

JOURNAL *of* NORTHERN STUDIES

Vol. 12 • No. 1 • 2018

Published by Umeå University & The Royal Skyttean Society

Umeå 2018

The *Journal of Northern Studies* is published with support from The Royal Skyttean Society and Umeå University

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ISSN 1654-5915

Cover picture

Sacrificial stone in Lake Unna-Saiva, Gällivare municipality, Norrbotten County, Sweden. Photo: Arvid Sveen, 19 July 1997; from the book and photo-project *Mytisk landskap* (2003).

Design and layout

Lotta Hortéll and Leena Hortéll, Ord & Co i Umeå AB
Fonts: Berling Nova and Futura
Paper: CT+ 300 gr and Pro Design 100 gr

Printed by

UmU-Tryckservice, Umeå University

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VELI-PEKKA LEHTOLA

“The Soul Should Have Been Brought along”

The Settlement of Skolt Sami to Inari
in 1945–1949

ABSTRACT In the autumn of 1944, five hundred Skolt Sami were forced to leave their home region in the Pechenga (Petsamo) area together with other inhabitants. After the war, their fate was discussed by Finnish officials and in the media. The question was whether they should be returned to the Soviet Union or relocated to Finland. This article describes the five-year-long process to relocate the Skolt Sami to the Inari region. Following a recommendation by Håkan Rydving to focus studies on Sami agency, in addition to non-Sami actors whose role is usually emphasised, the aim of this article is to identify key actors who made crucial choices in the relocation process. In addition to the Finnish “Skolt friend” Karl Nickul, the Skolt Sami meetings and Jaakko Sverloff, the trustee of the Skolts, appear to have had important roles in key decisions, for example regarding the expansion of the Skolt area from Nellim to Sevettijärvi, the role of the winter village and the choice of settlements along the waterways.

KEYWORDS Skolt Sami, Second World War, evacuation of the Sami, reconstruction period, relocation of the Skolt Sami

In September 1944, Finland was in turmoil. Two wars against the Soviet Union had resulted in a peace process where Finland was forced to cede large areas to its neighbouring state. Nearly half a million Finnish-speaking Karelians had to leave their home regions forever. The inhabitants of Finnish Lapland were also evacuated from the war zone between the Finns and the retreating Germans, but most of them could later return to their home districts. It was only the populations from the Pechenga and Salla areas that had to be relocated. The Lapland War between German forces and the Finnish army, which started in the autumn of 1944, also resulted in five hundred Skolt Sami (*Sä'mmlaž*) having to leave their home region. After the war, they were relocated in the Inari region together with many other Pechenga refugees (see Holsti 1990; Lehtola 1994: 170–188; Nyysönen 1999; Lehtola 2000b: 110–123; for a Skolt Sami documentary, see Sverloff 2003).

In the public debate about their post-war resettlement, the Skolts were placed in a kind of Sami-related "victim discourse." Statements such as "the swan song of a disappearing people" and "the village of a vanishing tribe" (e.g. *Lapin Kansa* 18–25 Sept. 1958; see Lehtola 2012: 388–401) contributed to painting a bleak picture of the Skolts as a people without hope of a future. As a counterbalance, Finnish civil servants and the administrative system have been criticised for procrastination as the relocation took three years to complete. They have been suspected of attempts to Fennicise the Skolts when planning the relocation, as well as of having had intentions to send the Skolts back to the Soviet Union in order to get rid of "the hot potato" (Nevakivi 1991; *Lapin Kansa* 24 Sept. 1958).

Instead of seeing the Skolt Sami as victims of a faceless Finnish bureaucracy, my article tries to show that there was a lively discussion on the Skolt Sami issue after the war, with diverse opinions and positions both among the Finnish participants in the discussion and the Skolt Sami themselves. My article attempts to identify different actors in different positions. Considering the Sami histories in general, it seems to be a simplification to assume that the only parties to the Sami-Finnish or the minority-majority encounters were the state administrators "in the south" and the Sami as a united group "in the north." Instead, there seems to have been a network of multilevel actors at micro and macro levels and mediators and middlemen in different positions, both on the Sami and the Finnish side (see Lehtola 2012: 19–20).

However, as pointed out by Håkan Rydving (2010: 259; cf. Rydving 1995: 69–92), there has been a convention among researchers to present the majority people as actors and agents of the Sami history, while the Sami themselves have been considered passive recipients, if they have been at all recognised. This seems to be the case also for the Skolt Sami histories during

the wartime and the reconstruction period. This is unfortunate, as previous research and public sources have confirmed that the Skolt Sami have been conscious, self-governing actors through the centuries, which is most clearly expressed in historical documents in the Gramota archive on the Skolt rights secured by the Russian czar as early as the seventeenth century. These documents were repatriated to the Sami Archive in Inari by the National Archive of Finland in 2012 (Gramota 2017).

In addition to identifying key persons in the Finnish discussion and administration and their conceptions of, and attitudes to, the Skolt issue, I also try to discern the voice of the Skolt Sami in the contemporary wartime documents and clarify how they experienced the events and whether their opinions were considered at the post-war period; this instead of taking into account later opinions and interviews (see Mazzullo 2017). This is especially problematic for reasons pointed out by Rydving, for example that no coherent collection of documents of the Sami Village Council(s) was available until the 1970s, when Matti Sverloff started to archive them more consistently.

