



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

Helda

---

## The Finnish Petsamo 1920-1940 : Strategies and Rhetoric of Colonialism and Finnishness

Stadius, Peter

University of Illinois press

2021-09-01

---

Stadius , P 2021 , ' The Finnish Petsamo 1920-1940 : Strategies and Rhetoric of Colonialism and Finnishness ' , Journal of Finnish studies , vol. 24 , no. 1-2 , pp. 112-135 . < [https://www.shsu.edu/eng\\_ira/finnishstudies/JoFS\\_Covers.html](https://www.shsu.edu/eng_ira/finnishstudies/JoFS_Covers.html) >

---

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/343060>

---

unspecified  
publishedVersion

---

*Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.*

*This is an electronic reprint of the original article.*

*This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.*

*Please cite the original version.*

# Petsamo 1920–1940: Rhetoric of Colonialism and Finnishness

*Peter Stadius*  
*University of Helsinki*

## **Abstract**

In 1920, Finland obtained a corridor to the Arctic Ocean, a land area that, until then, had been part of Russia. Petsamo, as the corridor was named in Finnish, was part of Finland from 1920 to 1944. As a new territorial acquisition, Petsamo raised expectations and was projected as a potential space for national expansionist policy. To answer the question of how Petsamo was to be put in use for building a strong and vital Finland, and not to become a burden and failure of Finnish state agency, many experts published views regarding how Petsamo should be developed. A dominating feature in this body of texts is a colonial mindset and rhetoric, promoting a comprehensive Finnish majority culture policy. These plans, including concrete actions, paved the way for a change in the region's environment and ethnic balance. The dominating discourse was that of ethnic Finnish settlement, and local features contradicting this were articulated as problems. From a Finnish majority perspective, Petsamo was often conceptualized as almost empty space waiting for a civilized and modern nation to take it into its possession and to develop it. The local Skolt Sami population became subject to much incomprehension and were viewed as a group doomed to perish under the pressure of a modern Finnish state.

**Keywords:** Petsamo, colonialism, Arctic railroad, Skolt Sami

## **Introduction**

In 1920, Finland obtained a corridor to the Arctic Ocean, as part of the Tartu Peace Treaty between Finland and Soviet Russia. It was one of many border changes in post-World War I Europe, and typical at a time when other similar corridors were created as part of the redrawing of the map of European sovereign states (Engman 2009a, 24). The area added to the territorial domain of the young republic was named Petsamo, and would remain part of Finland until 1944, when it was lost to the Soviet Union.

In later Finnish history writing and collective spatial memory culture, Petsamo has not played any notable part, but rather been acknowledged as a minor episode during the inter-war years. However, at the time, this acquisition raised vivid expectations and satisfied the need for territorial expansion among the many Finns working for and dreaming of a Greater Finland. At the time of the 1920 peace treaty negotiations, many in Finland had fostered hopes for even greater territorial expansions of the Finnish borders eastwards, which did not materialize. Since Petsamo, or Petchenga, was the only new territorial acquisition, it became subject of a self-projection of an expansive and vital young Finnish nation. The conceptualization of Petsamo as a “New Finland,” formally not a colony but often treated as a colonial space, became obvious. Another new factor was that now Finland had an Arctic Ocean shore, a physical natural environment not included in the canonized National Romantic Finnish landscape. Soon after the acquisition, government agencies sent experts to Petsamo in search of information as well as insight into how to develop the region.

This article will examine the ways future strategies for Petsamo were articulated in Finland, primarily during the 1920s, when the acquisition of this territory was recent and the assumption was that it would belong to Finland in perpetuity. The inter-connectedness of modernization and nationalization is at the core of these processes. The article will pose the following questions: What were the strategies proposed for Petsamo? What context and logic guided these strategies and policy recommendations? In which ways was a colonialist discourse articulated? How was an ideal Finnishness defined when projecting Petsamo’s future? The article will approach these questions through three sub-themes. First, the idea of Finnish colonization of Petsamo will be looked at. Second, the plans for building a railway to the new Finnish Arctic coast will be presented. Both state commissioned reports and literary fiction material will be looked at in that case. Third, the consideration, or rather lack of consideration, for the local Skolt Sami community will be briefly presented and analyzed.

Since Petsamo was never officially in a strict administrative sense defined as a colony, this conceptualization needs further clarification. The colonialist discourse present in the reports, pamphlets, travelogues, and, even in one case, a novel, was not primarily official and sanctioned by explicit colonial laws, but rather a public debate expressing general attitudes and expectations. In fact, the term *settlement* was used more often than *colony* and *colonization*. The debate over Petsamo has a strong contextual connection to the idea of a Greater Finland and the idea of an irredenta Finnishness under pressure outside the national borders. The irredenta context is different from a colonial context; however, the reality in Petsamo was far from a pure Finnish-irredentist situation. This was in many cases nonetheless the understanding, conceptualizing Petsamo as a space in waiting for the execution of a Finnish national modernization process.

The Petsamo case is an example of active Arctic policy of the Finnish State, and also an example of deliberate and articulated, although not always that successful, colonialist intentions. With colonialism, we understand a system of naturalizing differences, and the creation of hierarchies to justify domination. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, colonial domination also involves, “the deliberate destruction of other cultures” (Sousa Santos 2016, 18). He describes the lack of estimation for, and eventual destruction of, indigenous knowledge with the term *epistemicide*. The Petsamo case presents such a tendency, which is, however, not entirely void of a certain consideration for indigenous knowledge and agency. Recent research has also presented a more varied view of agency versus victimhood concerning the Skolt Sami community, also pointing to positive actions taken by certain Finnish authorities and actors (Lehtola 2018). Nonetheless, the dominating story is that of a colonial situation where cultural and ethnic diversity are subjugated to nationally framed strategies of expansion, modernization, and uniformity.

The colonialist discourse has an international context, making colonial capacity a point of comparison between nations and a measure of its vitality. In Finland, as in the other Nordic countries, the general assumption has traditionally been to see these countries as excluded from the Western legacy of colonialism, and the colonialist past has been addressed only randomly. The idea of this Nordic exceptionalism has been a part of the branding of the region as progressive and a conciliating agent in global conflicts. Only recently have there been major contributions on the Nordic colonialist past by Nordic scholars. The whole question of Finnish colonialism in the twentieth century has, up until recently, been a mere footnote in Finnish historiography, where questions of nation-building and even small-state victimhood have dominated the mental landscape. Among the few exceptions to this general tendency are the works of Veli-Pekka Lehtola and Olli Löytty. Kuortti and Löytty note:

Finland has not had any of its own colonies, even if a wishful gaze at times was projected in the direction of the Amboland [current Namibia] and in the direction of Karelia and its ultra-limes taiga areas. The way in which the Finns administrated and depicted Petsamo and especially the Skolt Sami population during the inter-war period, can rightfully be denominated colonialist. (Kuortti and Löytty 2007, 107)<sup>1</sup>

To this list we could also add Alaska, a Russian domain from 1733 to 1867. Finnish civil servants, merchants, priests, and institutions were part of the Russian colonial system from 1809 onwards (Rabow-Edling 2017). Alaskan artifacts in Finnish museum collections bear witness of this relationship even today. In the case of Petsamo, the recent research interest in Finnish colonialism connects to the surge of the Arctic Region

<sup>1</sup> All translations into English are by Peter Stadius.

as a new policy priority area. This applies both to historical research and present-day policymaking. The Norwegian-Russian initiative of conceptualizing and branding the Barents Region was taken in 1997. In 2015, this newly defined Arctic region had its first comprehensive history published (Elenius 2015). In Finland, the work of Maria Lähteenmäki has added to our historical knowledge about the Finnish Arctic. It is symptomatic that this new research often is connected to new policy interests. Lähteenmäki's most recent study, *Footprints in the Snow: The Long History of Arctic Finland*, was commissioned and published by the Prime Minister's Office (Lähteenmäki 2017). This work clearly filled a gap in Finnish historiography, but, at the same time, the book project exemplifies state agency in writing Finland's Arctic history, which has also been subject to recent criticism suggesting that it involves a justification of state action (Lehtola 2015, 26).

