmation of Greenlandic identity.

Even though hymn and choir singing in Greenland emerged from a mix of Dano-Norwegian and Moravian mission work, there are traits in the style that cannot be easily traced back to European styles. One

such is the use of the wording ‘aja’ in some of these hymns and choir songs, a wording that has no particular meaning but is known from pre-colonial song style (Larsen 1997: 63). The Greenlandic choir tradition also has a very distinct musical sound. A kind of ‘spontaneous’ polyphony has evolved based on the four voice harmonies of the organ accompanying the hymns at churches, so that all hymns during a service were often sung in polyphony by the congregation. This polyphony along with a preference for slow tempi have been noted by others to be some of the characteristics of the sound of Greenlandic choir singing (Johansen 1991: 48; Larsen 1997: 60), but I suggest that a tolerance for a wide range of intonation is another characteristic of this valued and beloved musical style. Heavy use of glissando is also a feature that to my ears distinguishes Greenlandic choir singing from its European counterparts, and this idiom has been noted as one of the characteristics of singing in the frame drum style (cf. Johansen 1991: 40).

*Fig. 3: The choir Aavaat performing the Christmas hymn “Guuterput qutsinnermiu” (‘Our Lord in the highest’) composed by Rasmus Berthelsens.*



## **From *vaigat* to The Eskimos – The incipience of popular music in Greenland**

Ever since the missionary Hans Egede arrived in Greenland, the country has, to various degrees, been under Danish influence. The Danish state as colonizer effectuated a strategy by which Greenland was kept relatively isolated, a strategy that was justified through a discourse in which Greenlanders, as ‘indigenous people’, needed to be protected from the consequences of a sudden transformation to the ‘modern’ way of life in the ‘civilized’ world. This strategy was interrupted as World War II broke out and Germany occupied Denmark in 1940. Because of the occupation, Greenland needed new diplomatic connections in order to import the foreign goods needed to maintain status quo. Furthermore, both Allied and German air forces had strategic interests in Greenlandic territory, and the US therefore considered it necessary to protect Greenlandic territory. The Danish envoy Hendrik Kauffmann therefore gave the US permission to build military bases in Greenland in 1941, in return for supplying the population with foreign goods. This resulted in a considerable expansion of the assortment of goods available in Greenland (DIIS 2007: 14-5, 21-31), and as a result of the presence of American military bases in Greenland, American guitar-based music became

available in large parts of the country. It was also possible during the war to listen to radio stations from neighboring countries like Iceland and Canada (Lyngé 1981: 31; Interview with P. O. Petersen, 19 December 2012). The national Greenlandic broadcasting service *Grønlands Radio*, later *Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa* (KNR), furthermore initiated official broadcasting during the war in 1942, even though some local broadcasting had been taking place as far back as 1926 (Lyngé 1981: 31-2).

American popular music quickly became popular in Greenland, and in the 1950s, the first locally-produced popular music emerged. This music consisted, to a large extent, of versions of American country and western music with Greenlandic lyrics, and as a style this music has been given the name '*vaigat* music', since it was mainly practiced in the mining town of Qullissat by the Vaigat Straight. But the genre gained national recognition and fame through the Greenlandic national broadcasting service (Lyngé 1981: 35-8; Johansen 1991: 50; Johansen 2001: 171-3).

The emergence and popularity of *vaigat* music illustrate the double character of radio. Radio has played a significant role in unifying and building new nation-states, and has been used to distribute and establish new versions of national culture (Stokes 1994: 11-2; Baily 1994: 51, 58). This is the case for Greenland, where the national broadcasting service has been seen as one of the strongest unifying factors in post-war Greenland (Lyngé 1981: 38), but radio in Greenland has also been a way of gaining access to culture from elsewhere, in a time when this access was limited. Radio is thus, as cultural studies researcher Jody Berland has noted, an ideal instrument for collective self-construction (Berland 2009: 207), but it is also an instrument for gaining a cosmopolitan outlook (cf. Cohen 1999: 244).

Fig. 4: *Vaigat* music by *Vaigat Orkesteret* "Nuna Hawaii" ('The land Hawaii') (1988).



Radio and imported LPs inspired the first rock music, which emerged in Greenland in the 1960s through genres like beat, and rock and roll. The most famous band from the first wave of Greenlandic rock was The Eskimos, a band that was active in the mid-1960s. The band recorded two EPs in Nuuk in 1965. These recordings made use of repertoire from internationally recognized bands and artists like The Ventures and The Beatles (from when they were Tony Sheridan and the Beat Brothers). But a rendition of the track "Hello Mr. Twist" with Danish lyrics (called "Mr. Twist" on the EP), that had been released by the Dan-

ish iconic artist Otto Brandenburg in 1962, also points towards influence from the Danish rock and roll scene even though “Hallo Mr. Twist” had already been released by Billy Sanders in a German and English version in 1961 (cf. fig. 5).

