Assembling Community in East Greenland: Making Sense of Arctic Relocations

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Fig. 1. A map by Einar Storgaard that shows historic-geographical subdivisions of Greenland. Published in ‘Om Inddeling af Østgrønland i Geografiske Landskaber,’ Geografisk Tidsskrift 43, no. 4 (1927): 222. The settlements of Scoresby Sound and Ammassalik are indicated by the author of this thesis.
Introduction

Our ancestors inhabited all the land for their descendants to inherit and marked the best hunting sites with old remains, as clues for later generations.

‘You, later generations, have fallen behind your ancestors.’

Not in terms of enlightenment, boats, and houses, but our ancestors roamed around and built dwellings everywhere for themselves. In those terms, we have fallen behind them. For Denmark’s honour it shall be made known: East and West Greenland belongs to Denmark. Greenlandic hunters, think about how a hunter can get the most from his catch. Opportunities for Greenlandic hunters are found everywhere in this country. [Otto Rosing, 1934]¹

Otto Rosing (1896-1966) was an ordained minister, the son of Kristian Rosing, a West Greenlandic teacher and missionary in Ammassalik. Otto Rosing was a self-taught artist deeply interested in Greenlandic archaeology and heritage, who portrayed the everyday life of the East Greenlandic hunters in numerous drawings and paintings.² The above excerpt is from a speech (presumably translated) he made during a visit to Scoresbysund (now known as Ittoqqortoormiit), the trading station located at the northern entrance to Scoresby Sound/Kangertittivaq. He was a well-educated man for his time, speaking to a group of hunters living in one of the most isolated regions of Greenland. Only a decade had passed after they and their families had been relocated from Ammassalik, the beginning of colonial expansion into the uninhabited North. Otto Rosing’s speech elucidates a complex and mixed society. The romantic and patriotic sentiments Rosing displays are layered with multiple meanings depicted in flows of events and ideas.

¹ Otto Rosing. (1934). [Impressions from the Visit of Otto Rosing]. 0030 ‘Inspektør for Østgrønland Ejnar Mikkelsen: Korrespondance og rapporter vedr. Scoresbysund og Angmagssalik (1926-40)’, The Danish National Archives (Box 1), Copenhagen, Denmark. All translations from Danish are the author’s unless otherwise noted.
The modern colonisation of Greenland began in the 1720s with the missionary work of the Hans Egede, a Dano-Norwegian Lutheran priest. Political, missionary and commercial activities were however restricted to southern West Greenland. The colonisation of East Greenland did not begin until 1894 when the explorer Gustav Holm established a mission and trading station at Ammassalik. These developments were accelerated when Norway took an interest in colonising Northeast Greenland, causing the Danish government to decide that the unpopulated part of the country should become inhabited. The disagreement between Norway and Denmark over the jurisdiction of Northeast Greenland resulted in a settlement in 1924, in which the projected colonisation of Scoresby Sound was officially mentioned for the first time. The decision to conduct the transfer from the Ammassalik district of about a dozen families to ‘re-populate’ the high-Arctic inlet was thus influenced by geopolitical considerations; that is to say, to put an end to the Norwegian territorial claim. From 1925, the population of East Greenland was split into two colonies, some 800 kilometres apart, leaving for the next decade and beyond, the two groups substantially isolated from each other.

Recently, there has been renewed interest in the organisation of relocation and resettlement in the Circumpolar North. The practice of relocating indigenous people to desolate territories in the Arctic, as a demonstration of sovereignty, was a salient feature of the twentieth-century history. Precedents can be found throughout the North and across national political borders. One early case involved a small group of Nenets, transferred in 1878-79 to Novaya Zemlya, to form a permanent Russian settlement on the island. Other examples include, for instance, the Russian relocation of Yupik families to Wrangell Island (Ostrov Vrangelya) in 1926 and the Canadian government’s relocation of Inuit families to the High Arctic (to Devon Island in 1934; and to Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord in 1953). Policy makers and agencies, which...

3 The European Science Foundation programme MOVE (Moved by the State: Perspectives on Relocation and Resettlement in the Circumpolar North) is an excellent example of conjoint academic efforts to shed light on the history of relocation schemes in the Circumpolar North. Website accessed May 19, 2016. http://www.alaska.edu/move/


assumed responsibility for indigenous affairs, were influenced by a highly essentialised image of the northern peoples, as Tester and Kulchyski observe:

The notion that Inuit were pliable, happy to live anywhere seals, snow, and foxes could be found, and that this was a solution to the problem of their welfare (portrayed as problems of overpopulation and scarce game), had already been well established through historical precedence.6

The seemingly benevolent schemes reorganised the lives of the indigenous populations according to Western ideas. In Seeing Like a State, his insightful critique of twentieth-century development, James C. Scott makes use of the notion of ‘high-modernist ideology’ as a ‘sweeping, rational engineering of all aspects of social life intending to improve the human condition.’7 Scott characterises high-modernism as a techno-optimism, an uncritical confidence in scientific- and technological progress, and its role in human efforts to contribute to human well-being.8 High-modernist planning is necessarily schematic since it ‘ignores essential features of any real, functioning social order’ and submits local knowledge against the expertise of the state’s agents.9 Existing research recognises the critical role that states played in restructuring settlement patterns of indigenous populations, in a way that often showed a rationale of a non-local character. The most prominent example is no doubt the High Arctic relocation in 1953.