When the Pechenga (Petsamo) area was annexed to Finland in 1920, the Skolt Sami Village Council of Suõ'nnjel continued to have meetings. They were adapted to form a body of the Finnish administration, the bailiff of Pechenga being the Finnish contact person. Thus, the documents of the Village Council are only sporadically found in the archives of Finnish authorities, to whom the Skolt issue was quite marginal, although they were treated as a united group. During the wartime years, Skolt affairs were handled by several different ministries and national and regional public servants, before they were finally made the responsibility of the Agricultural Association of Lapland (Lehtola 2012: 388–401).

Thus, the minutes of the Skolt Sami Village Council have been the most direct contemporary documents to capture the Skolt Sami's intentions in the wartime years. The Council was led by the village elder of Suõ'nnjel *sijdd*, Jaakko Sverloff, who became a notable spokesman for the Skolts. His own voice appears directly in his letters to Karl Nickul, the Finnish secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Sami Culture, a Finnish organisation on Sami issues. Sverloff and Nickul made an effective team in the Sami-Finnish encounters, with Sverloff influencing inside the Skolt community in issues that Nickul contributed to in the Finnish society (Lehtola 2005: 155–160).

“Content and Starving ...”

The Skolt Sami belong to the eastern Sami language group, which has inhabited an area covering the entire Kola Peninsula to the shores of Lake

Inari (*Aanarjäu'rr* in Skolt Sami). Today, Skolt Sami is one of three Sami languages in Finland besides Inari Sami and North Sami (Linkola & Sammallahhti 1995: 38–42). The fate, and even the tragedy, of the eastern Sami has been that they lived in an economically and politically contested region, which has been an apple of discord among superpowers for centuries (Tanner 1929; Nickul 1970: 17–88; Alavuotunki 1999: 35–58; Lehtola 1999: 149–170; Niemi 1999).

In the treaty of Tartu signed in 1920, Finland acquired the Pechenga region and three accompanying Skolt *sijdds* or Sami villages, namely the Paččjokk (*Paatsjoki* in Finnish), Peäccam (*Petsamonkylä*) and Suõ'nnjel (*Suonikylä*) communities. As Skolt interests were not considered when the Tartu borderline was drawn, the national frontier between the Soviet Union and Finland divided "the Skolt land" harshly in two. Suõ'nnjel lost a fourth of the village area to the Soviet side, including the old winter village, which was the centre of the community. After the demarcation, Skolts chose their nationality based on which country their traditional family areas were located in. Some stayed in the Soviet Union or, rather, returned there, while many remained on the Finnish side (Tanner 1929: 208; Nickul 1970: 33, 211; Linkola & Sammallahhti 1995: 51).

During the Finnish rule, traditional *sijdds* fell into a crisis, especially in the case of the Paččjokk and Peäccam Skolts, who, in accordance with social-Darwinist conceptions, were categorised as "an inferior race" dying under the wheels of progress (see Lehtola 1999: 157). Suõ'nnjel villagers, on the other hand, managed to negotiate quite significant reforms with Finnish civil servants, for example, the building of a new winter village with funding from the Finnish state. In the 1930s, there was even a proposal to make Suõ'nnjel a conservation area of Skolt culture where settlement would be prohibited.¹

The Skolt region again became a battlefield of world politics in the Second World War. Skolt men were conscripted, and it has been considered possible that, on the Pechenga front in the Winter War, Finnish Skolts were fighting against their own eastern Sami kinsmen serving in the so-called reindeer brigades in the Soviet troops (see Lehtola 1994: 31, 51, 67–69). During the Winter War, the Skolt area became an arena of war and some Skolt groups were evacuated as early as then (Nickul 1946: 3; Nickul 1956: 89–90).

When the Lapland War against the Germans started in September 1944, the Skolts lost their reindeer, their dwellings as well as their entire home area. The armistice between Finland and the Soviet Union required that Finland should expel the Germans within two weeks. That was impossible in practice and meant war with the German army, which was retreating to the north to its stronghold in northern Norway. The first safe relocation area to the south of the front line on the latitude of Oulu-Kuusamo was

Central Ostrobothnia. Although the Lapland War was mostly over by the end of the year, the Germans had mined the whole of Lapland, which made returning impossible throughout the winter.²

The Skolts were moved to the Kalajoki region, over 600 kilometres from their home areas. The inflow of thousands of new inhabitants resulted in constant problems with dwelling conditions and food supplies in the region (for information on the evacuation period, see Sverloff 2003: 132–133). Apart from epidemics and failing health among the Skolts, authorities noted that they were in actual distress in Kalajoki:

Moving quickly to a completely new and strange nature and all the worries this entailed have led to mental depression, which would be best relieved by providing suitable work, hunting, etc.

The situation was complicated by the fact that the local population viewed the Orthodox people and *ruskies*, who had lived in semi-nomadic conditions, with suspicion.³

During the winter, the lack of food supplies even resulted in a crisis—at least in the eyes of authorities. In an alarming report, an inspector who had returned from a visit to the Skolts stated that it was his impression “that they are actually starving” (underlining by the inspector). The Skolts themselves, however, were apparently less worried about the situation, because the inspector noted in his official report that: “It is disturbing to see starving people being so content.”⁴

“A Good Master is Best of All”

In the autumn of 1944, the authorities seem to have dealt with the Skolt issue as part of the process of settling the other Pechenga people. The issue of a small minority population was very marginal in post-war Finland. Karl Nickul, the secretary of the Finnish Society for the Promotion of Sami Culture (*Lapin Sivistysseura*), was the only one who voiced his concerns in Finnish media in order to highlight the problem. In several letters in national newspapers and in statements to authorities in the winter of 1944–1945, Nickul emphasised that Skolt Sami deserved special attention.