The Eskimos almost exclusively performed cover music (music that was primarily known as played by other bands and artists) and except for the lead singer Barselaj Danielsen’s curious English accent, it is not immediately possible to locate a Greenlandic place in the rock and roll hits performed by The Eskimos. This impression does however change if we look at another type of music recorded by the band. One of these tracks is named “A-E-Sakissak”. *Sakissak* or *saqisaaq*, according to recent orthography, is a type of polka (also known as *rheinländer*) from the *kalattuut* repertoire, and the Eskimos performed the music using rock and roll instruments. Thus while performing rock and roll hits from an international repertoire, the Eskimos also performed dance music that had a history stretching back centuries in western Greenland. It was this mix of international rock and roll and *kalattuut* that made the Eskimos the most popular band of their time. They had the knack of matching audience preferences to musical styles (Interview with P. O. Petersen, 19 December 2012). This example illustrates Connell and Gibson’s argument that new cultural alliances do not happen on a ‘blank slate’. The particular set of circumstances, traditions and social relations of older generations of cultural producers are inherited in some form (Connell and Gibson 2003: 14).

Fig. 5: “Mr. Twist” performed by The Eskimos (1965).



## Sume and the Greenlandification of popular music

Even after World War II came to an end and Denmark took over the administration of Greenland again, the country remained a more politically open territory than prior to the war. Amongst the Greenlandic people, there were many who wished for Greenland to be (further) modernized. Simultaneously, in the post-war years, the UN made it a mission to call for the decolonization of the world, and going with both these claims, Greenland in the year 1953 ceased to be a colony and gained political status as an *amt* (somewhat similar to ‘county’) in Denmark (Heinrich 2012: 230-3, 262). In the following decades, there was



considerable expansion in the infrastructure in Greenland. At the same time, a number of small settlements and even the mining town of Qullissat were closed down, adding an element of politics to *vaigat* music that lingers today, since the style is strongly associated with the town and the painful collective memory of its clearance (cf. Johansen 2001: 172; Sørensen 2013). The former inhabitants from these places were distributed across the remaining towns and settlements where it would then be less expensive to offer them modern housing and access to hospitals, schools and communication (Sørensen 1995: 99; Forchhammer 2001). Another factor in this policy was that the growing fishing industry was believed to offer the best opportunities for employment, and the interests of this industry were best served by concentrating the population in fewer towns (Heinrich 2012: 252). During this period, in the Greenlandic school system, measures were taken to make more children competent in the Danish language. The goal was to standardize the quality of the school system and develop opportunities for post-secondary education in Denmark (Gaviria 2013: 62). However, one of the results of these measures, concentration policies and ‘modernization’ was that an increasing number of people saw these changes as a neglect of Greenlandic language and culture, and thus, this historic period is often referred to as ‘the Danification’ (cf. Bjørst 2008: 23-4).

The proclaimed reason for these major changes in Greenlandic society was to ensure that Greenlanders were given equal opportunities to citizens in other parts of the Danish realm (Heinrich 2012: 263-4), but parallel with this development, a law was passed in 1964 known as *fødestedskriteriet* (‘the birth place criterion’). This law stated that public servants who were from Denmark were given better salary and conditions of employment than public servants who were from Greenland, and the birth place criterion became a symbol and tangible proof of the fact that Greenlanders did not have political equality with Danes (Janussen 1995). Meanwhile, Greenlandic language and culture were increasingly neglected. As this became more evident, Greenlanders began to demand ‘Greenlandification’ rather than Danification (cf. Sørensen 1995: 101). This was officially declared to the Danish government in 1972, leading to Home Rule in 1979, but it was not until the early 1990s that the remaining privileges from birth place criterion were revoked (Janussen 1995).

In 1973, when Greenlanders began to demand changes in the political strategy of the post-war period, the band Sume (‘Where?’) released their first album “*Sumut*” (‘Where to?’). The album was produced and released by Demos, a socialist and anti-imperialistic publishing company in Denmark founded by the Danish Vietnam Committees. The record company behind the release was thus an explicitly political one, and their interest in releasing this music was sparked because the lyrics were in a native language and criticized Danish imperialism (Lynge 1981: 64). This political backdrop probably had the effect of strengthening the political messages in the band’s material.

The lyrics featured in Sume's music were primarily concerned with topics from a Greenlandic context, and the lyrics made use of figurative language and metaphor to express demands for independence and cultural awakening in Greenland. The lyrics bear witness to a time when Danification was viewed as an eminent threat to Greenlandic identity and the population's right to sustain their distinct culture (cf. Langgård 1990: 24, 28-30; Berthelsen 2010: 16; Langgård 2013: 81). Sume's first album cover gave further voice to their opposition to Danish influence in Greenland. The cover is a copy of a woodcut made by the artist Aron of Kangeq in 1860 that depicts a scene from Greenlandic myth in which the legendary figure Qasapi has just cut the arm of the dead body of the Norsemen chief Uunngortoq (see fig. 1).<sup>ii</sup> The cover of "*Sumut*" could thus be interpreted as an appeal to take up armed resistance against Danish influence in Greenland. However, despite differences in opinion and a sometimes harsh atmosphere in public debate, armed conflict has never seemed to be on the agenda of the colonized nor the colonizers in Greenland, and the cover of "*Sumut*" should probably only be read as a provocation.



Fig. 6: Qasapi has just killed the Norsemen chief Uunngortoq (Woodcut from 1860 by Aron of Kangeq).