At the start of the twentieth-century, the uninhabited Ellesmere Island was still outside the span of Canadian control. Otto Sverdrup, the Norwegian explorer, had carried out oceanographic research in the High Eastern Arctic (1898-1902), without Canada’s permission being either requested or granted. He and his team explored entire Ellesmere Island region and claimed three large islands in the name of the

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 6.
Norwegian king. The situation was further complicated by the seasonal hunting trips to Ellesmere Island, made by hunters from the Thule region (on the north-west coast of Greenland) to shoot musk oxen. The Canadian government undertook various efforts, over the course of the twentieth century, to populate the Queen Elizabeth Islands and thereby ensure effective control over the northern regions. This demonstration of sovereignty coincided with growing concerns for indigenous welfare and marked a concentration of decision-making at a higher, more centralised level of authority. Canadian planners saw the relocation as a reformatory experiment, one that might restore the people to their traditional way of life, by establishing isolated and dispersed all-native hunting-trapping camps that could be kept under surveillance.

There are many similarities between the High Arctic relocation and our less well-studied case. The thesis does not engage with Scott’s high-modern paradigm as such, but it is, nevertheless, of interest. If we affirm his analyses in broad terms, we may be able to discover the uniquely modern vision behind the colonising of Northeast Greenland.

The Source Material

Where primary sources were available and useful within the time practicable for this study, they were utilised. In other cases, secondary source material was relied upon. The source material derives from people representing the official authorities: both mission and trade. They express a European worldview – irrespective of whether the particular person, describing and reacting to the alien community, is Danish, Greenlandic or of mixed descent. Written sources that allow us to say something directly about the East Greenlanders’ perception of the encounters, or the structured relationship of domination and subordination, are scarce. The sources available

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nevertheless provide a broad range of information about conditions in East Greenland, and by piecing them together, we can form a reasonably clear picture of the society that emerged in the wake of colonisation. Few scholarly publications have examined the colonial history of East Greenland specifically. A notable exception is the publications of Joëlle Robert-Lamblin’s anthropological studies from Ammassalik. In *Ammassalik, East Greenland - End or Persistance [sic] of an Isolate?*, she presents the transformation of the society throughout the twentieth century, as a result of its contact with the Western world. In addition, two studies have been made on the early missionary work among the East Greenlanders. Finally, *Stories from Scoresbysund* is a recommended reading and a serious study source for anyone interested in the ethnohistory of the Greenlandic relocatees. Written by the Greenlandic-Danish artist Pia Arke, the book uncovers forgotten communal history and describes post-colonial experiences through personal narratives.

**Terminology**

Greenland is home to three regionally distinct populations of Inuit: the *Inuit/Kalaallit*, who historically occupied the western coasts, the *Iit* of East Greenland, and the *Inughuit* in the far north. Collectively, all Greenlanders are known as *Kalaallit*. Depending on the context, Greenlanders today may use the collective ethnonym *Inuit* to identify themselves. Inuit means ‘the people’ in Inuktitut (the Inuit language) and has come to stand for all the northern indigenous peoples once referred to as *Eskimos*.

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15 Pia Arke was born in Scoresbysund and launches her book with a personal manifesto: ‘Scoresbysund is a collection of local stories, woven by the threads of other stories, partly personal and familiar, partly much larger colonial and global stories. The private, the aesthetic and the geopolitical merge here in the middle of nowhere.’ Pia Arke, *Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonisation and Mapping = Ittoqqortoormiitit Oqalattuat = Scoresbysundhistorier* (Copenhagen: Pia Arke Selskabet & Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010), 9.
which has, except in Alaska, come to be considered pejorative. At the time of colonisation, however, East Greenlanders were neither familiar with the word Kalaallit, nor with Inuit as a self-descriptive term. Throughout this study, ‘indigenous’ (people/population) and (East/West) ‘Greenlanders’ are used as more or less interchangeable terms. André Béteille warns against casual use of the phrase ‘indigenous people’, confusedly applied to peoples anthropologists formerly referred to as ‘tribes’. The concept, although arguably a product of European colonialism, is nevertheless appropriate in the East Greenland context since it emphasises the fact that the East Greenlanders were indeed indigenous vis-à-vis the Europeans and the West Greenlanders, settling in, or visiting, the territory.

As a general rule, most places are named in the contemporary language of the Western colonisers and explorers, or, more specifically, the Danish or English forms in cases where they were in wide use. The European names are accompanied with (East) Greenlandic orthography, as far as practicable, and are subsequently replaced by the local forms of known localities. However, Ammassalik (or Angmagssalik in West Greenlandic) and Scoresby Sound are consistently applied when referring to the broader territory of the two colonies in question.

**Synopsis of Chapters**

It is the principal purpose of this study to ‘read into’ the socio-historical context of the establishment of Danish-Greenlandic colonies in Scoresby Sound, and analyse the political and moral relationship between the State; its agents; and the people relocated to Scoresby Sound. The three chapters draw inspiration from assemblage theory,

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20 There is a significant difference between the West Greenland dialect and that of East Greenland. In many cases, the West Greenland spelling still appears on official maps of Greenland but this study prefers to use East Greenlandic forms, as has already been stated.
adapted from the work of Deleuze and expanded by Manuel De Landa.\textsuperscript{21} Gaining attention to place-specific relations of power and agency is a fundamental element of assemblage thinking. A community may be seen as a complex socio-material assemblage composed of happenings and events; and of actors, objects, and ideas. Each assemblage has its particular historical trajectory where heterogeneous entities enter in relations with one another, and where agencies emerge.\textsuperscript{22} Assemblage thinking moves away from essential properties and refrains from describing space, practices and political struggles in terms of pre-determined hierarchies or a single organising principle.\textsuperscript{23} Along these lines, McFarlane argues that ‘actors, forms or processes are defined less by a pre-given property and more by the assemblages they enter and reconstitute.’\textsuperscript{24} Assemblage, according to McFarlane and Anderson, suggests a ‘certain ethos of engagement with the world’.\textsuperscript{25} They continue:

\begin{quote}
Assemblage thinking experiments with methodological and presentational practices in order to attend to a lively world of differences …. Montage, performative methods, thick description, stories – all have been used by geographers and others in an attempt to be alert to processes of [assemblage].
\end{quote}

Assemblages are productive; they produce new possibilities and realities. We can examine these fragments of reality, by gathering available sources and evidence, but we cannot recreate the reality of past times – or, closer to the point: such like pursuit will not inform the methodological perspective assumed in this study.