### **The Greater Finland Ideology and the Gaze on Petsamo**

When the area of Petsamo was given to Finland in 1920, the general attitude was that this was historically justified, albeit not in itself enough to follow the Wilsonian principle of national and cultural-territorial unity. When Finland had become an administrative unit in 1809 with the creation of the Grand Duchy under Russian supremacy, Finland got its own Lapland, a region that had not previously been considered part of the spatial conception of Finland. In the eighteenth century, this spatial conception largely just meant the eastern part of the realm, but Lapland itself was considered a northernmost part of "Sweden," or at least not part of "Finland." But the increasing spontaneous migration of Finnish-speaking subjects to the Arctic Ocean shore from the 1860s onward, was followed by expansionist strategies on the part of the Finnish authorities. The most visible outcome of this was the partial financing by the Finnish autonomous government of a road project on the Russian side of the border toward the Arctic Ocean. This was later taken as part of a promise by Emperor Alexander II (reign 1855–81) to reward Finland with an access to the Arctic Ocean. This was also connected to minor territorial concession on the Karelian Isthmus in 1863 involving a Russian rifle factory. It was in this spirit that many leading Finnish politicians saw the acquisition of Petsamo as a proper result (Lähteenmäki 2017, 75). Most voices raised even saw the new acquisition as being rather small, and that Finland actually had a right to much larger territories in the north. One backdrop to the story is that of two campaigns to the Petsamo area during the years of the so-called Kindred Nations Wars, when government-supported paramilitary troops sought to establish a Finnish presence beyond the established borders in the east. The first expedition, led by Thorsten Renvall and Onni Laitinen, came in the spring of 1918 during the last weeks of the Finnish Civil War, but was thrown back after a clash with British military intervention troops. After the withdrawal of allied troops, a second campaign, under Major Kurt Martti Wallenius,

occupied Petsamo for one month early in 1920, only to be pushed back by a Bolshevik intervention in late March.

The not-entirely-convincing historical claims for Petsamo's exclusive Finnishness had to be argued for. In his 1918 pamphlet *Suomi Jäämerellä* (Finland at the Arctic Ocean), the politician—and future member of the Finnish Tartu Peace Treaty delegation—Väinö Voionmaa introduces the reader to the idea of past maltreatment of Finnish interests in the north. He states that, “Our entire people, with no exceptions among its many layers, are unanimous in its opinion, that now is the moment for Finland to get access to the Arctic Ocean, from which our country has, through adverse faith and against all sense of justice, been closed from” (Voionmaa 1918, 7). A historian and prominent Social Democrat politician, Voionmaa was a leading ideological promoter of the idea of a “Finnish Tribal Area”—*heimoaalue*—which in the north extended to areas in Sweden, Norway, and Russia, including the whole Kola Peninsula. He had been influenced by August Wilhelm Ervasti and Emil von Qvanten, who in the mid-1800s were among the first to define a Finnish territory larger than that stipulated by the Peace of 1809 (Lähteenmäki 2014, 34). Alongside a national tradition of claiming ownership to Petsamo, the development of geopolitics as an academic discipline had a visible impact. It is well documented that Voionmaa was inspired by the Swede Rudolf Kjellén, who had coined the notion of geopolitics, and who saw national expansion not as a brutal and aggressive, but rather as a natural and organic drive in each nation to preserve itself (Lähteenmäki 2014, 106). The idea to conceive of the state as an organic actor was based on the mainly German school of geopolitics, which parted from the “laws” developed by Friedrich Ratzel justifying territorial expansion. This German school did not make any clear distinction between overseas colonialism and territorial expansion in the neighboring region. Geographer Karl Haushofer developed these ideas further, including quite elaborate calculations of the costs and benefits of colonial possession (O’Loughlin and van der Wusten 1990, 2). Very similar ideas are presented in the Finnish texts on Petsamo, an obvious consequence of the close contacts Finnish scholars had to the German academic world at the time.

This discourse of a historically righteous claim of an Arctic corridor for Finland was then repeated through the following decades. Johan Evert Rosberg, professor of geography at the University of Helsinki, expressed this claim in 1919 before the Tartu conference when he stated that, “No Peace Congress can take Petsamo away from us. Our claims are justified” (Rosberg 1919, 5). In the first comprehensive Finnish-language guide to Petsamo, published in 1921, the authors Eero Lampio and Lauri Hannikainen devoted a chapter to explaining the systematic Finnish strategy to access the Arctic Ocean and to annex Petsamo. Geography, nation, and race are connected in a justification for a Finnish Petsamo. Paatsjoki, Näätäinjoki, and Uutuanjoki are listed as three Finnish rivers flowing into the Arctic Ocean, “constituting a strong natural bond between

Finland and the Arctic Ocean.” The entire settlement history is interpreted through the idea that the Finns, or “the Carelian race,” had inhabited the region by the twelfth century, eventually provoking counteractions by the neighbors, “mainly the Norwegians.” All later settlement policy and the establishment of towns was seen as part of an unfortunate process that “eventually moved the Finnish race from power, giving way to Norway and Russia” (Lampio and Hannikainen 1921, 64–65).

The guide thoroughly narrates all the events disfavoring the Finnish-claimed natural right to an Arctic Ocean coast up until independence. Among the defenders and promoters of the Finnish cause, Reverend A. W. Ervasti’s work from 1884, *Suomalaiset Jäämeren rannalla* (The Finns on the Arctic Ocean’s shore) is especially given canonical status in both articulating the Finnish claims and justifying Finnish supremacy. Ervasti was often cited as the first to suggest that the most favorable solution would be to annex the Russian shore—*Ryssänranta*—to the Grand Duchy (Ervasti 1884, 148). This would, according to Lampio and Hannikainen (1921), assure the rights of the local Finns and erase the urge to emigrate overseas (73). These ideas were then promoted by a considerable number of influential scholars, politicians, and others, setting a specific agenda in the public discourse in Finland during the 1920s and 1930s. One such example is Sulo-Weikko Pekkola, who wrote in 1930, concerning Petsamo and the Finnish-speaking irredenta population at large, how Finland had been, “closed out, from its own tribe” (Pekkola 1930, 7).

The idea of a Greater Finland, at the time a very influential conception of a nation bigger than the borders of the young republic, is essential for understanding the racialization and colonialist dimension of the narratives regarding Petsamo. There were also other, less boisterous and chauvinist attitudes toward this northernmost part of Finland, but it remains clear that an expansionist Greater Finland ideology was an essential part of a future-oriented national discourse. This discourse suggested a state of competition with the bordering states Norway, Soviet Russia, and Sweden. That was the main context for drawing up a strategy to make Petsamo Finnish and to make use of that area for the young nation’s modernization project.

### **The Colonialist Capacity**

The acquisition of Petsamo both activated and spatially located many future-oriented questions of the time. One was that of the capacity of the Finnish nation, and the Finns, to be a successful colonizer and agent of supremacy rule in an area considered colonial. This question and concern of national capacity was closely connected to that of modernity and what could be called national eugenics, a broad epistemic discourse on the total capacity and aptness of a nation. Marius Turda (2010) has noted that eugenics was “a social and cultural philosophy of identity predicated upon modern concepts of purification and rejuvenation of both the human body and the larger national community” (1). If Finland were to

survive as a nation—even as many bigger powers doubted the survival of the newly established smaller nations in Europe—it had to show strength and aptness in all sectors that marked a successful modern nation, such as science, education, industry, military, population quality, and urbanization. With the emerging Olympic movement, sports became a metaphor for the physical capacity and competitiveness of every nation, and Finland did remarkably well there. However, the capacity for warfare, national defense, and colonialist expansion was a far more decisive arena.