Sume's music had an enormous impact on Greenlandic popular music. "*Sumut*" was the first Greenlandic rock music featuring Greenlandic lyrics ever to be released. It became very popular in Greenland, and even amongst the Danish left, and played an important role in reviving Greenlandic as a complex and autonomous language (Henriette Rasmussen quoted in Langgård 2004: 103-4). This had deep repercussions in the music scene in Greenland in the years that followed. Up to the mid-1990s, almost all the music released

in Greenland featured Greenlandic lyrics. With Sume, Greenlandic popular music became, and remains, a forum in which the Greenlandic language is strengthened and evolved through creative use. This trend began with Sume's first album "*Sumut*", which became a pioneering record because it set the stage for a particular form of Greenlandification of popular music.

This Greenlandification of popular music was achieved by performing a sense of place, mainly by use of the Greenlandic language and through the themes found in the lyrics, but Sume also used other elements to connect their music with a Greenlandic place. Several tracks on the band's first album included wordings such as '*Aajai ja aai aajaa aa*', that, as already mentioned, can be traced back to pre-colonial songs, but Sume was the first to introduce into rock music another kind of performance of place. On the band's third album released in 1976, the sound of a frame drum performance was incorporated into one of their recordings. In the intro of the song "*Kalaaliuvunga*" ('I am a Greenlander'), Egon Sikivat's (1941-2009) voice accompanied by the frame drum, is heard for about one minute before Sume enters the soundscape with their 1970s rock sound. The sound of Sikivat's performance however re-emerges regularly in the soundscape throughout the song, and as the rock music fades to the background by the end of the track, it is once again just the singing and the frame drum that fill the soundscape, but this time the band does backing vocals for Sikivat's performance. Since this epic release, introducing elements from the frame drum dance and song tradition into popular music in various ways has become a common method for performing a sense of Greenlandic place in global musical forms such as rock, pop and rap. The sound of the frame drum tradition has become an audible symbol of Greenlandic identity in popular music, and Sume was the first to introduce this trend.

Sume's third album, featuring the track "*Kalaaliuvunga*", was also the first album to be released on the label ULO, the first professional Greenlandic record company, which was set up on the initiative of one of the band's lead singers Malik Høegh, the band's drummer Hjalmar Dahl and Karsten Sommer, the band's producer from their former productions with Demos. In the years that followed, ULO dominated the Greenlandic record market by releasing some of the most epic albums in Greenlandic popular music history, but in 2004 the record company closed down their studio following a period in which their productions had resulted in deficits (Andersen and Otte 2010: 61). The company is however still occasionally active today.

In 1980 the other lead singer from Sume, Per Berthelsen, started up his own record company in Nuuk called Qilaat-music. In the years that followed, Qilaat-music released several popular albums like those made by Per Berthelsen and his younger sister Birthe Olsen, whom he had recorded with prior to the setting up of Qilaat-music. However, when Birthe Olsen died from cancer in 1987, Per Berthelsen gave up his musical activities for a while and sold Qilaat-music to Eigil Petersen, the lead singer in the popular rock band G-60 (Interview with Per Berthelsen, 30 April 2011). Eigil Petersen changed the name of the label to

Sermit Records, which was changed again later to Ice Music owned by Eigil Petersen and Alex Andersen. Alex Andersen took over Ice Music in 2009, and the company was closed down in 2012 as the result of a general crisis in the music industry in Greenland.

Members from the band Sume thus had a tremendous impact on the Greenlandic popular music scene, not only because they were the first band to present rock music in a Greenlandified form that is still very much used, but also because several of the band members played important roles in setting up a music industry in Greenland that made it possible to record, release and distribute music in LP format in the country.

Fig. 7: *"Inuit Nunaat" ('The land of people') by Sume (1974).*



## Rasmus Lyberth – World music from Greenland

Another of Greenland's pioneering recording artists is Ramsus Lyberth. He was born in Maniitsoq in western Greenland in 1951 and trained as both an aircraft maintenance technician and actor. Since the release of his first album *"Erninga"* ('For my son') in 1975 he has however principally been known as a musician. Lyberth is furthermore known in Greenland as a spiritual person and this spirituality often finds its way into his lyrics, in interaction with nature and human emotions. Lyberth is one of the relatively few artists from Greenland ever to gain recognition beyond the borders of Greenland, in his case particularly in Denmark.

The musical style performed by Lyberth is quite different from that of Sume, even though performing a sense of place and injecting his music with a sense of Greenlandic identity is pivotal in his musical production as well. Lyberth does not play rock music but a kind of folk style in which gesticulating and recitative vocal passages are often at the center of the performance. The lyrics speak of the romantic ideal of Greenlandic nature, and in the onset of his career Lyberth was criticized for not writing political texts in the same manner as other bands and artists (Johansen 1991: 55). Lyberth did however engage with some of the identity politics that caught on during the project of Greenlandification. An example of this is when he played the lead role in the movie *"Qaamarngup uummataa"* ('Heart of light') (1998) in which he was Rasmus, a

Greenlander who feels conflicted between a Danish and a Greenlandic identity. Lyberth has actually also brought this theme into his music, as in the song “*Ajajajaa*” from the album “*hey hey*” (2008) (cf. fig. 8).