Despite their small numbers, Nickul argued, they had occupied almost half of the Pechenga area and they constituted the original population of that area. Furthermore, they represented a unique way of life, both in Finland and in the whole world. The foremost task for the authorities, according to Nickul, was to settle the Skolt population as an entity and not scatter them among the other Pechenga people. He also emphasised that the most important thing in the Skolt settlement process was the Skolts’ own opinions.

A contradictory claim by Nickul concerned the question of whether the Skolt Sami should be returned to the Soviet Union or be relocated in Finland. The older Skolt Sami wished to return to the Soviet Union, and their devoted friend, Karl Nickul, openly supported this opinion. Even the minister of the interior, Kaarlo Hillilä, concluded in a memorandum in January 1945 that "a relocation place suitable for their customary ways of life cannot be found on Finnish territory." As "an ethnologically unique population group," the Skolts had to be returned to their old dwelling places in the Soviet Union, which required an agreement with the Russians.⁵

Historian Jukka Nevakivi (1991) considered the returning of the Skolt Sami to the Soviet Union "an exceptionally radical idea," which reflected something other than a realistic evaluation: "As a former reconnaissance man, was he not aware of Stalin's way of dealing with indigenous peoples?" Nevakivi concludes that the proposal was an attempt to get rid of "a hot potato," i.e. to resolve the Skolt resettlement problem in the easiest possible way.

Having visited evacuated Skolts on several occasions, Nickul had become convinced that they wanted to return to their home area. In his letters to Nickul, Jaakko Sverloff, trustee of the Skolts, also expressed the elder generation's heartfelt wish to return to their home lakes. Nickul also knew from recent history that their family areas meant more to Skolts than belonging to a particular state. He knew that the Skolts had chosen their state of residence based solely on the location of their family areas in the Tartu peace treaty: "The attitude of the Skolts [...] does not stem from any politics. To them, it is simply a matter of life's fundament and the traditions of their home area."⁶

During the winter, however, a new situation emerged among the Skolts when Skolt soldiers returned to the evacuation localities. They took a stand against moving back to the Soviet Union. The thought of returning to the country of their former enemy was abhorrent to these young men who had developed a bond with Finland over the past 24 years and fought side by side with Finns. To avoid disintegration of their next of kin and families, the old Skolt Sami ended up agreeing with the young men's opinion (Nickul 1945).

Young Skolt men did not wait for new proposals regarding relocation places, but set off in March–April 1945 to prepare a temporary Skolt settlement along the Pechenga road (Sverloff 2003: 133–135). Matti Sverloff, son of Kiurel, the former village elder of Suõ'nnjel, wrote to Nickul from Lutto and explained the view of the young men:

Of course, it would be favourable also for us to go back to our native place, but naturally Finland has been our best master and will perhaps remain so. It is clear, however, that many will criticise this view, especially the future generations. One's birthplace is precious to everyone, but a good master is best of all, better than being in a place whose heart you don't know.⁷

The so-called Pechenga Committee, founded by the Ministry of Agriculture to deal with issues which also included the settlement of the Skolts, came to the same conclusion at the end of March. All Skolts were to be settled on the Finnish side in Lutto (Luttojoki) or the so-called *Njeä'llem* (*Nellim*) area. Thus, the starting point of the committee was to keep the Skolt population together as one group. Separate decrees would guarantee their exclusive fishing rights. Similarly, their reindeer herding area would be negotiated with local reindeer-grazing associations.⁸

The Skolt meeting in January 1946 expressed its satisfaction with the area of *Njeä'llem*.⁹ In other quarters, however, the proposal was not received with favour. The Lapland Reindeer Grazing Association to the south of Lake Inari, for example, did not welcome the Skolt reindeer herders to their territory, and the National Board of Forestry stated that the fishing potential in the area was poorer than on the Russian side, and that local inhabitants should be allowed to retain their free fishing and hunting rights.¹⁰

Nevakivi (1991) described the most critical statements: "The gentlemen of the forestry board worried about their fish hauls, and those of the reindeer grazing association did not want to give up their lichen lands." The Administrative Committee of the Inari municipality stated that it did not want the Skolts in the area because they would be "a burden," since they "will need social welfare for a long time."

"Poor We Walk this Strange Path"

The mass transfers of Skolts from Ostrobothnia to Lapland started in late summer of 1945, from mid-August to mid-September. By the end of November, more than half of the Skolts, 262 people, had been moved to the Inari municipality area.¹¹ Almost all were *Suõ'nnjel* villagers, who seem to have received priority in the authorities' plans. This priority of the *Suõ'nnjel* inhabitants compared to "other Skolts" had old grounds in the actions of Finnish authorities. Already in the Pechenga era, the premise was to give special protection to the interests of *Suõ'nnjel*, while the other Skolt groups—the "roadside Skolts" (see Lehtola 2000a: 49–52)—were considered Fennicised or alienated from their traditions (see Lehtola 1999: 157).