Ernst Lampén (1921), author and tourism promoter, voiced this imperative for the Finnish nation to step up and take on the challenge to compete in the global colonial race, pointing to the fact that the Finns now had reached a big ocean and were no longer confined only to its Kalevalan inland-lake landscape but had to accept a new mental challenge of the “newest Finland.” This meant that Finland needed to acquire the “spirit of the Arctic Ocean [. . .] unknown and strange to us Finns” (238). Lampén saw this process in terms of a collective eugenic leap forward:

Maybe the spirit of the Arctic Ocean will preserve us from turning soft and will provide a long life for our nation. The ice will conserve the flesh from putrefaction, and maybe the Arctic Ocean will preserve the national spirit from decay as well. (Lampén 1921, 238–39)

Lampén is bewildered by this new Arctic Eldorado for the thrifty, strong, fearless, and capable Finns to conquer (Lampén 1921, 5–6). Many were those who, along with Lampén, continued to be attracted to this new horizon, seeing it as a “Nordic Klondyke” (Engman 2009b, 8; Ericsson 2006). Others, like Jaakko Ikola (1924), imagined Petsamo as the “Sampo sung of by the ancient rune singers, a real mill of riches” (213). Axel Björklöf, a sea captain and one of the chief executives of the Petsamo OY company, was often quoted in the press as saying that the Finns were the only ones capable of developing this region (Heikkilä 2017, 11). At the same time, there was a general concern about the nation’s capacity to establish a modern Finnish presence in the area. The press reported that many Finnish-speaking subjects actually had voiced a preference after 1920 to move to the Norwegian side of the border since it apparently provided for better conditions of life. This controversial issue developed into a concrete problem when the inhabitants in Paatsjoki village arranged a referendum which ended in a petition to be incorporated into Norway (Törnqvist 1998, 35). In Salmijärvi, a similar petition had been voiced (Heikkilä 2017, 11).

The economic prospects were many, ranging from large-scale ocean fishing to mining prospects. Väinö Voionmaa had already suggested in 1918 that the obvious sources of riches in future Finnish Petsamo would be ocean fishing and mining. He felt that it was unforgivable that the Finns had not invested more effort in following the examples



of Sweden and Norway concerning Arctic mining (Voionomaa 1918, 106–10). Concerning fishing, both state-driven and private initiatives to establish Finnish industries failed to materialize in the long run (Ekström Söderlund 2009, 131; Nordström 2009, 140). The state-financed venture Oy Petsamo Ab (Petsamo Limited) was established in 1921 for fishing and general provision of goods in Petsamo, but it never became profitable nor trusted by the locals. This was partially the result of misconduct by the above-mentioned Björklöf and his closest men, and the venture was closed down in 1929 (Taskila 1980, 11–12). The lack of sufficient knowledge, investments, and effective management meant that the Finns were not able to compete with the Norwegians.

The prospect of minerals and other capital-yielding endeavors were often articulated in a wishful but cautious fashion. Signs of abundant mineral ore had been observed in the late nineteenth century. However, it was not clear if the findings would be rich enough to permit profitable mining. Early efforts were rather concentrated on establishing Finnish small farms and thus colonizing Petsamo by settlement. Mining prospects were by many not seen as a base for a realist policy, and many, such as J. E. Rosberg (1919), opted for “rational and productive agriculture,” as the only viable option for developing Petsamo into a Finnish area (102). This both national-cultural and cautious approach of relying on the Finnish farmer was also promoted by both Östen Elfving and Väinö Tanner. Elfving, chair of the Board of Homesteading, was commissioned in 1923 by the Ministry of Agriculture to visit Petsamo and write a report on the operations of the Petsamo Limited, but also to propose general measures to develop economic life in Petsamo. Elfving (1924) found large parts of the lower Petsamo lands, such as Salmijärvi and Höyhenjärvi, suitable for a major settlement action. He refers to how the expedition had monitored and measured a seemingly empty space, “of kilometers-wide marshlands apt for cultivation” (83).

Väinö Tanner, state geologist in charge of the commission to undertake investigations on the true scope of the mineral ore in Petsamo between the years 1924 and 1931, represents the same national-modern approach.<sup>2</sup> In his 1927 report, *Voidaanko Petsamon aluetta käyttää maan hyödyksi: Keinoja ja tarkoituseriä?* (Can the area of Petsamo be used for the benefit of the country: Means and goals?), Tanner, in the capacity of state geologist, did not advocate large-scale mining, but he rather warned about the risks of such a venture. Only in 1935 was a nickel-mine project finally initiated with the Canadian INCO as concession holder, and the economically very promising mining venture started production in 1939. It never reached full capacity because of the war. By far, this was the largest industrial project in Petsamo during the Finnish era of 1920 to 1944. For Tanner, the question of intensified colonization by Finnish settlers, and thus the nationalization of Petsamo, seems to have been far

---

2 The geologist and geographer Väinö Tanner (1881–1948) is not to be confused with the Social Democratic politician Väinö Tanner (1881–1966).

more important. Tanner felt that Petsamo mentally had the position of a colony in the Finnish mindset, even if legally it was as much a part of the country as any other region. He advocated that its resources should be estimated according to “colonial principles” (Tanner 1927, 6). These colonial principles were, in the mind of Tanner, more national than capitalist. Although a state geologist, Tanner mainly advocated settlement and the development of farming and forestry. His main concern seems to have been the establishment of Finnish peasant culture in the region.

This same concern was visible in Jalmar Castrén’s railroad report published in 1923. The report strongly advocated for policies that would give incentives for families, not just single men, to settle in Petsamo and Lapland (Castrén 1923, 14). The possibility of acquiring forest, pasture, and arable land with state subsidy was strongly advocated, and the promotion of permanent settler families was an obvious step in the direction of creating a strong Finnish presence. The prospect of profit seems to have been less imperative than the idea of making Petsamo Finnish. Tanner, for his part, did not see Petsamo as primarily a financial burden in need of the eternal support of the government. Instead he felt that if “somewhat enlightened and strong” Finnish farmers would settle, there would be hope that this political victory eventually would also be an economic success (Tanner 1927, 112). The importance of establishing a Finnish farming society was present in most reports from the early 1920s (Heikkilä 2017, 13).

Tanner had faith in Finnish agricultural know-how, and he saw the possibility of advancing a Finnish presence in multiple symbolic ways. He promoted the “northern Finnish breed of cows, which are replacing the others in Finnmark” (Tanner 1927, 85). He even promoted traditional tar burning, and suggested reforestation projects so that the Finnish farmer would settle in a landscape more proper for an authentic Finnish peasant culture:

I suppose that we can be of the same opinion that a genuine Finnish mode of agriculture does not find itself comfortable outside the pine forest region. The settlement culture of the Finns and their health and aesthetic wellbeing requires almost as a necessity to have pine forest nearby [. . .]. If we admit that the region will be best assimilated to the State [*valtakunta*] by the peasant culture of ours, we have to provide the comfort and, may we say, necessity of: the pine forest. (Tanner 1927, 8)

Tanner’s concern with making Petsamo the home for Finnish model citizens was also connected to the specific Finnish domestic situation after the Civil War of 1918. He was afraid that Petsamo would turn into a reckless Eldorado, hosting rootless proletarian elements, “between the two prominent communist agitation cradles, Kirkenes and Murmansk”

(Tanner 1927, 24). A responsible state-monitored settlement policy, promoting patriotic self-control among the settlers, was the first priority:

In Petsamo it is as important to cultivate the population material as it is to cultivate the land. The living conditions in this wilderness have to develop in a social and civilized way so that the new settlers can feel that they belong to this new environment. (Tanner 1927, 96)

For Tanner, the Finnish enlightened classes—*suomalainen sivistisyhteiskunta*—were to move their positions to the Arctic Ocean shore, and stay there firmly, preserving the ideals and knowledge inherited from earlier generations of nation-builders. Even if, as will be shown later, Tanner took a considerable interest in the Skolt culture, it was not considered to be nearly on the same level as Finnish culture, as defined by him. If “somewhat enlightened and strong” people among Finnish settlers would arrive here, there was hope that this “political victory” would also be an economic success (Tanner 1927, 112). Östen Elfving ended his report expressing the view that Petsamo could not be developed rapidly by the present inhabitants. Settlement from other parts of Finland was crucial, and the challenge was to make the local community understand that:

[. . .] its own interest demands development as much in spiritual as in economic life, and that they do not stand a chance of reaching economic welfare and of standing in the competition against the neighboring countries unless they do not themselves rise to better their situation. (Elfving 1924, 135)

By the end of the 1930s, 600 new settlement homes had been established by Finnish small farmers. This meant that the proportion of other ethnic elements, such as the Skolt Sami, Norwegians, Russians, and Komi, became subordinated to the Finnish national element from a local population perspective as well. As Lähtenmäki has shown, this policy was part of Finnish borderland regional politics (2001, 563–66). Improving farming conditions, communication, and general life conditions in these contested areas became pivotal. The aim was to strengthen that national spirit and cultural presence, and the thinking around the whole border region was visibly connected to the idea of a Greater Finland. Creating conditions for successful colonization through farming seems to have been the natural first step in the Finnish mindset. This perhaps limited visionary horizon seems to have been rooted in a realist national thinking that was implemented even if the conditions for successful farming were not very good in Petsamo.



**“Make Finland Great! A Railroad to the Arctic Ocean!”**

In the debate about how to develop, colonize, and make economic use of Petsamo, the idea of a railway to the Arctic Ocean shore was constantly mentioned. It was both a concrete and symbolic project for the Finnish capacity to bring modernity to the Arctic and to compete with its neighbors. The railroad was never built, but, as a project idea, it existed throughout the whole period of the Finnish presence in Petsamo. The various articulations of the need for and benefits of a railway, from state commission reports to letters to newspaper editors and even novels, show the common idea and debate about the incorporation of Petsamo and the Arctic Ocean into a new, modern, and wider concept of Finland. The completion of the Murmansk railroad, reaching to the Arctic Ocean on the Russian side in 1916, sparked this interest. Already in 1917, a first report on the conditions for an Arctic coastal traffic infrastructure had been commissioned by the Senate. Väinö Voionmaa, head of the transport department of the Senate, was the key initiator of this new direction (Lähteenmäki 2017, 84). In 1919, even before Petsamo was officially part of Finland, J. E. Rosberg continued this agenda in the preface of his book *Petsamon maa: Suomen alue Jäämeren rannalla* (The Petsamo land: Finland's area at the Arctic Ocean shore). Finland had to build a proper harbor immediately, and hastily finish the entire length of the road connecting Petsamo with the rest of Finland, “and then as soon as possible that [road] would be replaced by a railway” (Rosberg 1919, 5).

In February 1921, the Finnish government commissioned Jalmar Castrén, professor at the Polytechnical Institute in Helsinki, influential politician, and future head of the National Railroad Company, to investigate the prospect of building a railway to Petsamo. This was a reaction to two concrete proposals for a railroad, one presented to the parliament in 1918 and another to the Transport Commission in 1920 (Lähteenmäki 2017, 85). Castrén would lead an expedition to Petsamo the same summer, with the task of examining the terrain for possible railway construction. This was a consequence of an intensive debate on the necessity of the railroad voiced in the press ever since Petsamo became Finnish. As in the case of Tanner's estimations for Petsamo's utility for the Finnish nation, Jalmar Castrén's report also would prove a disappointment for the most active visions of how to make Petsamo a showcase for Finnish colonial capacity. The report rejected a Petsamo railway project as too expensive. This was the most significant outcome of the pragmatic and realistic attitude toward Petsamo (together with the incompetence to realize the scope of the nickel-ore prospect) in Finnish inter-war domestic politics, and Castrén is, along with Tanner, a prominent representative of this stand. Castrén was obviously in favor of the railroad project as an idea, but felt that it was economically unrealistic. Östen Elfving shared this ambiguity between economic calculation and nationalistic fervor:

The Petsamo-Ivalo railroad, as easy as it is right now to show it unprofitable economically, can, however, not be bypassed if there is still a will to bring Finland into full strength on the Arctic Ocean shores. (Elfving 1924, 119)

The question of a railway would reappear only in the late 1930s, but those plans were cut short by the war. As Katja-Leena Heikkilä has shown, the railway question was subject to editorials, columns, and letters to the editor during the early 1920s in both local Lapland newspapers and the nationwide press (Heikkilä 2017, 40–53). The acquisition of Petsamo in 1920 generated an immediate interest among leading politicians, both on a municipal and a national level, to start lobbying for major improvements to the transportation infrastructure in the northernmost parts of Finland. The railroad as the main infrastructure project for Petsamo was thus rapidly established, and many were those who spoke in favor of connecting the rest of Finland more closely to its northernmost region.

Among the many positive voices, Arthur Aspelin urged the Finnish state to seize the moment at all costs, publishing an article in the *Kaleva* newspaper of his home town Oulu. Aspelin, who would be elected to the Finnish parliament the following year, wanted to spur enthusiasm:

You, who are guiding the country, start your work! Send an enthusiastic speaker to every village, post giant posters on every wall, where a train is seen carrying the Finnish flag high, crossing the mountains to reach the rich shores of the Arctic Ocean, and where flaming letters proclaim: Make Finland great! A railroad to the Arctic Ocean! (Heikkilä 2017, 43)

Aspelin envisioned a campaign for selling shares in a railroad venture. As a member of the conservative and nationalist coalition party, he urged a capitalist approach to developing the northernmost territories of Finland. He represented the position of the politically influential groups that boasted both a fierce anti-communism and a nationalistic, competitive attitude toward the border neighbors of Norway and Sweden, while at the same time apparently idolizing the United States as the foremost model for modern development. There was an apparent vision for how the young and—in the Civil War, victorious—white, potent, and expansive Finland would enter the race for the Arctic. The whole ideology surrounding the acquisition of Petsamo connected to the idea of a competitive sense of developing Finland in an expansive fashion. As such, it was part of the international negotiations for position in the Arctic (Avango 2013). The targeted opponents and enemies were, however, not only external, but also internal. Communist agitators and non-Finnish ethnic elements, ranging from the Swedish-speaking upper class to Russian monks and Sami people, were understood to be in need of a national cultural correction (Stadius 2016, 162–63).

### **A Novel: A Heroic Struggle for an Arctic Railroad**

The idea of a Petsamo rail connection had all the elements of showing national strength and technological supremacy over the harsh conditions of the Arctic. A fine example of this mode of thinking is the novel *Petsamon rata: Isänmaallinen unelma* (The Petsamo railroad: A patriotic dream), by Jalmari Kara, published in 1921. The heroic, patriotic rhetoric in Kara's novel was a civilian adaption of the military science-fiction genre, introduced in Finland in the aftermath of the Civil War. Jalmari Kara was an ardent advocate of the Greater Finland idea. Kara, who had fennicised his name from Forsström, wrote the novel under the pen name Kapteeni Teräs (Captain Steel), fitting for his activist agenda. After finishing his engineering studies in Helsinki, where Jalmar Castrén was one of his teachers, he enrolled as a *Jäger*, that is, one of the 200 young Finnish men who, during the First World War, clandestinely left Finland for Germany in order to be trained as soldiers in opposition to Russian authority.