The first chapter presents the historical background necessary to understand Danish colonial policies and the country’s early quest for re-colonisation with overseas expansion in the North. Attention is devoted to the development of a government policy that sought to maintain scattered settlement in East Greenland. The second chapter naturally follows; it traces the advent and development of how an

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} For the most accessible and elaborate description of the notion of assemblage in Deleuze’s own words, see Gilles Deleuze and Clare Parnet, \textit{Dialogues} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 69; see also Manuel De Landa, \textit{New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity} (London and New York: Continuum, 2006).
\item \textsuperscript{22} See e.g. De Landa, \textit{New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity}, 5; and Kim Dovey, \textit{Becoming Places: Urbanism/Architecture/ Identity/Power} (London: Routledge, 2010), 16.
\item \textsuperscript{23} See e.g. Dovey, \textit{Becoming Places: Urbanism/Architecture/ Identity/Power}, 16–17.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ben Anderson and Colin McFarlane, ‘Assemblage and Geography,’ \textit{Area} 43 (2011): 126.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
international territorial conflict influenced the making of the Danish policy on Greenland and eventually led to the establishment of Danish-Greenlandic colonies in Scoresby Sound. Finally, the third and last chapter analyses how cultural difference was constructed in East Greenland through scientific romanticising of traditional hunter society. The chapter investigates the sentiments and motives of the authoring subjects, who arrived as strangers to East Greenland and stood as an organised entity against the indigenous population. A dialectical situation of inclusion and exclusion, coupled with cultural discrimination, characterised complex hierarchy of race and class. However, as will become apparent, these oppositions were arbitrary and inherently unstable. Inequalities were produced through different periods of cultural practices and policies. Each could at any given point in time be assembled differently.
Chapter One: Expansion of Danish Activity

Norse efforts to colonise Greenland began with Erik the Red’s (Old Norse: Eiríkr Þorvaldsson) voyage in the late tenth century. Hundreds of his Icelandic countrymen agreed to follow him and founded two settlements, both scattered within the southwestern fjords that were uninhabited at the time of colonisation. The Norse Greenlanders were eventually made subject to the Norwegian Crown and when Denmark and Norway united as a dual monarchy in 1380, the overseas dependencies of Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands became a part of its realm. The small diaspora adapted to the local conditions, but changing patterns of trade caused the settlements to dwindle, and shipping between Norway and Greenland eventually ceased in the late fourteenth century. All theories about the colony’s extinction remain speculative, but the last direct record from Greenland dates from 1409. According to written sources, the Western Settlement was deserted in the fourteenth century, and the Eastern Settlement presumably became depopulated sometime during the fifteenth century.

Norse disappearance from Greenland, however, did not mean that the island disappeared entirely from European consciousness. Each year from the sixteenth century onwards, English, Dutch, and Basque whalers sailed into the Greenland Sea. Archaeological evidence from the West Coast suggests repeated encounters between

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30 Arneborg, ‘Norse Greenland: Reflections on the Discussion of Depopulation.’
European sailors and the indigenous population. The Dutch in particular traded with the indigenous, which meant that they had early access to European metal goods, and gradually changed their hunting patterns to produce trade goods appealing to the Europeans. In addition to private trading, arranged purely for profit, the monarchs of the Danish-Norwegian kingdom tried to revive contact with the lost Norse colonies. King Christian I (1448-1481) and King Christian II (1513-1523), monarchs under the Kalmar Union, and King Frederik II (1559-1588), all organised expeditions, as early as 1472, but none were successful. Christian IV (1588-1648) organised several expeditions, with the same object, including one in 1605 led by the Scottish Admiral John Cunningham. His was the first Danish expedition to succeed in reaching Greenland.

Despite these early attempts, historians customarily credit the Norwegian vicar Hans Egede with opening Greenland for Dano-Norwegian re-colonisation and for revitalising interest in the island. He made his first voyage on behalf of the Danish king and arrived in Godthåb (now Nuuk), with a group of colonists, in 1721. His mission was to convert any small group of Norse people, or nordboer, commonly believed to be still living in Greenland, from Catholicism to Lutheran belief. Instead of descendants of the old colonists, he found only small bands of nomadic indigenous hunters who had emigrated from northern territories. Egede founded a colony in Godthåb and started to convert the heathen population to Christianity. The formal colonisation of Greenland thus commenced, but the trade was competitive, because the Dutch whalers, in particular, also traded for indigenous goods. Den Kongelige Grønlandske Handel, or KGH (Royal Greenlandic Trade Company), was established.