The musical style of Lyberth is quite distinct from other styles in the music scene in Greenland, which is generally very dominated by catchy pop and rock music. Lyberth’s music is evocative, and mainly suitable for attentive listening, but his identity as a performer from Greenland is central to his international success. He is perhaps one of the few artists in Greenland that engage with producing a kind of world music, in the sense that he performs as an ‘other’ to the west, but still manages to package this otherness in recognizable musical forms (cf. Stokes 2004: 53; Brusila 2003: 18). In Lyberth’s case, he seems to draw inspiration from well-known, somewhat exotic styles like Latin, and makes use of more ambient soundscapes than what is the norm in Greenlandic popular music. He thus combines different styles associated with different places to establish sounds of ‘otherness’ that, along with his Greenlandic lyrics and narrative style, establish a sense of Greenlandic place to his audience, but this version of place and his way of performing it, are his own interpretation and do not represent general trends in the Greenlandic music scene.

*Fig. 8: The official music video for the track “Ajajajaa” by Rasmus Lyberth (2008):*



## **Inneruulat – Including landscapes in soundscapes**

Including sounds from a landscape in musical productions has become a method sometimes used by bands and artists in Greenland, for establishing a sense of place in their musical production. An early example of this is the song “*Qimusseq*” (‘Dog sledge’), by Inneruulat (‘Phosphorescence’) (Mølgaard 2011), in their album “*Inneruulatut naajarpugut*” (‘We are growing like Dandelions’) (1981) (cf. fig. 9).<sup>iii</sup>

The band Inneruulat is from Aasiaat in northern Greenland, and it is the sounds of a north Greenlandic landscape that reach the listener in the song’s intro. The sounds of creaking ice and howling sled dogs fill the soundscape. Then the band fades in with an energetic song that praises the dog sledge, not only as means of transportation, but also for the benefit of the soul of Greenlanders and the future of the Greenlandic nation. The lyrics thus indicate the nationalist, socialist and anti-imperialistic themes that dominate

in the lyrics featured on the album. These themes were strongly represented in the early years of Greenlandic rock music, in music by other bands like Sume and Piitsukkut ('The poor ones').

Fig. 9: "Qimusseq" ('Dog Sledge') by Inneruulat (1981):



## From anti-imperialism to existentialism

The harsh critique of Danish imperialism, featured in lyrics from Greenlandic bands and artists, was problematized early by Siiva Fleischer, the lead singer in the popular band Zikaza, on the band's first album (1985) and on their legendary release "Miki goes to Nuussuaq" (1988), as several of Fleischer's lyrics call for overcoming differences of opinion to embark on a new course towards the future (cf. Langgård 1990: 34).

Another turn away from anti-imperialism in the music scene came about in 1989, when the artist Ole Kristiansen released his first album "*Isimiit iikkamut*" ('From the eye to the wall'). The album included his hit song "*Zoo inuillu*" ('Zoo and the people') (cf. fig. 10). The lyrics are about the relationship between humans and both nature and the city, and through the lyrics, Kristiansen takes a critical position towards urban spaces by describing them as claustrophobic prisons, whereas nature is seen as a beautiful and vast space in which humans can breathe (cf. Johansen 2001: 181). Even though urbanization in Greenland picked up pace during the Danification period and is often associated with this time, the song is not directly concerned with criticizing Danish imperialism in Greenland, and Ole Kristiansen is noted as a pioneer in the trend in Greenlandic popular music to perform lyrics more concerned with existentialism than anti-imperialism. Meanwhile Ole Kristiansen is celebrated in Greenland for his lyrics and use of metaphor (Focus group interview in Aasiaat, 5 September 2011; cf. Langgård 2011: 162).

Despite the popularity and influence of Zikaza and Ole Kristiansen, a critical stance on Danish influence in Greenland has remained a theme in the lyrics of some Greenlandic popular music, as in Greenlandic society in general. The band Liima Inui ('The people of Lima') has taken such a position in some of their songs in the albums "Shaman" (2007) and "Republic" (2009) (Langgård 2013: 87). What is common to both these lyrical trends is however a dedication to forms of nationalism which has remained an important element in popular music lyrics, mainly in numerous songs that praise the beauty of Greenlandic nature, but

also in songs about legendary figures from Greenlandic myths. Both Zikaza and Ole Kristiansen utilize these themes in songs about Kaassassuk (cf. Johansen 1991: 85), an orphan boy who is tormented by others from his community but eventually seeks Pissaap Inua ('The master of the force') and from this creature, receives superhuman strength that allows him to inflict vengeance on his tormenters. Kaassassuk has often been used as a symbol of Home Rule and Self Government, and a statue of Kaassassuk and Pissaap Inua has been erected in front of the government complex in Nuuk.

Performing a sense of place in popular music has remained an important feature in this performance of nationalism, but sometimes the connection between the music and a Greenlandic place is very subtle, and achieved through metaphors that take on a particular meaning in a Greenlandic context. An example of this is the track "*Puttaaruunnaaq*" ('Floating ice') from the album "*Tunissut*" ('The gift') (2006). The album is written by Pilu Lynge, but all songs are sung by Kimmernaq Kjeldsen who, like Pilu Lynge, is from Aasiaat. *Puttaaruunnaaq* is the name of a game children play in some places in Greenland, when enough floes (or floating ice) are floating in the fjords for them to jump between floes. In the song lyrics, this game is used as a metaphor for a protagonist living a dangerous life. Furthermore, the recorded version of the song features both the sound of creaking ice and a reference to frame drum performance.