The Petsamo railroad novel is a nationalist utopian narrative about how the Finns manage against all odds to build a railroad to Petsamo. The reader is introduced to a group of a half-dozen engineers with seemingly extraordinary qualities. It is hinted that many of them have been enrolled as *Jägers* and fought in the Kindred Wars (*heimosodat*) in various Finnish irredenta regions. Some of them have earned a fortune on patent incomes and now want to offer their services to their fatherland. In the opening scene, the consortium leader Antti Jäkälä, engineer, businessman, and millionaire, offers the minister of industry and trade an extraordinary deal. The newly established Osakeyhtiö Petsamo (Petsamo Ltd.) offers to build a railway to Petsamo in five years and then hand it over free of charge to the state. In addition, they promise to modernize agricultural production in Petsamo, making the vast peat marshlands suitable for cultivation. In order to achieve this, they ask for the right to explore a mining field for ten years, after which the mine would be handed over to the state with no compensation. The written offer includes a statement that this group acts purely out of patriotic idealism. This supreme patriotic idealism is similar to the extreme sacrifice for one's country in war, and the narrative evolves much as a battle operation would.

The obvious hint toward the real Petsamo OY venture is one of many barely concealed allusions to real political life in Finland connected to the Petsamo question. The novel presents an activist fantasy of how everything would evolve as a most successful Finnish colonization of Arctic Petsamo, with the help of knowledge, bravery, and a patriotic sense of sacrifice. In this constellation, the governmental institutions are depicted as slow, hesitating, and lacking the energy to start major projects. But the minister of transportation has a clear vision of where to find relief for the economic hardships the poor nation is suffering: "Its riches probably are hidden in the northern parts, in the woods, the hills and mountains, in the

marshlands, but they are not accessible and the Ministry of Transportation has no money” (Kara 1921, 19–20).

As in war science fiction, where guns are bigger and better than anybody has seen before, the railroad is also conceptualized as a major technological advancement. The projected railroad is a sensational electric monorail construction. Jäkälä’s companion, Pekka Johansson, educated in Chicago, was, together with Jäkälä, the engineering mastermind behind this patented solution. This monorail, not entirely utopian since monorails had been developed in smaller scale in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, was not a regular and expected solution, especially not in Arctic conditions. But electrification was also a true sign of modernity, and the real-life electrification in 1915 of part of the highly strategic Swedish-Norwegian Malmbanan railroad between Luleå and Narvik actually is mentioned in the novel, where Jäkälä is said to have supervised some repair work on the electrified section between Kiruna and Riksgränsen (Kara 1921, 26).

The agricultural modernization project in the novel was based on a special gopher plow, developed by the ‘cowboy engineer’ Laakso, managing underground drainage of the wet marshlands. All technical innovations, from gyroscopic trains to hydropower plants are described in detail with measurements and capacity, adding to a gospel of technology. Technological prowess is a big factor in the projected victory over nature, communist political opponents, and mischievous neighboring nations, such as the Norwegians and the Swedes. The road to success is halted by interrupting forces, such as harsh winter weather and communist agitation amidst the workers, and the virtues and weaknesses in every person are tested. Fatherland and martial camaraderie is stronger than anything else and worth every sacrifice. The extraordinary virtues and sense of duty of the protagonists bring the whole project to a triumphant end. The railroad is finally handed over on time to the president of the republic in a pompous and patriotic ceremony. The mastery of technology and even world-leading innovations are paired with the main heroic character’s ease to dominate in every sense. Petsamo is the Finnish frontier, and the heroes in the novel echo an admiration for similar agency in the recent history of the United States.

In one scene, where Antti Jäkälä thanks those who, despite cold and starvation, managed to overcome an extreme snowstorm, he exclaims, “This is Finnish workmanship” (Kara 1921, 143). The self-image, or auto-stereotype, of Finnishness, be it engineers or workers, is actively constructed by Kara. Petsamo and its extreme conditions become the semi-alien space, characteristic of science fiction, for this construction. The revelation of national virtues and the rejection of defects, whether it be communism or bureaucratic softness and lack of vitality, are at the heart of this active construction of a new and modern, entrepreneurial, martial, masculine, and patriotic Finnish Man. This man is modern, and he is suited for any futuristic project as any other nationality on the globe.



These are the inner borders while the outer, specifically spatial, borders for defining the essence of Finnishness are to be found in a pathological Russophobia and a hostile tone toward both Sweden and Norway. Symptomatically, there is not a single reference to Sami people or culture in Petsamo, as the area is portrayed as a virtually empty frontier for Finnish vitality and modernity.

### **The Sami Question**

The fairly abundant literature on how to develop Petsamo in a colonial fashion, obviously in one or another way touches upon the theme of the indigenous Skolt Sami population. This Sami group of Orthodox Christians was often seen as the most exotic and least developed among the different Sami groups in Lapland. The new border established in 1920 meant that their traditional seasonal movements were disturbed since their traditional living area now was spread over three different nations: Norway, Finland, and Russia. This constituted a considerable threat to their traditional ways of subsistence, based on fishing, hunting, and reindeer herding. The traditional *siidalsijdds* organization, on which their nomadic seasonal movement was based, fell into a crisis (Lehtola 2018, 56). The Skolts became a minority in their own home, as Finnish settlement was intensified. During the Finnish period from 1920 to 1944, efforts to protect this group were initiated to some degree, but they were overshadowed by the general ambitions to make Petsamo part of Finland and all the modernization measures that this implied. When Petsamo was lost in 1944, a process began to move most of the Skolt community to the Finnish side, and only in 1949 was a large part of the Skolt community in Petsamo installed in the Inari Lake region in the northeastern parts of present-day Finland (Lehtola 2018, 64).

The Skolts were sometimes referred to as “Russian Lapps” (Paulaharju 1921, 5). They had been christened by Russian Orthodox mission, a factor that made them stand out among the entire Sami population in the north. The attitude toward the Sami in general, and Skolt Sami in particular, in this source material, can be divided in three main discourses. First, there is the more or less total absence of the Sami in the description of Petsamo. This can be labeled according to what has been coined “the sociology of absence.” Second, there is the acknowledgement of the Sami presence combined with a certain expression of sympathy. However, this stand usually embraces the idea of the Sami being a population element doomed to perish under modern development and from stronger national racial elements taking over their territory. This image can be called cultural-eugenic. Third, there is a discourse with a degree of understanding for the Skolt Sami culture and the need to somehow preserve it at least in parts. This strand of thought is a Lappology discourse on the Skolt Sami of Petsamo, referring to the objectification connected to these actions, and still void of the idea of proper agency for the Sami themselves. Lappology



is to be distinguished from modern Sami studies (Lehtola 2017, 83). The materials here analyzed all represent a majority perspective.

The sociology of absences, as coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, refers to the different processes through which hegemonic criteria of rationality and efficiency produce non-existence and disqualification of certain groups, rendering them invisible, unintelligible, or irreversibly discarded (Sousa Santos 2016, 19). This approach is cultural and extends the notion of colonialism with regard to an institutional approach, seeing the cultural and political hierarchical asymmetries as structural. In those cases when Petsamo is described as an area where the Skolt Sami are absent, we find a future-oriented, scientific, and encyclopedic gaze. In the works presenting Petsamo and the Petsamo question, Voionmaa (1918), Puustinen (1922), and Lampio and Hannikainen (1921) display this approach. They all start by describing the land and the fact that this land is now part of Finland. The description's focus is on the potential riches, the use which this land might bring, and the challenges posed by the present state of affairs. Only after having presented flora and fauna, something brief is said about the local Sami population.