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in 1774 and replaced the private companies that had, until then, engaged in trading with Crown charters. KGH seized a monopoly on the trade and fortified the factories, or the kolonier (pl.), in an attempt to prevent the Dutch trade. The factories, characterised as a mission- and trade stations, were the effective social and economic centres of the colonial society. Great authority was delegated to the priests and the colony managers (kolonibestyrer) of each settlement. It was their responsibility to manage local affairs and dealings with the indigenous population.\textsuperscript{37}

**Colonial Governance Takes Shape in West Greenland**

Danish authorities regarded the Greenlandic population as an object of mission and as a potential source of trade revenue. The so-called ‘Instructions of 1782’ laid down the economic, social, and cultural principles of the Danish colonial system. The Instructions were a royal ordinance and the first major general regulation on European trade with the Greenlanders.\textsuperscript{38} Although the Instructions were presented as the ‘constitution of the protective monopoly’, they had legal implications for trade, whaling and mission employees only and did not provide legislation for those Greenlanders not employed by the state.\textsuperscript{39} The Instructions did, however, have a social engineering function and instituted certain moral standards; regulating relations between the colonial agents and the indigenous, by limitations and prohibitions.\textsuperscript{40} Native Greenlanders were to be protected from any ‘corruptive influence’ from European civilisation, and it was therefore strictly forbidden to trade in luxuries such as coffee and tea, or alcohol, as it would ‘ruin their health, pervert their style of life and make them want to loiter in the houses of Europeans.’\textsuperscript{41}


\textsuperscript{38} Louis Bobé, ed., ‘Instrux Fra Handelsdirektionen, 1782,’ *Meddelelser om Grønland* 55, no. 3 (1936); see also Sørensen, ‘Denmark-Greenland in the Twentieth Century.’


\textsuperscript{40} Petersen, ‘Colonialism as Seen from a Former Colonized Area.’

Concern for the indigenous population, as Ulrik Gad suggests, was not the primary motivation behind the protections provided by the Instructions – but rather the wish to secure a continuing supply of trade items. The ringed seal, its skin and blubber, largely sustained the local economy. The trade’s success and profitability were dependent upon the products bought from Greenlandic seal hunters, and it was critical that the Greenlandic society remained hunter-gatherers, or gode Gronlendere (‘good Greenlanders’) as it is expressed. The socio-economic strategy of the Trade, therefore, safeguarded the traditional, nomadic lifestyle. The Instructions revealed a particular anxiety of proximity between Greenlandic women and European men (‘seamen, colonial employees and other Europeans in the country’). Social and sexual intercourse with Greenlanders was discouraged or prohibited. Merchants, for instance, were not allowed to keep young Greenlandic maids and visits to the houses of Greenlanders were forbidden, particularly in ‘suspicous’ hours, or when the ‘men are out hunting’. Prospects of marriage between European men and ‘real’ Greenlandic women (virkelige Gronlænderinder) became restricted since sexual liaison could result in ‘mixed-race’ children (blanding) who might not adapt to a traditional lifestyle.

These endogamic principles drew social and racial boundaries between the colonisers and the inferior vassal population, which preserved relations of subordination. A complete spatial and social separation between the two populations was, of course, unachievable, but the division itself, as Christina Petterson suggests, placed Greenlanders ‘outside Danish law and its entitlements.’

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46 Ibid.
47 The term ‘blanding’ (sg.) for members of ‘mixed ethnic status’ was officially in use from 1760 and up until the 1901 census. See e.g. Hans-Erik Rasmussen, ‘Some Aspects of the Reproduction of the West Greenlandic Upper Social Stratum, 1750-1950,’ Arctic Anthropology 23, no. 1/2 (1986): 137–50.
48 Ibid.
49 Christina Petterson, Missionary, the Catechist, and the Hunter: Foucault, Protestantism and Colonialism (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 121.
Only those of mixed descent who had not been raised as hunters, or were otherwise ill-suited for hunting, could be given other trade opportunities.50 In the course of time, the children of mixed Dano-Greenlandic couples had easier access to education and employment within the colonial apparatus. In general, the blandinger were trained only for lower functionaries; i.e. as craftsmen, boatmen and store managers for the outposts – or women as midwives. The higher functionary posts were reserved for Danes.51 Similar principles applied in the Mission. Priests and higher clergy were most commonly European, but ‘mixed’ individuals were recruited as catechists.52 Fortune within the colonial system was thus administrated along the lines of a social stratification established by the Instructions. The ‘mixed-blood’ Greenlanders eventually had a decisive role in the administration of Greenland and formed a social stratum of Greenlandic elite who aspired for equality with the Danes.53

**Østerbygden and Danish Expeditions to the East Coast**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Danish state had trading stations dispersed along the west coast of Greenland.54 Conversely, the eastern side of Greenland remained an unknown territory outside Danish rule. Despite greater proximity to Europe, it is inaccessible most of the year. The southern coast is mountainous and broken by glaciers and fjords, which make travel on land almost impossible. Additionally, the strong East Greenland Current flows from the north carrying ice against the coast, causing treacherous conditions for any vessel. The Danish colonisers, however, hadn’t abandoned all hope of finding the nordboer and it


51 See e.g. Rud, ‘A Correct Admixture: The Ambiguous Project of Civilising in Nineteenth-Century Greenland’; and Sørensen, ‘Denmark-Greenland in the Twentieth Century.’

52 See e.g. Petterson, *Missionary, the Catechist, and the Hunter: Foucault, Protestantism and Colonialism*.


54 Forchhammer, ‘Political Participation in Greenland in the 19th Century, State Hegemony, and Emancipation.’
was still a common belief that one of the two Norse settlements in Greenland was situated on the island’s eastern coast, namely the Eastern Settlement (Østerbygd, or Old Norse: Eystribyggð). In 1751-53 Peder Olsen Walløe, a trader in Greenland, made a trip in an umiak (a women’s boat) to East Greenland’s southern coast, as far as Uunartoq Fjord [60°32’N].