The situation manifested itself after the war in a memorandum by Minister of the Interior Kaarlo Hillilä in which, in the words of Jukka Nevakivi, he "harshly" divided the Skolt Sami into two groups. In his opinion, the fishermen Skolts of *Paččjokk* were "degenerated" people who had supported themselves partly by begging, partly by fishing. *Suõ'nnjel* Skolts, on the other hand, were skilled reindeer owners, who had usually been well off.¹²

This division caused criticism among other Skolts and civil servants. The Skolt meeting at the Kalajoki town hall in December noted that the

final relocation place of Skolts other than the Suõ'nnjel villagers had not been planned at all. They, too, wanted to be relocated to the Inari region, mostly to the roadsides, where it would be possible to fish and herd reindeer, but also to work for wages. The opinion of the Skolts was that each Skolt tribe should be kept together.¹³

The Skolts settled on the lakeshores of Nangujärvi, Tsarmijärvi and other large lakes. The conditions were hard in many ways. Their reindeer, pastures and fishing waters had been left on the other side of the border. The area of Suõ'nnjel alone had been 4,800 square kilometres, which included excellent lichen terrain as well as fine fishing waters. There were not much fish in the small lakes in the new area and initially there were hardly any fishing equipment. Moderately good lichen lands were not very useful, as their reindeer had been lost.

Matti Fofonoff from Matsašjärvi reminisced wistfully about the 900 reindeer which Onttas Fofonoff's heirs had still had the previous winter: "That was wealth," he mourned, "poor we walk this strange path now, landless, houseless, reindeerless. Not even nets to start fishing again and begin a new life" (*Lapin Kansa* 17 Oct. 1945). Anni Feodoroff later described their life in the first few years:

Some of us settled in Njeä'llem, some in the surroundings of Luttojoki. We stayed in Nangujärvi where a few barracks had remained standing. People started to turn them into houses. That was quite a job. Everything had to be started from scratch, nothing was available ready-made. If we were lucky, we could get thread from the shop to make nets and seines. Men made boats, sledges, pulks, reindeer collars and straps. There were no reindeer. The Society for the Promotion of Sami Culture, for example, bought reindeer from other herders and distributed them to families; a big family got more reindeer, a small one fewer. Some Sami also bought reindeer themselves. So the number of reindeer began to rise gradually. (Semenoja 1992: 54)

As the description illustrates, the Skolts were not entirely at the mercy of circumstances and helpless in the new situation, as sometimes believed. Directly after their arrival, they had started building cabins and sheds in the wilderness as summer dwellings in the traditional manner. They sought to make their life in the new dwelling area similar to what it had been in the Pechenga era. However, establishing a permanent settlement there was not possible as long as there was no decision on their final dwelling area.

From the start, the lack of space and insufficient natural resources in the Luttojoki area raised criticism among the Skolts as well as in the media. It was out of the question that the Skolts would be able to return to their old social system and semi-nomadic seasonal migration, as the elder gener-

ation and Nickul had hoped. The Pechenga committee had suggested that a winter village should not be built in the area, and the area was also found to be too small for reindeer husbandry.¹⁴

New Possibilities

For a long time, there seem to have been only two options in the Skolt settlement issue: either accept the Lutto area or return to the other side of the border. However, in autumn 1945, the provincial government of Lapland proposed a third possibility, namely settling the Suõ'nnjel people to the north and northeast side of Lake Inari. This location was better than the Njeä'llem area as regards fishing and reindeer husbandry. As a protected forest area, it was also protected from disturbance caused by forest felling.¹⁵

It may seem surprising that the Skolts, in their village meeting in January 1946, dismissed the proposal to expand the area. They felt that they had lost traditional "vocational possibilities" and become dependent on waged labour. The meeting concluded that the conditions for both fishing and reindeer husbandry were adequate in the Njeä'llem area. Travel was difficult on the north side of the lake as there were no reindeer, boats or motor vehicles available.¹⁶