In Viljo Puustinen's (1922) work on Lapland and Petsamo, the reader has to wait to the last page of this sixty-six-page-long pamphlet, where the author, "as a side note briefly mention[s] his impressions of them." By "them," Puustinen refers to "The Lapps," whom he finds to be on a lower level of development and degenerated by an exaggerated sex drive and alcoholism. The only reason for "showing care for the Lapps is that Lapps do not live only in Finland, but also in northern Sweden, northern Norway, and northern Russia, and that our responsibility is actually to start defending the rights of all Lapps" (Puustinen 1922, 66). This somewhat paradoxical final twist raises questions. Why is Puustinen advocating protection while at the same time explicitly labeling the Sami as racially inferior (he is speaking about the Sami in general, not the Skolts in particular)? He does not elaborate this further, but apparently he saw an incentive for siding with the cause of the Sami population, in order to avoid their taking a Norwegian-friendly approach as a consequence of indifference or maltreatment from Finnish authorities (Lehtola 2012, 517).

The narrative of absence is usually part of a systematic and encyclopedic genre, where Petsamo is presented as numbers and facts. Territory, flora, and fauna are listed, and the Skolt Sami are situated within this order, and not as a vital agent of historical development. In Lampio and Hannikainen's (1921) Petsamo guide, the Skolts are mentioned briefly in connection to reindeer herding, but when presenting Petsamo's history, they are absent (64–77). This encyclopedic approach is also produced, as in Rosberg, in combination with what here is called a cultural-eugenic discourse. J. E. Rosberg's (1919) in-many-ways-pioneering book on Petsamo places the Skolt Sami in a brief section in the end, mostly referring to second-hand information from the Norwegian scholar A. B. Wessel. Besides

depicting their nomadic life-style, traditional negative stereotypes—familiar from travelogues of earlier centuries—are on display: “Their faces are usually ugly with broad noses and pouting mouths, and the voice is guttural, as if they would have destroyed it shouting” (Rosberg 1919, 98).

The mix between a narrative of absence and that of a cultural-eugenic dismissal of the Sami is also present in Ernst Lampén’s (1921) depiction. His primary approach is to list the main tourist attractions: the mountains, the fjords, and the ocean. However, Skolt Sami named by name are presented and cited in his travel depiction. The young porter Sammeli Morottaja is described as humming tunes from continental operettas, and the reader is told about his childhood as part of a Skolt Sami family on display in European zoological parks (Lampén 1921, 78). Lampén shows great sympathy toward this people, but no real engagement for their rights. This is also the stand of Väinö Voionmaa, who saw little hope for the Skolts to adapt to modern life. He saw that “European culture” had entered life at the Arctic Ocean shore, leaving “the Arctic indigenous people more and more marginalized” (Voionmaa 1918, 25). According to him, the Skolts were especially subject to future extinction since they seemed to represent the lowest cast also among all the Sami: “The most deplorable creature in the Arctic Ocean world seem to be the human. [. . .] [T]heir population has belonged to the lowest of nations” (Voionmaa 1918, 25). In Voionmaa, the Sami do not receive much space for mention, and it is telling that the cover of his book portrays a map of Finland and its border regions, where only national borders and major railroads are marked. The cultural-eugenic stand dominates the Petsamo texts here analyzed. Ilmari Turja, author, journalist, and well-known Finnish nationalist activist, made a trip to the Arctic Ocean region in 1928, with the exclusive aim to examine conditions for the Finnish-speaking groups. For him, “the Lapps manage unusually poorly in the hard challenges of today’s world. He is too slow, too stupid, and also too modest and friendly” (Turja 1928, 54). For Turja, the Skolts were on the level of children, “and from everything you get the impression that the Lapp nation will die out quite soon” (70). Examples of a similar nature abound, and these examples serve to show the general attitude toward the Skolt Sami in particular, and the Sami in general. One might add that the Skolt Samis were often referred to as the least-developed population within the Sami peoples. They awoke sympathies, or at least interest through their exoticness, but were clearly not seen as part of the Finnish national colonization project in the far north. The gradual extinction of Sami society was accepted since the Skolt culture had been dismissed as being on a lower level racially and culturally. Their Russian Orthodox religion and generally held opinion of being a “Russian mix” apparently contributed to this. From here on, there was a moral justification for implementing a complete Finnish-national program (Törnqvist 1998, 94).

As a weak but still traceable counter-balance to the colonial supremacist attitude is that which can be denominated a Lappology view on the

Petsamo Skolt Sami. This meant a humane interest in the Skolt culture and a willingness to, in some ways, defend this group and its right to its own culture and to its survival (Nyyssönen and Lehtola 2017, 50–51). Among the many travel depictions from Petsamo, the composer, musicologist, and folklore collector Armas Launis stands out as a defender of indigenous Sami culture. In his book *Kaipauksieni maa* (The land of my longing) from 1922, Launis rejects the plans to build a road to Petsamo and any other extraction of natural resources. For him, the local Sami culture and its essence is far more important. Launis also stands out for using the name “Saamemaa,” *Sami Land* (Launis 1922, 74). Before him, this concept had only been used by the ethnographic documentarist Samuli Paulaharju, who visited the region in 1914 and published a study on the Skolts in 1921. As did Launis, he valued the Skolt oral literary tradition highly and found its documentation important. However, at the same time, he was realistic about the fact that eventually the Skolts would die as a nation, and with it their “strange language” as well (Paulaharju 1921, 198). This Lappology discourse, present in Launis and Paulaharju, gives a positive value to the Sami culture, but does not conceive the idea of participatory agency for the Sami.

Curiously enough, state geologist Väinö Tanner was a central figure among those showing both interest and, apparently, some understanding for the Skolt Sami. Tanner apparently became fascinated with the Skolts while spending numerous summers in the area, and he ended up publishing a scientifically valid anthropological study on the seasonal nomadic life connected to the Siida institution. The Swedish-language study, *Antropogeografiska studier inom Petsamo-området*, published in 1929, contributed valuable information about the social order and the group’s relationship to nature, something that would remain invisible for most other Finnish observers. Tanner reasoned that there were two possible ways for the Sami to survive. The new settlers would develop farming in the lowlands, and some of the Sami would adapt to this style of life, while others would continue their centuries-old reindeer herding in the highlands under protection of established reserves. Tanner and especially the more radical Karl Nickul became pioneer defenders of the Sami culture against the harshest nationalist modernization opinions. Of these two, Tanner was more prone to combine his Sami interest with a firm belief in Finnish settlement modernity as a recommendable project, and thus appear as contradictory in his views (Nyyssönen 2017, 143). Nickul, a Civil War veteran who had become a pacifist, proposed in the 1930s that a protected zone for the Skolt Sami be established in the village of Suonikylä, a part that, around 1930, had not yet been affected by the increasing Finnish settlement brought about by the settlement law of 1925. The idea enjoyed some support, but when the matter was transferred into the hands of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1935, the initiative was sidestepped in favor of an expansive agricultural and settlement policy (Lehtola 2012). As Lähteenmäki (2001) has shown, this line of thought was attached to

Finnish borderland regional politics (563–66). These border and frontier areas were to receive special attention in the nation-building process. This meant the consolidation of a policy attitude favoring national interests as defined through a Finnishness based on a Lutheran agricultural peasant society.