Even though in the late 1980s trends in composing lyrics in popular music underwent a change in Greenland, Greenlandic culture, nature, myths and history has remained resources for artists looking to perform a sense of place, and this context can therefore be important for gaining particular understandings of lyrics and other musical elements.

Fig 10: "*Zoo Inuillu*" ('Zoo and the people') by Ole Kristiansen (1989).



## The Greenlandic Divas<sup>iv</sup>

In Greenland, as in some other places, women primarily engage in the production of popular music as singers (cf. Connell and Gibson 2003: 123). However, up until the 1990s, female singers in Greenlandic popular music would usually only record and perform together with male singers. This gradually changed when the group Mariina (the name is more or less synonymous with the group's lead singer Marina



Schmidt) released their first album named “*Utaqqivunga*” (‘I wait’) (1992). Though this album also featured the band’s primary song writer Hans Lange on vocals, Marina’s voice became the dominating sound on the three albums the band released before Hans Lange died in a boating accident in 2007.

Marina served as a model for the younger singer Nina Kreutzmann Jørgensen (Interview with Nina Kreutzmann Jørgensen and Malik Olsen, 8 June 2009), who is from the same generation as a list of other popular female singers, like Kimmernaq Kjeldsen, Tupaarnaq Mathiasen and Julie Berthelsen. These four singers all gained popularity from the 1990s and into the 2000s, and typically perform as divas in the sense that they are primarily valued for their vocal skills, while male singers usually take the role of auteurs that are songwriters and instrumentalists as well as singers (cf. Regev 2013: 35).

*Fig. 11: Nina Kreutzmann Jørgensen performing “Silarsuaq Takuiuk” (‘Have you seen the world?’) (2008), originally written by Siiva Fleischer and performed by Zikaza (1985).*



This role of women in Greenlandic popular music was challenged when in 2009 Nive Nielsen played her first concert in Greenland with her collective of international musicians called The Deer Children. Nive Nielsen writes her own material and when performing, she both sings and plays the guitar or her signature red guitalele (cf. fig. 12). Her voice is meek and she seems almost shy on stage, which is in direct contrast to the powerful and self-confident performance of the Greenlandic divas. Though Nive Nielsen has not gained the same popularity in Greenland as the divas, she has managed to gain unprecedented international attention as an indie artist. She has carefully branded herself through narratives of Greenlandic identity, connecting her songs and their English lyrics to Greenland (Otte 2013: 139). Cohen has written that connecting an artist with a sense of place can add an era of realness, roots and authenticity (Cohen 1994: 118), and even though the connection between the music of Nive Nielsen and Greenland might not be immediately audible in the bulk of her songs (which feature English lyrics), such a strategy has proven quite successful in the case of Nive Nielsen, though of course in combination with musical productions highly valued by her audience.

Fig 12: Nive Nielsen performing "Room" (2011).



## New styles and new languages

Starting in the late 1970s and during the 1980s and 1990s, the record company ULO faced some competition from minor recording studios that emerged in Greenland along with a couple of new record companies. This led to a significant increase in the number of music releases that were either produced in Greenland or produced in Denmark by Greenlanders and targeted the Greenlandic music market. Before the CD became the preferred medium for music, a significant market for cassette tapes emerged with these smaller studios. These tapes were often recorded and released by shops that sold radio and television equipment across the west coast. The four-track cassette recorders often used for these productions did not encourage large ensembles, and as the electric organ and keyboard became affordable, the one-person band emerged that made use of the instruments' built-in functions for accompaniment. This development resulted in a new style of music in Greenland, often referred to as *suaasat*-music or *suaasat*-rock. The style gets its name from the way meat is traditionally prepared in Greenland as *suaasat* ('soup'). The lyrical themes featured in this style of music usually deal with love, family relations, locality or the nation in a nostalgic manner, and the music mainly addresses an adult audience. The lyrics are almost entirely in Greenlandic (cf. Johansen 1991: 67; Bjørst 2004: 14-5).

The popularity of Greenlandic lyrics in locally produced popular music, that had existed since Sume released their first album, was challenged in the second half of the 1990s. The first release that featured English lyrics in this period was "Stay put" by the band Century Schoolbook, but the album did not receive much attention in Greenland. Nanu Disco's "In search of the roots" (1998) was another release from the period that featured English language as part of the music, primarily in the form of voice-over narration layered above the dance music of the album. This English narration seems to be an attempt to make the music accessible to English-speaking listeners, as it tells of, and idealizes, a mythical era before Greenland was colonized, when the Inuit population lived in harmony with nature and with supernatural beings. The narration is clearly inspired by Greenlandic myths and the music on the album repeatedly attempts to connect the dance music style with this mythical pre-colonial Greenland, by using elements like the sounds of

howling huskies, the frame drum, and ethnographic recordings of song (cf. Johansen 2001). It is worth noting that the album was produced by a Danish DJ Morten Stjernholm a.k.a. Svend Break. It may seem that the album is based on an outsider's exotic fantasies of a Greenlandic pre-colonial place. Ironically, the album never gained international success, but in the late 1990s, Nuuk youth danced to the sounds of Nanu Disco when going out.