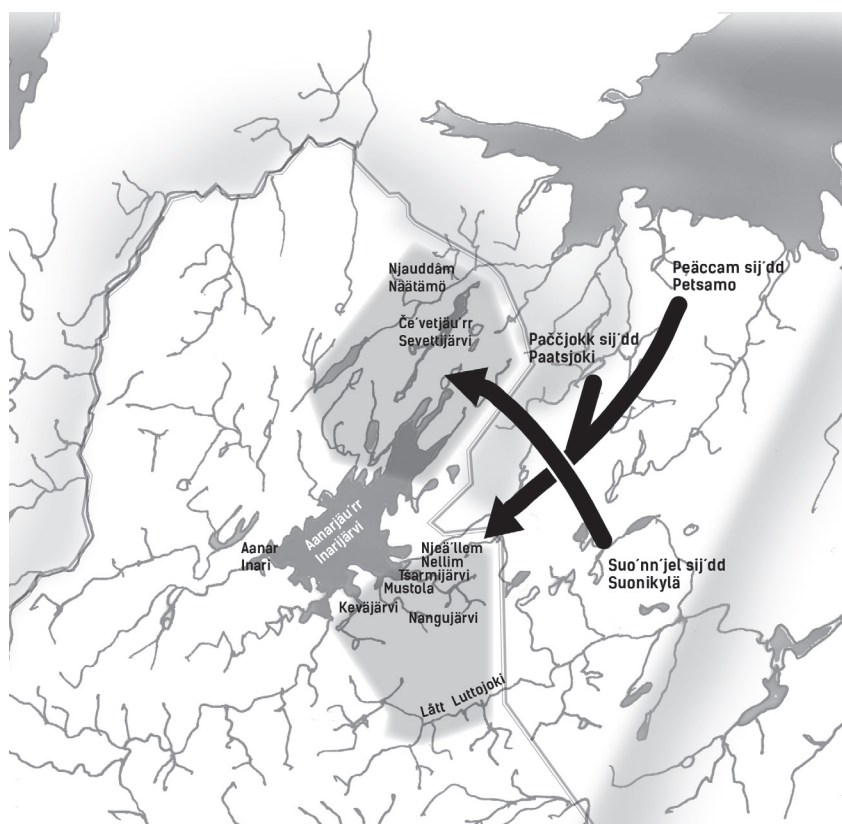
It is possible that the Skolts were tired of the constant uncertainty and moving they had experienced. As many had already built small dwellings in the Njeä'llem area, another move seemed wearisome. Another interpretation is that the Skolts were not yet aware of how small the area really was. Only about half of the Skolt population had been returned by the end of 1945. Therefore, the Skolt meeting in January consisted solely of Suõ'nnjel people. The other Skolts were relocated to the Njeä'llem area during 1946. There were a hundred households there, about five hundred people.¹⁷

In July 1946, representatives of the Suõ'nnjel and Paččjokk Skolts had a meeting with agronomist Pauli Sipilä from the Lapland Agricultural Society. At the meeting, the Skolts concluded that the area was insufficient for their needs. Thus, the basis for the decision they had made at the beginning of the year had changed. The Agricultural Society conveyed the message to the government the same autumn: "the area designated by the government does not guarantee sustenance to all Skolt Lapps pursuing their earlier livelihoods."¹⁸

After negotiating with Jaakko Sverloff, Nickul and Sipilä visited Helsinki in the autumn to make it clear to Minister Lauri Kaijalainen that the area designated by the government could not sustain the Skolts. However, the minister's curt reply was that the Skolts should be content with the area.¹⁹ To relieve the difficult situation of the Skolts, the Society for the Promotion of Sami Culture and its secretary Nickul organised an internation-

al fundraiser to raise money for reindeer and fishing equipment with help of many international organisations. Swiss author Robert Crottet took the fundraising activity to England where he founded a relief committee called the *Scolt Lapp Relief Fund*. A fundraiser for the building of a new winter village produced a total of four million Finnish marks.²⁰

With state appropriations and contributions from various organisations, the Skolts managed to acquire over 1,500 reindeer and enough fishing equipment to make their situation satisfactory in the following years. However, the reindeer and fishing equipment, which were handed out for free, caused envy among other Inari people who thought that the Skolts were rich enough even without the contributions. Thus, they were seen as "fatlings" who took advantage of others.²¹



Map 1. The relocation of the Skolt Sami from Pechenga area to the Inari region after the Second World War, in 1945–1949. The Skolt villages were resettled as their own entities: Suo'nnjel sijdd to northern Inari around the Če'vetjäu'rr area, Paččjokk and Peäccam communities to the Njeä'llem region south of the Inari Lake.

“There Was a Lot of Snow, Sheep Were Bleating ...”

The Skolts had a village meeting in June 1947 to discuss an alternative to moving to the Lutto area. The meeting selected six men to form an expedition aimed at investigating the fishing waters and meadows to the north of Lake Inari. In addition to three Skolts, the expedition included a representative from the Lapland Agricultural Society. The Iijärvi region turned out to be too sparsely forested. The area between Če’vetjäu’rr (Sevettijärvi) and Lake Inari, on the other hand, seemed large enough, and offered better possibilities for reindeer husbandry (Sverloff 2003: 134).

The Skolt members of the expedition reported these results to their kinsmen “in the Suõ’nnjel language” at the end of July in 1947, claiming that the northern side would offer much better living conditions, once the transportation problems had been solved.²² The region was already familiar to the men as they had herded Suõ’nnjel reindeer there during the Winter War (see e.g. Sverloff 1982; Sverloff 2003: 126–131). The area, officially called the Njauddâm (Näätämo) area, was already inhabited by about ten Inari and Utsjoki Sami households as well as some Finnish families, fewer than a hundred people in all. The principle was that their interests should not be violated. The area was a natural alternative to the Skolts also historically. It had once been an autumn fishing area of the westernmost Skolt village of Njauddâm which the Skolts had to give up in the 1826 demarcation, and in practice even earlier.

When the results of the expedition became clear, Settlement Committee Chairman Sipilä of the Agricultural Society drew up a memorandum in which he proposed the Njauddâm area to the northwest of Lake Inari as the second settlement for the Skolt Sami. The Njauddâm area was meant for the Suõ’nnjel Skolts, whose main livelihoods were reindeer husbandry and fishing. The number of settlers was 230, or some 60 households. The report stated:

The other Pechenga Skolts, who [...] have already become accustomed to waged labour and who have already lived near other settlements separate from the Suõ’nnjel Skolts, are to be located to the Lutto area.