### **Petsamo: A Case of Finnish Colonialism?**

In the light of the texts analyzed in this article, a Finnish colonialist discourse can clearly be traced concerning Petsamo during the period of 1920 to 1940. This discourse is not exclusive, but it is still dominant. As a discourse, it is nestled into various forms of textual documents, in this case, mostly informative presentations regarding Petsamo and pamphlets suggesting future policies for the region. This theme connects to a wider discussion of the colonialist history of the Finnish nation. Some previous voices have been raised in this question, but the debate is as of now still open, at least concerning the Sami. A brief summary of this debate presents us with diverging ideas on the matter. The first radical take on the Finnish Sami history was that of historian Kyösti Julku, who, in the late 1960s, claimed that this indigenous group had been subject to genocide (Lehtola 2015, 24). This claim has not been visibly supported by later research, but as Veli-Pekka Lehtola has shown, the definition of a colonial situation was confirmed by several scholars, including the Swedish Latin America specialist Magnus Mörner, who in the 1970s made comparisons between indigenous people in that region and in Lapland (Mörner 1980). Lehtola has emerged as one of the most vocal researchers on proposing a colonialist interpretation of the history of the Sami in Finland. The critique against this stand has focused on the observation that Sami groups and individuals were not always just silent victims, but that they exercised agency, acted rationally from their own perspective, and also contributed to various forms of cultural hybridization. Jouko Vahtola and Matti Enbuske (Vahtola 1991; Lehtola 2015, 24) have criticized the post-colonial approach of Lehtola and others for using present-day criteria for past events. Enbuske has rejected the idea of peasant settlement having in any major way contributed to an invasion of Sami lands in northernmost Finland (Enbuske 2012). Also Maria Lähteenmäki has questioned this colonialist interpretation by showing that an archival survey of state authority records does not show any signs of a colonialist policy. She rejects “extremist interpretation of the militant Saami Studies of the 1990s,” alluding to the works of Korpijaakko and Helander and Kailo (Lähteenmäki 2006, 203; Lehtola 2015, 24). Korpijaakko claimed in her doctoral dissertation from 1989, that Finnish settlers had appropriated Sami land by force, hence suggesting the need for re-compensation policy on the part of the Finnish state (Korpijaakko 1989). Anthropologist Elina Helander and literary scholar Kaarina Kailo edited a book, giving voice to indigenous experiences. In the preface, the importance of an openness toward alternative epistemologies is voiced (Helander and Kailo 1999,

15). Claims for indigenous rights in various forms, by some labeled radical, has not ceased. A new generation acting in a new global context of the “fourth world” political discourse has entered the stage. One such example is the group of visual artists *Souphaterror*, who bring forward their manifestos for Sami rights, mixing elements of militant resistance on a global scale.

These claims, as well as the textual evidence from depictions of Petsamo in the 1920s and early 1930s, can also be considered from a cultural studies point of view. This means a broadening from the fact-finding archival research to a more holistic interpretation of the phenomenon of majority culture and the Sami minority culture. Seeking to uncover structural asymmetries regarding majority and minority, image production, and different forms of discursive othering are to be taken into consideration. Cultural historian Marja Tuominen has pointed out that just approaching history through the archives is not enough. In order to see the structural power relations, the ways of producing knowledge need to be analyzed, for example, with the assistance of methods used in sociology and cultural studies (Tuominen 2011). To approach the history of the relationship between Finnish national majority culture and Sami minority culture is in itself an act of taxonomy that risks the over-essentialization of complex events involving concrete actors, not just groups, state authorities, and discursive acts. However, the case present in the material here analyzed bears witness to a systematic colonialist discourse and asymmetry, which most likely still have implications for these societies today. Even if talk of genocide is exaggerated, the conceptualization of epistemicide—the deliberate or immanent dismissal of indigenous culture—is worth discussing.

The entanglement of economic and nationalist incentives marked the debate over Petsamo back in the 1920s. Today, state authorities have started to look toward the Arctic coast anew. In 2018, a report commissioned by the Ministry of Communications and conducted by the Finnish Transport Agency recommended the building of a railroad from northern Finland to Kirkenes in Norway (Liikennevirasto 2018). This provoked a strong reaction from the local Sami community and brought up questions about the relationship between Finnish state authorities and the Sami community. Here again, conflicting interests are connected to questions of governance and trade on the one hand, and indigenous rights and sustainability on the other. Two former prime ministers, Esko Aho and Paavo Lipponen, published an open letter to the editor in Finland’s biggest newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, in 2018, speaking in favor of the railway project. They pointed out the economic potential brought by global warming to the Arctic. Materializing the opportunities offered by this ecological paradox was, in their interpretation, to be put in the service of national interests (Aho and Lipponen 2018). The dream of a Finnish railway to the Arctic Ocean has thus been awakened anew, and some aspects of the debate are not much different from those a century back. Is the project worth the costs? How would it bring a welcomed economic

boost to the northernmost region and, additionally, the whole of Finland? But in some regards, the debate is different today. The Sami community has a much more pronounced agency, even if considerable asymmetries are still at work. The Nordic governments have, through the Nordic Council in 2017, set a goal for the Nordic states to become a model region for sustainable development (Generation 2030). This makes the debate different, and state authorities will most probably have to pay attention to the views of the Sami community in a way that was not possible a hundred years ago. While doing so, the discussion of Finland's part in past colonial structures will most likely become more intense, both concerning the interpretations of history and the justification of present-day policies.

## References

- Aho, Esko, and Paavo Lipponen. 2018. "Arktinen yhteistyö avaa Suomelle uusia mahdollisuuksia" [Arctic cooperation opens new opportunities for Finland]. *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 25, C9.
- Avango, Dag. 2013. "Arktiska framtider och resurser: Industriarvet som källa" [Arctic futures and resources: The industrial heritage as a source]. *Bebyggelsehistorisk tidskrift* 65: 52–71.
- Castrén, Jalmar. 1923. *Petsamon radan taloudelliset edellytykset* [The economic conditions for the Petsamo railroad]. Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto.
- Ekström Söderlund, Birgitta. 2009. "Den Elfvingska sillflottan och Petsamo" [The Elfvig herring fleet and Petsamo]. In *Petsamo och havet* [Petsamo and the sea], edited by Max Engman and Kasper Westerlund, 125–32. Meddelanden från sjöhistoriska institutet 30. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.
- Elenius, Lars, ed. 2015. *The Barents Region: A History of Subarctic Northern Europe*. Oslo: Pax.
- Elfving, Östen. 1924. *Petsamon taloudellisesta elämästä ja toimenpiteistään kehittämiseksi* [On the economic life of Petsamo and the means to development]. Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto.
- Enbuske, Matti. 2012. "Lapin asutuksen ja maankäytön historia myyttien ja todellisuuden ristivedossa" [The history of Lapland's settlement and land use in the cross-draught of myths and reality]. *Faravid* 36: 213–25.
- Engman, Max. 2009a. "Petsamo: Den finländska korridorerna" [Petsamo: The Finnish corridor]. In *Petsamo och havet* [Petsamo and the sea], edited by Max Engman and Kasper Westerlund, 23–50. Meddelanden från sjöhistoriska institutet 30. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.
- . 2009b. "Petsamo inför havets anlete" [Petsamo in the face of the sea]. In *Petsamo och havet* [Petsamo and the sea], edited by Max Engman and Kasper Westerlund, 7–10. Meddelanden från sjöhistoriska institutet 30. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.
- Eriksson, Harald. 2006. "Muistelmia Petsamon liikenteestä 1940–41" [Memories of Petsamo traffic 1940–41]. In *Pohjolan Klondyke*