Although unsuccessful in finding any Norse society, Walløe became the first known European to make contact with the indigenous inhabitants of the Southeast Coast. Outlying areas were beyond Danish reach at the time, but even the coast north of Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord [73°N] was inhabited somewhat into the nineteenth century. Extensive European whaling during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Greenland Sea may well have brought whalers from the coastal waters of the Svalbard archipelago to the northeast coast of Greenland, but no accounts exist of encounters, nor is there any archaeological evidence that indicates they ever landed. William Scoresby Jr., an English whaler and scientist, was probably the first European to discover parts of Scoresby Sound/Kangersuttuaq, which he charted in 1822. Scoresby believed he saw traces of human settlement but was unable to reach the shore for further inspection. A year later Charles Douglas Clavering, the captain of HMS Griper, and his crew made their way through ice floes and reached Gael Hamkes Bay (discovered by the Dutch whaler Gael Hamkes in 1654). There they met a small indigenous group: twelve men, women and children – the first and last living residents on the Northeast Coast ever contacted.

The English achievements and cartographic activities in the northern regions caught King Frederik VI’s (1808-1839) attention. Since the eastern coast of

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57 Ibid.
Greenland was isolated, and almost certainly very sparsely populated, the requirements of effective occupation were insubstantial and did not necessarily include extensive administrative acts by any state.\textsuperscript{62} The question of sovereignty became significant. The Danish government equipped the 1828-30 expedition led by Wilhelm A. Graah, a lieutenant of the Royal Danish Navy. The northern limit of the expedition was to be the ‘southernmost extremity of the land seen by Captain Scoresby in 1822’ and its aim was to ‘seek for traces of the old Icelandic colonists supposed to have inhabited these coasts.’\textsuperscript{63} The expedition encountered a dispersed population of about 630 indigenous residing on the Southeast Coast but no evidence of Nordic settlements. While they reached only 550 km up the coast, to Dannebrog Island [65°15’N, just south of Ammassalik] where a flag was raised, Graah nevertheless concluded that Østerbygd had never been on the east coast of Greenland.\textsuperscript{64} Lieutenant Gustav Holm, who commanded the so-called Women’s Boat Expedition (\textit{Konebaads-Expeditionen til Grønlands Østkyst 1883-1885}), confirmed Graah’s persuasion.\textsuperscript{65}

Holm’s assignment was to continue where Graah had left and, ideally, locate an unknown indigenous group who were rumoured to live north of the area explored by Graah. Holm’s expedition travelled on four umiaks, with five indigenous women rowers for each, and assisted by local men, rowing alongside in kayaks. Holm discovered that, after Graah’s expedition, the Southeast Coast had become almost deserted. He counted only 120 people but continued further north, and reached the Ammassalik district on 1 September 1884, ‘whose population knew nothing about European commodities, apart from iron, which was a great rarity.’\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Wilhelm A. Graah, \textit{Narrative of an Expedition to the East Coast of Greenland, Sent by Order of the King of Denmark, in Search of the Lost Colonies, under the Command of Captn. W. A. Graah of the Danish Royal Navy}, trans. G. G. Macdougall (London: John W. Parker, 1837), cited from the introduction chapter (p. x).
  \item The anthropologist Helge Larsen revised the population estimates made in 1830 to 536 people. The population had already declined drastically by 1883, when Lieutenant Gustav Holm surveyed the same area. See Helge Larsen, ‘The Exploration of Greenland,’ in \textit{Greenland, Past and Present}, ed. K. Hertling et al. (Copenhagen: E. Henriksen, 1970), 139–54.
  \item Gustav Holm, ‘\textit{Konebaads-Expeditionen til Grønlands Østkyst 1883-85},’ \textit{Geografisk Tidsskrift} 8 (86 1885): 79–98.
  \item Gustav Holm and Thomas V. Garde, \textit{Den Danske Konebaads-Expedition til Grønlands Østkyst, Populært Beskreven} (Copenhagen: Forlagsbureauet, 1887), 25.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
colleagues navigated through the region during the ten months they stayed in Ammassalik and had visitors coming to their station from the distant parts around Ammassalik Fjord. Holm and his junior leader Thomas Vilhelm Garde estimated a population of about 413 people. Holm charted the coast from Cape Farewell to Ammassalik and claimed the entire territory for the Danish Kingdom. The men built a cairn on Eric the Red Island and hoisted the red-and-white Dannebrog (the Danish flag) (Fig. 3).

The Danish government was still alarmed about the new interest awakened in Arctic exploration and sponsored another scientific expedition under the leadership of Lieutenant Carl Hartvig Ryder of the Royal Danish Navy. The objective of the East Greenland expedition (1891–92 Den østgrønlandske Expedition) was to extend Holm’s exploration, from Aammassalik and northward to the entrance to Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord, discovered by a German expedition in 1870. The commission overseeing the expedition emphasised the need to survey the span from 66°N to 73°N, as this offered an almost virgin area for geographical research:

The issue here is not that Denmark should contend with the greater nations, whose assumed duty is to resolve far-reaching problems. We must confine our actions to the proposal submitted by the government, and conduct out investigations quite rightly expected to be done by Denmark and Denmark only. These concern, as shall become apparent, only the territories that either belong to the Danish Crown, or regions bordering such territories. If we consider their location, being so close to the busy seas of the civilised world, we must agree that these lands must not be left unexplored in our time.