*Fig 13: "No Past – No Future" by Nanu Disco (1998).*



The first widely popular pop-rock album partly featuring English lyrics that was released in this period was "Inuiaat 2000" (2000) ('The people in the year 2000'), by the band Chilly Friday. The album was released by the new record company Atlantic Music, a company that grabbed most of the national music market during the first decade of the millennium. Despite the English lyrics on "Inuiaat 2000", Atlantic Music, like ULO, has in general focused on music featuring Greenlandic lyrics. "Inuiaat 2000" was heavily inspired by grunge music from the 1990s, by bands such as Nirvana and Pearl Jam, and in the album tracks that feature English lyrics and deal with subjects like sex, parties and complicated love, there seems to be no overt connection between music and a Greenlandic place. It is of course a different matter in the songs where the lyrics are in Greenlandic, and the band eventually turned towards primarily producing songs with Greenlandic lyrics, as they released three more albums from 2001-2005. The themes of the songs changed over time as well and became more concerned with political topics and social problems like suicide (Interview with Angunnguaq Larsen, 27 June 2009). This turn can be viewed as a turn towards a more local context, since suicide is a significant social problem in Greenland and is an important and popular topic in Greenlandic oral tradition as well as in written literature (Thisted 1992).

*Fig 14: The official music video for the track "Sialuit" ('Rain drops') by Chilly Friday (2001).*



Themes such as suicide and other social problems have featured in Greenlandic rap music as well. Rap emerged in Greenland during the 1980s with the group Nuuk Posse (cf. Johansen 2001: 182). The group's music primarily featured Greenlandic lyrics, though they rapped in both English and Danish on some tracks. Nuuk Posse was thus ahead of the general music scene in using English lyrics, and somewhat off it in their use of Danish, since Danish has so far not become an accepted language for Greenlandic artists. Going with the general trend of rap music, it nonetheless seemed pivotal to Nuuk Posse to express local identity, to which the name of the group bears witness (cf. Miller 2012: 272) (cf. fig 15). It was however not Nuuk Posse that became famous for bringing social and political agendas into rap music in Greenland, but the group Prussic with their debut album *"Misiliineq Siulleg"* ('The first attempt') (2003). Through this album the group set up new standards for what themes could be debated through music. An example of this is the song *"Angajoqqaat"* ('Parents'), which is an angry message to their parents' generation and the actual parents of the group members, that they should take care of their children rather than spend their time drinking and smoking hashish. Prussic has been noted in both academic and popular writing as an important group in giving these tabooed themes a voice in popular music (Langgård 2011: 163; Ullerup 2006). Some of the first bands that attempted to do this in the early 1980s, like Inuit and Simik (The Plug), had their songs banned from national radio (Interview with Steffen Lynge, October 2010).

Today, practically all rap music produced in Greenland features Greenlandic lyrics, but while both Nuuk Posse and Prussic gained considerable national popularity, broad interest in rap music has declined in recent years and the genre is now primarily found in a large number of home recordings made by disadvantaged and marginalized youth and shared through computer and cell phone technology.

*Fig 15: The official music video for the track "Qitik" ('Dance') by Nuuk Posse (1992).*



## **Angu and the performance of 'non-place'**

Greenlandification of popular music, in its various avatars, has dominated musical production in Greenland from Sume's first release and up till today. Most artists sing in Greenlandic, often about themes with some local or national relevance, and different auditory elements have been incorporated into the

repertoire to make it possible to perform a sense of place in the music as well as in the lyrics. Most artists thus engage in musical production that is explicitly framed by place and produce music for a Greenlandic audience. However, within the last ten years a number of artists have emerged that seem to target their music to a more international audience, and who only rarely attempt to perform a sense of Greenlandic place in their music.

Angu Motzfeldt was one of the first popular artists to come out of Greenland using such an approach, and he did manage to gain some attention in Denmark with his soft melancholy pop/rock songs. But when Angu released his music in Denmark (2005 and 2009), Danish music journalists emphasized his Greenlandic background – something that Angu himself neither rejected nor promoted. One critic in Denmark even suggested, with a sense of disappointment, that it should be possible to detect a sense of Greenlandic and Arctic place in Angu's music (cf. Poulsen 2004 and 2009). Angu himself, on the other hand, seems to repeatedly and knowingly position himself as a modern globalized individual, a cosmopolitan who is not limited to acting within frames of a particular place or culture (cf. Holton 2009: 33). This cosmopolitan approach is particularly evident in the official music video made for Angu's song "Time for time" (cf. fig. 16). In the beginning of the video, the viewer is presented with an image of earth seen from space as 'one' place. Then the video presents Angu performing in a recording studio and as the song hits the chorus, the video shows Angu performing in a synthetic-looking outdoor setting made up of water, sky and flames – an outdoor setting that does not really belong to anywhere in particular. Like the video, the English lyrics featured in the song do not connect to any particular place, but are concerned with love and desire, which must be some of the most global themes in popular music history.

Though a few examples exist in which Angu does in fact connect to a sense of Greenlandic place in both his music and visual material, he generally avoids this and his two albums, along with the first two albums released by Julie Berthelsen in Denmark following her participation in the Danish television program *Popstars* in 2002, are the most popular examples of Greenlandic artists releasing music with no explicit sense of a Greenlandic place. Since these releases, a number of Greenlandic artists have emerged, who produce music that features English lyrics, and these artists partly focus on gaining an international audience. Most noticeable of these are Nive Nielsen and the Deer Children, Simon Lynge and Small Time Giants, but these bands and artists all use their Greenlandic identity as a promotional strategy, and in the case of Small Time Giants, very much as a resource for their musical production.