220 settlers, or some 65 households, were assigned to the latter area.²³

The Sipilä committee concluded that a winter village would not be built; the settlement would be placed “according to reindeer husbandry and fishing requirements in family units in scattered settlements, as the Skolts themselves are proposing.” In autumn 1947, Sverloff travelled to Helsinki, where he and Nickul tried to get the authorities’ support for the new plan. The Society for the Promotion of Sami Culture appealed to the Ministry of

Agriculture. In October 1947, the government approved the proposal to attach the Njauddâm area to the previous Skolt area, which more than doubled its size.²⁴

Construction of the winter village started at the beginning of 1948. Nickul wrote from Če'vetjäu'rr in February: "The mood here is quite different now than in previous years. The new village is on everybody's mind." Many of the houses were ready to move into even before the winter. Administrators offered motorboat transportation in the autumn, but the Skolts said it was better to move in winter conditions.²⁵

Moving the Suõ'nnjel people to their final dwelling place started in March–April 1949. All of Če'vetjäu'rr was completely inaccessible by motor road, and therefore men with horses transported the people and their belongings from Nangujärvi and along the Lutto River to Akujärvi. Some of the Skolts and their reindeer came direct across Lake Inari to Če'vetjäu'rr, while others were transported on lorries around the lake near Kaamanen, where the journey continued by reindeer to the destination (Sverloff 2003: 135–136). "There was a lot of snow, sheep were bleating in the sleds, babies were crying in the cradles," describes Skolt author Kati-Claudia Fofonoff (1988).

In itself, moving was nothing new or special to the Skolts, because it resembled their normal spring migrations in their Suõ'nnjel era. The destination, however, was a completely unknown region. Six families did not move from the Njeä'llem area, mostly because they were too exhausted to move again. Vassi Semenoja and Helena Semenoff have described poetically in their *leu'dds*, or Skolt Sami epic yoiks, how it felt to lose their home region and come to live in a completely new environment:

The sun sets in the west / from the east the sun rises / it reminds us of our former beloved birthplace. [...] We were torn from our roots, / brought in a blizzard over Lake Inari. / There were no cars or dirt roads. / We were brought near the lakeshore / in the middle of the coldest winter planted to grow again like saplings, / but the roots remained in our former native place. (*Moošt Sue'nnjlest* 1979; Semenoja 1992: 55)

The Skolt settlement in the Njauddâm area, consisting of a total of 267 people at the beginning of the 1950s, was located in a zone more than 50 kilometres long, from the Nitsijärvi village to Kirakkajärvi. The new inhabitants of the Njauddâm area began to be called *Če'vetjäu'rr Skolts* after the central settlement. The dwellings as well as a chapel were built with state funds. The municipality of Inari ordered the construction of an elementary school, a dormitory and a health clinic with support from the state.²⁶

Researcher Päivi Holsti later observed, to her own surprise, that the family still played an important role when it came to choosing the dwelling

place, as it had in Pechenga. The Skolts chose their dwelling places along the waterways. According to Holsti, settling down enabled certain changes in livelihoods, such as potato growing and cattle farming, which had been impossible during the migratory life. The lack of a winter village weakened the community spirit of the Skolts, however, because the winter village had been a socially binding factor. Consequently, they did not convene together very often, and many games, songs and traditional forms were forgotten (Holsti 1990: 54–55).

While the Suõ'nnjel people went across Lake Inari, other Skolt Sami remained in the Lutto area. Most inhabitants of the Pechenga village settled in the Tsarmijärvi (from 1946) and Njeä'llem (1948) areas. The Sami from Paččjokk built their houses closer to Ivalo in "Little Pechenga," Keväjärvi and Mustola. A total of 140 Skolts were settled in the Njeä'llem Skolt area, and 35 dwelling houses and 34 outbuildings, as well as ten saunas, were built for them with state funding.²⁷

Apart from Skolts, a lot of other migrants also moved to Inari from old Pechenga. In addition to the inhabitants of the Tervola region in southern Lapland, some 30–40 families from Pechenga had moved to the Inari municipality by the end of 1948. In a few years, the population of the municipality rose by almost 1,200 migrants. This also resulted in increased unemployment and stiffer competition over limited resources.²⁸

Concluding Remarks

The authorities should, in my opinion, be credited for dealing with the Skolt issue as a separate question in the Skolt relocation process, rather than bundling it together with the settlement problems of other Pechenga people. The delay that the officials have been criticised for was due to a number of complicating factors, the main one being the notion current in 1946–1947 that the Njeä'llem area was too small for the entire Skolt Sami population, which the Skolt meeting had itself pointed out in summer 1946.

The role of the Skolt Sami themselves has been interesting to follow. Important decisions were made at the Skolt meetings, for instance concerning the expansion of the Lutto area and the expedition to look for new areas across the Lake Inari. Another issue that was clearly discussed between the Skolt meeting and Finnish officials was the role of the winter village, which was not built, and the choice to locate settlements along the waterways. It has been later disputed, also among the Skolt Sami themselves, whether or not this choice was correct (Mazzullo 2017: 52–55).