Ryder’s expedition entered Scoresby Sound on 31 July 1891 and penetrated deep into the large fjord system. They found a suitable harbour on Denmark’s Island (Ujuaakajiip Nunaq), named so to emphasise national interests, and conducted scientific research from there. Ryder managed to explore and map parts of the

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67 Ibid., 96.
68 Holm, ‘Konebaads-Expeditionen til Grønlands Østkyst 1883-85,’ 84.
69 Higgins, Exploration History and Place Names of Northern East Greenland, 22–3.
branching fjords but had to abandon his endeavour in the extensive region between Ammassalik and Scoresby Sound.\footnote{Carl H. Ryder, ‘Beretning om den Østgrønlandske Expedition 1891-92,’ \textit{Meddelelser om Grønland} 17, no. 1 (1895).}

Six years later, Georg C. Amdrup led the Carlsberg Fund Expedition (\textit{1898–1900 Carlsbergfondets Expedition til Øst-Gronland}) to map the still unsurveyed area between Ammassalik and Scoresby Sund. Amdrup began his expedition with a botanist and a physician, and a crew of one naval officer and a mechanic. The first destination for these five men was a fjord called Kangerdlugssuaq, midway between Ammassalik and Scoresby Sound.\footnote{Georg C. Amdrup, ‘Beretning om Kystexpeditionen Langs Grønlands Østkyst, 1900,’ \textit{Meddelelser om Grønland} 27, no. 4 (1902).} They explored as far as Nualik, about 315 km north of Ammassalik, before returning. The second half of the Carlsberg Fund Expedition was larger than the first. Amdrup left Copenhagen again on 14 June 1900 with botanists, geologists, a zoologist, a geodetist, and a watercolour artist – as well as sailors Søren Nielsen and Ejnar Mikkelsen, and petty officer N.A. Jacobsen.\footnote{Four men of this party, Christian Kruuse, Dr. Otto Nordenskjöld, Lieutenant Johan P. Koch, and Ejnar Mikkelsen would later achieve renown on their own polar expeditions. See Apollonio, \textit{Lands That Hold One Spellbound: A Story of East Greenland}, 91.} This time, the expedition claimed the coast from Dannebros Island to Scoresby Sound and named it for His Majesty the King of Denmark \textit{King Christian IX Land} – a name previously used by Holm for the Ammassalik region but designating now a much-extended territory.\footnote{Amdrup, ‘Beretning om Kystexpeditionen Langs Grønlands Østkyst, 1900,’ 253.}

Amdrup gathered three men in Nualik to signal the pivotal moment: Officer Jakobsen fired the salute, carpenter Søren Nielsen had his hand held high carrying a small flag, and young Ejnar Mikkelsen (\textit{see chapter 2}) stood in for the cheering crowd.\footnote{Palle Koch, \textit{Kaptajnen: Logbog over Polarforskeren Ejnar Mikkelssens Togt Gennem Tilværelsen} (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1980), 38.} Amdrup, acting as the photographer, eternalised the moment (Fig. 4):

\begin{quote}
Once again the old \textit{Dannebrog} was being waved in this place, while 9 shots were fired in a brisk cadence and our cheers resounded in the mountains.\footnote{Amdrup, ‘Beretning om Kystexpeditionen Langs Gronlands Østkyst, 1900,’ 251–253.}
\end{quote}
Old Settlements and Depopulation in Northeast Greenland

Amdrup and his crew made good use of their time and collected ethnographic objects across indigenous ancestral geographies. Of particular interest were the many stone structures left by previous settlements, such as house walls, tent rings, grave cairns, and food caches. In Nualik, they found four well-preserved houses. In one of the houses, a so-called ‘dead house’, they discovered skeletons of the inhabitants who ‘must undoubtedly have fallen victims to some awful catastrophe famine or poisoning.’ Wherever they went, the lands were long abandoned but had, apparently, once sustained relatively high populations. Amdrup was curious as to what could have caused the depopulation, and whether the territories could sustain an indigenous population or not. He examined what external circumstances would present the best conditions for the inhabitants in their struggle for existence. He meticulously compared all the disparate territories to the landscape of the Ammassalik region, where people still subsisted by hunting, hoping to be able to conclude from the ‘orographic nature of a stretch of coast whether or not it is adapted for Eskimo habitation.’ Other factors, however, such as the prospect, or the unattainability, of relations between communities did not feature in his article as possible determinants for human existence.

The exact nature and causes of the depopulation are still unresolved. European whaling in the Greenland Sea might have influenced the development but large-scale sealing on the ice off the East Coast was probably a more significant factor. It is certainly quite plausible that small groups gradually migrated southwards, but little is known of the course involved. From Cape Brewster, on the south of Scoresby Sound, the Blosseville Coast continues. It is a steep coast with few places to land and often closed by an impassable ice barrier. Despite inaccessibility, there are sources of information that suggest that people occasionally made their way into the resource

78 Ibid., 293.
rich areas in Southeast Greenland. William Thalbitzer collected oral history in the Ammassalik community about the last known migration, which probably took place at the end of the eighteenth century:

Later, people journeyed from Ammasalik northwards and there met with others coming from the north, who called themselves ‘Taawin’ and who were clothed in white anoraks, embroidered with black patterns …. From the north these came to Ammassalik and lived there one winter …. Thereafter 10 of them returned … and increased the number of inhabitants at Ammassalik.

Sørensen and Gulløv suggest that the inhabitants could have remained in Northeast Greenland longer if the cold extremes they experienced from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century had been absent. Nevertheless, they stress that the ‘island-like geography’ of the region was doubtless one of the most problematic factors. Groups who entered the area had a scarce chance of maintaining contact with other populations and lived more or less isolated from other societies from the fifteenth century onwards.