Fig.16: the official music video for the track "Time for time" by Angu (2005).



## Places as meeting points

Based on this brief introduction to styles, trends, and bands and artists in the Greenland music scene, it should be evident that this cultural field, borrowing the words of anthropologist Anna Tsing, is “shaped and transformed in long histories of regional-to-global networks of power, trade, and meaning” (Tsing 2005: 3). Tsing has labelled this interaction ‘friction’ and defines it as “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (Tsing 2005: 4). This friction is a productive aspect of globalization and I argue that it has played a decisive role in the production of music culture in Greenland for centuries. Drum dance and song are the only musical forms that are not intelligibly affected by music cultures from south of the Inuit regions, but this does not mean that the style has not been produced by friction. Only drum dance and song stretch back so far in history that we cannot determine how this cultural form came into being.

*Kalattuut* and choir singing are a different story. We can pinpoint to the moments in history when trans-local meetings created the basis for these styles in Greenland, but how these styles evolved in locally-distinct ways is more difficult to account for, and this emphasizes the “unexpected and unstable aspects of global interaction” (Tsing 2005: 3). What is however key to how these styles are perceived is that they have been appropriated as local and national culture in Greenland, and thereby given a very strong symbolic value as distinct Greenlandic cultural forms. They have become part of the repertoire that identifies Greenland as a distinct place to many people.

Popular music in Greenland is the result of cultural interconnectedness as well. Performing popular music became increasingly popular simultaneous to the modernization or Danification of Greenland in the 1960s. But since the very first locally-produced recordings of popular music, there were clear evidence that place affected the productions of popular music, despite the import of globally-distributed instruments and musical forms. However, as the examples of Angu and Julie Berthelsen show, we must stay attentive to the fact that producers of music can choose to perform a sense of place in their productions, but need not nec-

essarily do so. As ethnomusicologist Philip V. Bohlman has observed, music is both autonomous and evocative of the identity of place (Bohlman 2011: 208).

Traditions have been invented, changed and forgotten throughout history (cf. Hobsbawm 1983: 1), and though we may suspect that this process is accelerating as a result of technological developments, we must also acknowledge that authenticity is a construction, not an essence. No culture has ever remained isolated from influence (Connell and Gibson 2003: 27-8). But because authenticity can be constructed, even when engaging with globally-distributed popular musical forms, both producers and consumers seem to often want bands and artists to perform identities that are based on place, and that can construct some notion of authenticity. However, this sometimes means that popular music is deeply engaged in arenas of conflict. In the case of Greenlandic music, I have come across questions about what gives local music Greenlandic identity. Is it the identity of the artist, the language used in the lyrics, or the sound of the frame drum that adds identity to the music? These are not questions that concern everyone, but they sometimes result in voiced judgments of who 'gets' to identify as a Greenlander and who does not, who stays 'true' to their country and who betrays it (Interview with Mik S. Christensen, 20 September 2009; Interview with participants at GiT, 1 August 2012). These debates adhere to more general discourses on place and identity. In Greenland, these discourses have resulted in a division between different places, identities and historical times into hierarchies according to their degree of 'Greenlandicness' (Bjørst 2008: 23-4; Sørensen et al. 2003: 25; Rygaard 2010: 232). But perhaps such (sometimes incursive) debates could be avoided by changing the very way we conceptualize place, in music and in general. If we choose to view place in popular music from Greenland as a representation of intersections between places and histories, we can perhaps avoid making popular music (and perhaps even identities of places in general) an arena for conflict, while acknowledging that a piece of music can represent a unique sense of place in the form of a unique meeting place.

Geographer Doreen Massey has proposed such a conceptualization of place, which she labels a 'global sense of place' due to its focus on local to global interconnectedness. By introducing this way of conceptualizing place, Massey challenges a tendency to view local communities and places as coterminous, a view she suggests is based on a (wrong) conceptualization of places as simple, pure and easily defined geographical areas inhabited by particular peoples with particular cultures and internalized histories. Rather than adhering to such a view on places, Massey suggests that we should think of places as intersections between human relations, as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings..." (Massey 1994: 146-56). If we could do the same in our conceptualization of connections between place and music in popular music, it would perhaps be possible to avoid conflicts over what music is Green-



landic and what is not, while accepting that a sense of place, a sense of meeting place, can be experienced as a distinct sound and narrative in music.