Following the advice of Håkan Rydving to have another look at the sources in order to also identify Sami actors and agencies, it is obvious that the Skolt Sami Village Council played a very important role in the negotia-

tions with Finnish officials. Even in the post-war time, the Skolt Sami were able to preserve their unique indigenous governance with the support of the state (Linkola & Sammallahti 1995: 38–39). However, my study shows that in addition to the Sami Village Council of Suõ'nnjel, meetings of two other Skolt Sami villages are also mentioned a few times in the sources. In the eyes of the Finnish authorities, the village councils of Paččjokk and Peäccam had less power, but they seem to have been quite active. Even in the post-war time, they had their own village meetings until they were merged with a joint Skolt Sami Village Council supported by the state.

As a Skolt trustee, Jaakko Sverloff clearly had a central role as a voice of the Skolts, but his influence on the Finnish administration cannot be fully understood without recognising his fruitful relation with a Finnish intermediary, Karl Nickul, a long-time friend of the Skolts. Together with the agronomist of the Lapland Agricultural Society, Pauli Sipilä, they formed a team whose cooperation "in the field" was a definite prerequisite for keeping the Skolt issue in the public eye and driving administrative decisions.

Moving to a new dwelling area and starting a new life in strange conditions was a traumatic experience for many Skolts. In the words of the long-time Skolt trustee, Matti Sverloff, "the soul should have been brought along."²⁹ The idyllic memory of Suõ'nnjel dominated the adaptation of the Skolts to the new conditions for a long time. There has been considerable prejudice against the Skolts from both Finns and other Sami, and recently, the Skolt histories have been described and analysed as being even more traumatic than those of other Sami (Rasmus 2008; Jauhola 2016), also as regards memories from the post-war era.³⁰

The boundaries of the Skolt settlement and Skolt benefits have been changed many times in the course of decades. The 1955 Skolt Act and Decree and the Land Adjustment Act, as well as law amendments made in the 1970s, were improvements at the time, but they were not sufficient to secure Skolt interests in the long run. The development of the Skolt culture is still dependent on the activity of the Skolts themselves and the political will and ability of the authorities to react to changed conditions.

Translated into English by Jouko Salo

NOTES

- ¹ The Ministry of Agriculture to the governor of the Oulu province 15 September 1926. Petsamon kihlakunnan kruununvoudin ark. (PKVA) BI:45. Oulun maakunta-arkisto (OMA); "Petsamon kolttalappalaiset," Helsingin Sanomat 13 May 1926; Record of Pechenga district bailiff's final inspection in Suõ'nnjel 12 December 1930 and Pechenga district bailiff's situation report to the Oulu province governor 31 December 1930. Oulun lääninhall. ark. (OLKA) 5989. OMA; Nickul 1946: 54. Meeting minutes from the Skolt meeting of the new Suõ'nnjel winter village 12 December 1930. PKVA BI:45. OMA; The governor of the Lapland province to the Ministry of Agriculture 11 May 1938. Kaarlo Hillilän ark. D:7. OMA.
- ² Report on the evacuation of northern Finland 30 October 1944 by the military headquarters of Lapland. Poliisitark. Armas Alhavan kok. C:I. OMA.
- ³ The evacuee welfare director to the provincial government of Oulu (undated, in November 1944). OLKA Hc5:3. OMA; Report on provincial inspector Osmo Martikainen's trips to e.g. Alavieska and Kalajoki 11 and 12 July 1945. KD 9374/46. Siirtoväenos. Ea127. Sisäasiainmin. arkisto (SMA), KA.
- ⁴ SPSC to the the provincial government of Oulu 30 November 1944. OLKA Hc5:3. OMA; Inspector H. Tenhamo's inspection report from 4–10 February 1945. OLKA Hc5:3. OMA. Meeting minutes of evacuee meeting 6 May 1945. KD 14.167. Siirtoväenos. Ea64. SMA, KA.
- ⁵ Kaarlo Hillilä PM. Hki 11 January 1945 to the Evacuee Department of the Ministry of the Interior. OLKA Hc3. OMA.
- ⁶ K. Nickul to K. Hillilä 7 March 1945. Kirjeenvaihto 1944–1947. KNA. KA; SPSC secretary to the evacuee welfare director 19 November 1944. OLKA Hc5:3. OMA.
- ⁷ Matti Sverloff to Karl Nickul 20 September 1945–13 November 1945. Kirjeenvaihto 1944–1947. KNA. KA.
- ⁸ "V. Kolttalappalaisten sijoitus." Pechenga committee report (excerpt) 24 March 1945. Lapin lh yl. os. ark. (LLHA) Hd:2. OMA; Ministry of the Interior to the provincial government of Lapland 17 August 1945. OLKA Hc3. Also e.g. K. Nickul to U. Hannula 30 September 1946. Kirjeenvaihto 1944–1947. KNA. KA.
- ⁹ The Evacuee Department of the Ministry of the Interior to the provincial government of Lapland 14 August 1945. LLHA Hc5:3. OMA; The Settlement Department of the Ministry of Agriculture to the provincial government of Lapland 1 September 1945. OLKA Hd:2. OMA; Meeting minutes from Skolt meeting in Nangujärvi 10 January 1946. LLHA Hd:2. OMA.
- ¹⁰ "Kolttalappalaisten juttu" (summary of statements). LLHA Hd:2. OMA.
- ¹¹ E.g. the provincial government of Lapland to the Lapland Agricultural Society 30 November 1945. LLHA Hd:2. Hd:2. OMA; Karl Nickul 1947: 5.
- ¹² Kaarlo Hillilä PM. Hki 11 January 1945 to the Evacuee Department of the Ministry of the Interior. OLKA Hc3. OMA; Nevakivi 1991.
- ¹³ Assistant presenter of Pechenga affairs in the Settlement Department to Judge Nukari in the Evacuee Department 15 August 1945. OLKA Hc5:3. OMA; Negotiation meeting between the provincial government of Oulu and Skolts at Kalajoki town hall 5 December 1945. OLKA Hc3. OMA; "Kalajoen koltat 26.6.1945" (note) and a List of Skolts and Lapps living in the Kalajoki municipality 1 December 1945. OLKA Hc5:3. OMA; Evacuee Department of the Ministry of the Interior 26 November 1945 and reports from the results of inquiries made in Ii, Kuivaniemi and Kalajoki in 3–5 December 1945. OLKA Hc5:3. OMA.