Migration to Cape Farewell

Food shortages in the nineteenth century inevitably brought extreme hardship for the inhabitants in East Greenland. Gustav Holm cites his East Greenlandic informants, who reported that the total catches of hooded and harp seals were declining in Ammassalik. Their accounts give a clear indication of the increasing European

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hunting: ‘From time to time people find dead seals on the ice, with the skins and blubber removed.’ In 1828, when Graah made his expedition, the number of the people living south of Ammassalik was estimated to be around six hundred, but some of the population had already migrated west. Around 450 people settled in Southwest Greenland during the first phase of emigration, which lasted to 1831. Emigration then slowed sharply, but Holm’s Women’s Boat Expedition may have stimulated it again. An increasing number of Ammassalikers as Gustav Holm called them, went around Cape Farewell to settle in South Greenland. The entire inhabited East coast of Greenland was soon threatened with consequent depopulation.

The majority of the immigrating East Greenlanders settled in Friedrichsthal (Narsarmijit, Danish: Frederiksdal, 50 km north Cape Farewell), where the Moravian Brethren of Hermnhat ran their mission from 1824 to 1900. Encounters between East Greenlanders and both Europeans and West Greenlanders were not recent phenomena. During the eighteenth century, the population of settlements in the Cape Farewell area served as intermediaries, in a trading system that connected East- and West Greenland. Traditional products, as well as European goods, were traded in journeys from East Greenland to Cape Farewell, or from Cape Farewell up the West Coast to the Danish colonies. These long trading journeys gradually ended as the Danish trade extended southwards, but the journeys of the East Greenlanders continued until the end of the nineteenth century. The mission station in Friedrichsthal was well situated on the route which the immigrating East Greenlanders followed to the nearest trading station (Nanortalik, and later Pamialluk). During the years, when the mission was operated, between 700 and 800 people

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85 Holm, ‘Ethnologisk Skizze af Angmagsalikerne,’ 52.
travelled from East Greenland and joined the Moravian congregation.\textsuperscript{91} The final emigrants set out from Southeast Greenland, at the end of the nineteenth century, leaving the previously populated coast desolate.\textsuperscript{92} The Ammassalikers were now very isolated, being the only remaining inhabitants on the East Coast.\textsuperscript{93} The old trading network had broken down on account of the sparse population, and the Ammassalikers had to make the entire journey to the Cape Farewell district for trading.\textsuperscript{94} Whereas in previously, the Ammassalikers had returned from these journeys, there was clear evidence that the trend was changing.

It is important to note that the concentration of settlement in South Greenland took place in the absence of state planning and control. This development of ingathering was, eventually, resisted in preference for a policy of dispersal. The influx of migrants and the prospect of complete desertion worried Danish authorities since it could affect Denmark’s title to East Greenland. Further worries included, for example; would Southwest Greenland become overpopulated and that European civilisation would have an adverse effect on the immigrants. Polar explorer and naval officer Garde argued that by establishing a trading station on the East Coast, the government would ‘prevent further overcrowding in Southwest Greenland and, what is more, it could prevent the Eastlanders [Østlendingerne] from coming too headlong into Civilisation and free trade.’\textsuperscript{95} A trading post was therefore established near Itilleq on Eggers Island, Greenland’s southernmost island, to shorten the journey from the east.\textsuperscript{96} It was a hopeful attempt to stop the migration and ensure that the East Greenlandic population remained and could sustain itself by hunting.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 105–9.
\textsuperscript{92} Graah, \textit{Undersøgelses-Reise til Østkysten af Grønland Efter Kongelig Befaling Udført i Aarene 1828-31}, 126.
\textsuperscript{93} Mikkelsen and Sveistrup, ‘The East Greenlanders Possibilities of Existence, Their Production and Consumption,’ 34.
\textsuperscript{95} Thomas V. Garde, ‘Om østgrønlændernes Rejser og Deres Fremtidsudsigter,’ \textit{Geografisk Tidsskrift} 10 (1890): 189; see also Holm, ‘Konebaads-Expeditionen til Grønlands Østkyst 1883-85.’
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 119.
**Founding Trade Station in Tasiilaq**

All further plans for new outposts in South Greenland were deferred when the Danish government decided to establish a new trading- and a mission station in Ammassalik. The Greenland Administration, in a Memorandum dated 26 November 1886, published the general guidelines.98 Ideologically, a benevolent protectionism justified this geographical expansion of Danish state structures and provided an overarching rationale for the colonisation. The trading intercourse was to be established for the sake of the indigenous population, irrespective of whether it paid or not. Trade was to be restricted to firearms, ironware, tobacco and a few articles of clothing. There was to be no trade in blubber. The object of these regulations was to avert temptation and prevent the population from depriving itself of essential hunting products, so as not to destroy the commercial basis of the trade.99 Finally, it is evident that the Mission was supposed to play an important role, in a broad civilising agenda but also as a crucial component of the Danish annexation of East Greenland:

> The inhabitants of Christian IX's Land being heathen, the first object of the Government must presumably be to found a mission station in the country; when in the future the mission is kept up by the Government, the latter will in the best possible manner maintain Christian IX's Land as a Danish possession.100

Gustav Holm was given the assignment to found the trade station. He arrived with *Hvidbjørn* to Tasiilaq (in former days Angmagssalik or Ammassalik) on 26 August 1894, carrying the two agents in charge of the colony: the Danish missionary Frederik Carl Peter Rüttel and the Dano-Greenlander Johan Petersen, colony manager. Johan Petersen knew the Ammassalikers well since he had been to the region twice before, first as an interpreter in the Women’s Boat Expedition and again as a member of Ryder’s expedition in 1892.101 Ten years had passed since Holm’s first visit to this remote region, and the population was significantly reduced. It now consisted of only