- [Nordic Klondyke], edited by Harald Ericsson and Janne Nokki, 11–63. Helsinki: Tullin julkaisusarja Merkurius 2.
- Ervasti, August Wilhelm. 1884. *Suomalaiset Jäämeren rannalla: Matkamuistelmia* [The Finns on the Arctic Ocean's shore: Travel memoirs]. Helsinki: Weilin and Göös.
- Generation 2030. 2017. *Generation 2030: Nordic Programme for Agenda 2030: Programme Description 2017–2020*. 467/2017. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Heikkilä, Katja-Leena. 2017. *Ryssänranta ja Suomen Alaska: Petsamo Helsingin Sanomien, Kalevan ja Rovaniemi-lehden kirjoittelussa vuosina 1921–1923* [The Russian shore and Finland's Alaska: Petsamo in the writings of *Helsingin Sanomat*, *Kaleva*, and *Rovaniemi-lehti* from 1921 to 1923]. MA thesis, University of Oulu: <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:oulu-201711163112>.
- Helander, Elina, and Kaarina Kailo. 1999. *Ei alkua ei loppua: Saamelaisten puheenvuoro* [No beginning, no end: The voice of the Sami]. Helsinki: Like.
- Ikola, Jaakko. 1924. *Petsamohon valaskaloja onkimahan* [To Petsamo to fish whales]. Jyväskylä: Gummerus.
- Kara, Jalmari [Kapteni Teräs]. 1921. *Petsamon rata: Isänmaallinen unelma* [The Petsamo railroad: A patriotic dream]. Helsinki: Kirja.
- Korpijaakko, Kaisa. 1989. *Saamelaisten oikeusasemasta Ruotsi-Suomessa: Oikeushistoriallinen tutkimus Länsi-Pohjan Lapin maankäyttöoloista ja -oikeuksista ennen 1700-luvun puoliväliä* [On the legal position of the Sami in Sweden-Finland: A legal history study on the conditions of land use and rights in Vesterbotnian Lapland before the mid-1700s]. Helsinki: Lakimiesliitto.
- Kuortti, Joel, and Olli Löytty. 2007. *Kolonialismin jäljet* [The traces of colonialism]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Lähtenmäki, Maria. 2001. "Ett marginellt Norden? Det finska Lapplands ställning från 1920- till 1940-talet" [A marginal Norden? The position of Finnish Lapland from the 1920s to the 1940s]. *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 86: 561–78.
- . 2006. *The Peoples of Lapland: Boundary Demarcations and Interaction in the North Calotte from 1808 to 1889*. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- . 2014. *Väinö Voionmaa: Puolue- ja geopolitikko* [Väinö Voionmaa: Party- and geopolitician]. Helsinki: SKS.
- . 2017. *Footprints in the Snow: The Long History of Arctic Finland*. Helsinki: Prime Minister's Office.
- Lampén, Ernst. 1921. *Jäämeren hengessä* [In the spirit of the Arctic Ocean]. Jyväskylä: Gummerus.
- Lampio, Eero, and Lauri Hannikainen. 1921. *Petsamon opas* [A guide to Petsamo]. Helsinki: Otava.

- Launis, Armas. 1922. *Kaipauksieni maa: Lapinkävijän matkamuistoja* [The land of my longing: Memories of a Lapland traveler]. Jyväskylä: Gummerus.
- Lehtola, Veli-Pekka. 2012. "Lapin Sivistysseura ja saamenystävät 1930-luvulla" [The Lapland enlightenment society and the Sami friends in the 1930s]. In *Historian selkosilla: Jouko Vahtolan juhla-kirja* [In the wilderness of history: Festschrift to Jouko Vahtola], edited by Matti Enbuske, Matti Mäntylä, Matti Salo, and Reija Satokangas, 511–24. Rovaniemi: Pohjois-Suomen historiallinen yhdistys.
- . 2015. "Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland." *Arctic Anthropology* 52 (2): 22–36.
- . 2017. "Vanishing Lapps, Progress in Action: Finnish Lappology and Representations of the Sámi in Publicity in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century." *Arctic and North* 7: 83–102.
- . 2018. "'The Soul should have been Brought along': The Settlement of Skolt Sami to Inari in 1945–1949." *Journal of Northern Studies* 12: 53–71.
- Liikennevirasto. 2018. *Jäämeren rataselvitys* [Arctic Ocean railroad report]. Helsinki: Liikennevirasto.
- Mörner, Magnus. 1980. "Samers och indianers rätt till jorden: En historisk jämförelse inför Högsta domstolen" [The Samis' and the Indians' right to the land: A historical comparison to the Supreme Court]. *Historisk tidskrift* 100: 419–51.
- Nordström, Raimo-Ragnar. 2009. "Nordströmrederiet och Petsamo" [The Nordström shipping company and Petsamo]. In *Petsamo och havet* [Petsamo and the sea], edited by Max Engman and Kasper Westerlund, 133–43. Meddelanden från sjöhistoriska institutet 30. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.
- Nyysönen, Jukka. 2017. "Väinö Tanner and the Discourse on Racial Difference." *Arctic and North* 7: 127–46.
- Nyysönen, Jukka, and Veli-Pekka Lehtola. 2017. "Introduction: From Depictions of Race to Revitalizing a People: Aspects of Research on the Sámi in Finland and Norway." *Arctic and North* 7: 50–62.
- O'Loughlin, John, and Herman van der Wusten. 1990. "Political Geography of Panregions." *The Geographical Review* 80: 1–20.
- Paulaharju, Samuli. 1921. *Kolttain mailla* [In the Skolt lands]. Helsinki: Kirja.
- Pekkola, Sullo-Weikko. 1930. *Petsamoa perimässä* [Inheriting Petsamo]. Porvoo: Werner Söderström.
- Puustinen, Viljo. 1922. *Mietelmiä Lapista ja Petsamosta* [Thoughts about Lapland and Petsamo]. Helsinki: Otava.
- Rabow-Edling, Susanna. 2017. "Imperiella visioner och den koloniala erfarenheten av ryska Alaska i finländsk press 1809–1867" [Imperial visions and colonial experiences from Russian Alaska in the Finnish press 1809–1867]. *Ennen ja nyt: Historian tietosanomat* 17 (4) (website). <https://journal.fi/ennenjanyt/issue/view/7156>.



- Rosberg, J. E. 1919. *Petsamon maa: Suomen alue Jäämeren rannalla* [The Petsamo land: Finland's area at the Arctic Ocean shore]. Helsinki: Otava.
- Sousa Santos, Boaventura de. 2016. "Epistemologies of the South and the Future." *From the European South* 1: 17–29.
- Stadius, Peter. 2016. "Petsamo: Bringing Modernity to Finland's Arctic Ocean Shore 1920–1939." *Acta Borealia* 33: 140–65.
- Tanner, Väinö. 1927. *Voidaanko Petsamon aluetta käyttää maan hyödyksi: Keinoja ja tarkoituspäriä?* [Can the area of Petsamo be used for the benefit of the country: Means and Goals?] Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto.
- . 1929. *Antropogeografiska studier inom Petsamo-området, 1: Skoltlapparna* [Anthropogeographical studies in the Petsamo Area, 1: Skolt Lapps]. Helsinki: Societas geographia Fenniae.
- Taskila, Erkki. 1980. *Valtion liiketoimintaa Petsamossa: Oy Petsamo Ab (1921–1929)* [State business ventures in Petsamo: Petsamo Ltd]. Tornio: Oulun Historiaseura ry.
- Törnqvist, Tiina. 1998. "Petsamon suomalaistaminen: Koltat suomalaisuuden puristuksessa vuosina 1920–1925" [The fennization of Petsamo: The Skolts under Finnish pressure during 1920–1925]. MA thesis, University of Helsinki.
- Tuominen, Marja. 2011. "Where the World Ends? The Places and Challenges of Northern Cultural History." In *They Do Things Differently There*, edited by Bruce Johnson and Harri Kiiskinen, 43–80. Turku: University of Turku.
- Turda, Marius. 2010. *Modernism and Eugenics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Turja, Ilmari. 1928. *Ruijan rantaa ja Ruijan merta* [Finnmark shore and Finnmark sea]. Porvoo: Werner Söderström.
- Vahtola, Jouko. 1991. "Lapin valtaus historiallisessa katsannossa" [The Occupation of Lapland in a historical perspective]. *Faravid* 15: 335–55.
- Voionmaa, Väinö. 1918. *Suomi Jäämerellä* [Finland at the Arctic Ocean]. Helsinki: Edistysseurojen kustannusosakeyhtiö.