- ¹⁴ Meeting minutes from a meeting in Ivalo 7 July 1946. Lapin maatalousseuran asutustoi-mikunta (LMA) II Ha:7. OMA.
- ¹⁵ The provincial government of Lapland to the Kemi district county constable 4 January 1946, and the Kemi district county constable to the provincial government of Lapland 7 January 1946. LLHA Hd:2. OMA.
- ¹⁶ Meeting minutes from a meeting in Nangujärvi 10 January 1946. LLHA Hd:2. OMA.
- ¹⁷ Cabinet decision in a letter from the Minister of Agriculture to the Settlement Commit-tee of the Central Union of Agricultural Societies 11 April 1946, see *Kolttaasaamelaisten sijoittaminen* 1988: appendix 1.
- ¹⁸ K. Nickul to U. Hannula 30 September 1946. KNA. KA; "Eräästä ajankohtaisesta lappa-laiskysymyksestä." K. Nickul's radio presentation 25 November 1946. KNA. KA; LSS hall ptk 8 March 1947. Lapin Sivistysseuran arkisto LSSA. KA.
- ¹⁹ SPSC board meeting minutes 8 March 1947. LSSA. KA.
- ²⁰ "Matkavaikutelmia Lapista." K. Nickul's speech at the SPSC annual meeting 30 March 1947. Käsikirjoitukset. KNA. KA.
- ²¹ SPSC board meeting minutes 8 May 1946. LSSA. KA; A. Nuotio to K. Nickul 19 April 1948 and 13 May 1948; E. Innola to Nickul 10 May 1948. KNA. KA; Inari local board to the provincial government of Lapland 21 April 1948. Kunnallislautakunta asiakirjat. Inarin kunnan arkisto (IKA); "Matkavaikutelmia Lapista." K. Nickul's speech in SPSC annual meeting 30 March 1947. Käsikirjoitukset. KNA. KA.
- ²² General Skolt accommodation meeting in Pikku-Petsamo in Ivalo 31 July 1947. LLHA Hd:2. OMA; Laura Lehtola to Karl Nickul 26 June 1947; Jaakko Sverloff to Karl Nickul 12 August 1947. Lappia koskeva kirjeenvaihto. KNA. KA; General Skolt accommodation meeting in Pikku-Petsamo in Ivalo 31 July 1947. LLHA Hd:2. OMA.
- ²³ The settlement committee of the Lapland Agricultural Society to the Ministry of Agricul-ture 9 October 1947. Lapin maatalousseuran asutustoimikunta II (LMA II) Ha:13. OMA.
- ²⁴ Meeting minutes of the Lapland Agricultural Society 3 December 1948. LMA II, Ca:1. Tk pkt: 1945–1951. OMA; SPSC to the Ministry of Agriculture 30 October 1947. LMA II Ha:13. OMA; Cabinet decision in a letter from the Minister of Agriculture to the Settlement Committee of the Central Union of Agricultural Societies 30 October 1947, see *Kolttaasaamelaisten sijoittaminen* (1988), appendix 2; Meeting minutes from a Skolt meeting in Ivalo 2 August 1948. LMA II Ha:7.
- ²⁵ Undated report about settling Pechenga evacuees. OLKA Ce:1. OMA; see also Fofonoff 1988.
- ²⁶ Meeting minutes from a Skolt meeting in Če'vetjäu'rr 12 August 1949. LMA II. Ha: 2–7. OMA.
- ²⁷ The settlement committee of the Lapland Agricultural Society to the Ministry of Ag-riculture 1 November 1948. LMA II. Ha:13. OMA; P.M. Kolttien asunto- ja maanomis-tusolojen järjestäminen. LMA. Ha:17; Meeting minutes from a Skolt meeting in Ivalo 4 August 1948. LMA II. Ha: 2–7 OMA.
- ²⁸ Settlement Committee reports 1945–1951. LMA II, Da:1. OMA; Municipal reports 1948–1951. IKA; Petsamolais-muistio 1950 in Petsamon siirtoväki ry:n Ivalon alaosaaston arkisto. OMA; Nyssönen 1999: 641–652. See also Aminoff 1951.
- ²⁹ Matti Sverloff's oral comment.
- ³⁰ For the discussion on the traumatic experiences of the Skolt Sami, see https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/sapmi/kolttaasaamelaiset_oireilevat_yha_sota-ajan_kokemuksien_vuok-si_kolttien_kylakokous_tyostaa_yhteista_hyvinvointisuunnitelmaa/9177019; access date 7 May 2018.

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