One way to achieve this is by imagining a typology of the musical construction of place within a given piece of music, through which place as a relational intersection is highlighted. Such a typology could be imagined for the track "*Kisimiinneq*" ('Loneliness') by the band Nanook (The bear above all other bears) in order to illustrate its character (cf. fig. 17). Nanook is one of the more recent bands from Greenland that makes use of elements from frame drum performance. On this track, the sound of the frame drum can be heard in the first verse along with the wording '*Ajaijaa*'. The lyrics are in Greenlandic and several elements from the established repertoire for performing a Greenland place in popular music are then performed in the song. The text is however about the more universal feeling of loneliness. In the first verse this feeling is described in figurative language, through an empty urban scenario and sounds of a storm. This scenario could really take place anywhere, but was probably originally inspired by an urban setting in Denmark, since this was where the songwriter Frederik Elsner lived, and where he perhaps longed for his friends and family in Greenland, when he wrote the song. The refrain of the song speaks more directly about feelings of loneliness, while in the second verse, the song's protagonist seems to go on a spiritual journey, and we thus return to a theme that we might connect to a Greenlandic place, albeit a mythical one. However, the style of this track is a form of pop or rock music, which of course has a particular history in Greenland. But popular musical forms are often associated with the west and perhaps considered relatively placeless, even though as musical styles, pop and rock derive from rock'n'roll that emerged from blues and country music in the southern United States. In turn, this was heavily influenced by the music of slaves that were originally brought to the region primarily from West Africa, mainly by European slavers (Connell and Gibson 2003: 55, 66). The style has evolved in other places like the U.K., but the most commonly-used instrument in this style is the guitar, which emerged from a family of stringed instruments. The earliest depiction of these is a more than 3000-year-old stone carving of a Hittite bard found in the Black Sea region of Turkey. Thus, if we want to make just a cursory map of the representations of place in this recording of "*Kisimiinneq*" and imagine a typology illustrating the places and histories intersecting in this particular meeting point, we have to draw routes that run through a significant part of the world and far back in time. If we would and could dig deeper into these styles and instruments and their histories, our typology could be further expanded illustrating the complexities through which this musical performance of place has come into being. What is truly the unique sense of place in this piece of music is the intersection, the meeting place of all these relations over time performed through a song.

Fig. 17: "Kisimiinneq" ('Loneliness') by Nanook (2009).



## Globalization and the music in Greenland

Popular music in Greenland has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the construction and negotiation of Greenlandic identities and of Greenlandic place. Greenland, and experiences of being a Greenlander, are narrated in popular music, and though the most explicit medium for doing this is through song lyrics, a sense of place is sometimes included in musical sounds, just as I would argue that using Greenlandic language can in itself be seen as a national sound.

Over the decades, musicians in Greenland have attempted to perform a sense of distinct Greenlandic place in their production of popular music, but if one does not understand the language or the history of music in Greenland, it can be difficult to trace these elements in popular musical forms. Globalization has dispersed these cultural forms into various corners of the world, but this has not resulted in popular music being the same all over the world. The reason for this is, of course, that people produce music and even though we might spend a significant amount of time on the internet, or watching the newest Hollywood blockbuster, or listening to international hit music, we live in places, speak different languages and identify with certain ways of life. Viewing globalization as only a force of homogenization is thus missing sociologist Roland Robertson's significant observation, that homogenization and heterogenization are mutually-implicated features of life (Robertson 1995: 26-7), something Massey also touches upon when noting that "The global is in the local in the very process of the formation of the local" (Massey 1994: 120).

Having said so much about the performance of place, it may be time to give some thought to how non-place is performed. In the logic of Massey's global sense of place, there should be no such non-place, though at the same time all places are more than local. However, we may consider some popular music to be placeless (often done by referring to it as 'international'), but the claim is as absurd as claiming that a white man is not of color. Music perceived as place-less will usually be that which is identified as 'pure' Anglo-American popular music, but this probably only bears witness to the dominance of Anglo-American culture. If we look into the history of how Anglo-American popular musical forms came into being, dialectics between people and places, stretching across oceans and continents, will be revealed as their very

foundation, thereby illustrating that human worlds are deeply entangled across geographical and political locations.

As this article has touched upon, there is not necessarily an explicit connection between places and musical production. Though a widely-acknowledged repertoire exists for performing a sense of Greenlandic place in music, it is not necessarily used by all artists from Greenland. Listeners might however still be able to hear how popular music has developed local particularity in Greenland, even when listening to some of the music in which place is less explicitly performed. But knowledge and technique is what constitute this particularity and this can be moved across places and transferred between people. That does not, however, render places insignificant, because we invest places with meaning, even if this is not represented in musical productions. Though we may only take his word for it, even the cosmopolitan Greenlandic artist Angu does this, as he has explained in an interview:

If I had not been growing up here and if I did not have my language (...), then perhaps the songs would not have sounded like they do. Then they would have been completely different, you know.

(Interview with Angu Motzfeldt, conducted by Iben Andersen, 3 May 2009, my own translation)

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<sup>i</sup> Bjarne Kristoffersen (music teacher at GU-Qaqortoq) introduced me to the history of polka and pointed out, that this particular style is unlikely to have been appropriate into the *kalattuut* repertoire by influence of whalers.

<sup>ii</sup> The Norsemen where a population of Vikings that immigrated to Greenland from Iceland and colonized parts of the south and west coast around the first millennium, but disappeared about 500 years later (Sørensen 1995: 86).

<sup>iii</sup> In Greenlandic literature in this period, Dandelions are used as symbol of the wild, indomitable and indigenous as opposed to that which is cold, domesticated and imported (ex. Olsen 1980: 84).

<sup>iv</sup> Several of the female Greenlandic singers have performed together as The Greenlandic Divas. The label 'diva' does not seem to carry particularly negative connotations in Greenland.