98 See Mikkelsen and Sveistrup, ‘The East Greenlanders Possibilities of Existence, Their Production and Consumption.’
99 Ibid., 41–2; see also Robert-Lamblin, ‘Ammassalik, East Greenland - End or Persistance of an Isolate?: Anthropological and Demographical Study on Change.’
293 persons compared to the earlier 416 Holm had counted.\textsuperscript{102} Without this intervention, the entire coast of East Greenland would most likely have depopulated with the course of time. The colonisation effectively stopped the steady decrease, which had occurred throughout most of the 1800s, and at least some of the departers returned to their original settlements. During the first decades of colonisation and development, there was a general population increase in the Ammassalik district.\textsuperscript{103}

The colony was intended to serve all the indigenous settlements in the Ammassalik- and Sermiligaq fjords. But perhaps more importantly, it demonstrated Denmark’s claim to sovereignty over all Greenland and prevented Norwegian vessels from taking advantage of existing hunting opportunities.\textsuperscript{104} For this reason, Holm was later remembered for his part in securing the recognition of Danish sovereignty by other contracting states, as is evident from Kaj Birket-Smith’s obituary:

\begin{quote}
Just a few men amongst us could be honoured with the British term ‘empire builder’ – Gustav Holm was one of them!\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

From its small beginning, the station grew with the addition of administrative staff. The colony manager was allowed one assistant, a deputy head of the trade, and three catechists assisted the priest: two from West Greenland and one native East Greenland, all educated in the Seminarium (teacher training college) in Godthåb (Nuuk). A trained West Greenlandic midwife served the community.\textsuperscript{106} Inhabitants of the trade station were West Greenlandic and Europeans mainly. Traditional winter settlements remained dispersed at first. No natives lived near Kong Oscars Havn (Tasiilaq) when Gustav Holm selected the site for the trading station; it was near a sheltered harbour but was never a suitable hunting ground.\textsuperscript{107} The Mission, however, considered it necessary for religious reasons to keep the population as close to the church as practicable. The missionary was unable to visit the most remote settlements during the winter (October-April) and consequently could convert only those who

\textsuperscript{102} Gustav Holm and Johan Petersen, ‘Angmagssalik Distrikt,’ \textit{Meddelelser om Grønland} 61 (1921): 560–661.
\textsuperscript{103} Robert-Lamblin, ‘Ammassalik, East Greenland - End or Persistance of an Isolate?: Anthropological and Demographical Study on Change.’
\textsuperscript{106} Holm and Petersen, ‘Angmagssalik Distrikt,’ 637.
\textsuperscript{107} Holm and Petersen, ‘Angmagssalik Distrikt.’
lived close to the trade station. Those who lived further away and wanted to receive baptism had to winter in Tasiilaq.108

The settlement’s first missionary, the Danish cleric Frederik C. P. Rüttel, performed the earliest baptism in Ammassalik in 1899 – and Kristian Rosing baptised the last heathen East Greenlander in 1921, celebrating the second centenary of Hans Egede’s colonisation.109 Many native Ammassalikers who came to prepare themselves for baptism were subsequently unwilling to return to their hunting grounds. Thalbitzer notes, during his 1905/06 winter stay in Tasiilaq, that many took up dwelling in the koloni, and he is distraught by the possible consequences: ‘Is it necessary that they should be subjected to hunger, in order to receive the instruction their baptism demands?’110 This particular dilemma was well known in Greenland, as Poul Ingerslev notes: ‘This gave rise to the almost classic Greenlandic-Danish problem: mission contra trading, or mission contra prosperity.’111 The trading station offered some wage-earning possibilities, so the number of East Greenlanders living in Tasiilaq rose sharply at the turn of the century.112 The colonial authorities found the situation far from ideal and, for that reason, issued an order in 1905 to the effect that no family was allowed to stay at the main settlement for more than two years consecutively.113

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Chapter Two:

Relocating the Ammassalikers

Alfred Bertelsen, a physician in Uummannaq, was the first to propose in 1910 that hunters and their families should be dispersed to new settlements. He attributed the disappearance of nomadic lifestyle to the concentration of people in a few colonies, which resulted in depletion of resources in adjacent territories. Bertelsen did not mention East Greenland, but a year later a young assistant of the Greenland Administration, Harald Olrik, argued for the colonisation of the Scoresby Sound region. He expressed a common concern, that the west coast of Greenland would, shortly, become overpopulated. Olrik demonstrates the declining standard of living in West Greenland and summarises what was known about the climate and the wildlife in Scoresby Sound. He refers to both Amdrup’s and Ryder’s expeditions to support his belief that there is indeed a plenitude of wild animals to hunt. Olrik does not disregard the fact that former settlements were for some reasons desolate, but invokes Ryder’s conjecture that ‘[t]he population from Scoresby Sound did not die out, but for the most part emigrated.’ Olrik provides an essentialist, and somewhat romantic explanation for the depopulation, rather than look for external causes:

It might well be that hunting deteriorated and they were thus forced to head south. This is, however, implausible. It is, in fact, much more feasible that they migrated, because it is their nature to be nomads.

Olrik carefully expounds his ideas as well as the procedure for the execution of his plans and postulates that the Administration should take the initiative and commission

115 Carl H. Ryder, ‘Om den Tidligere Eskimoiske Bebyggelse af Scoresby Sund,’ *Meddelelser om Grønland* 17, no. 6 (1895): 340.
the preparation. *Det Grønlandske Selskab*\(^{117}\) published the proposition in 1916, although not with the intention of realising the plans: ‘partly because of the war, partly because the Greenland Administration, in any case, is currently preoccupied with improving living conditions for the larger population in West Greenland and is developing programs with the aim of creating new industries.’\(^{118}\) West Greenland was being subjected to social and political reforms at the time, influenced by liberal democratic movements in Denmark. The potential for social democracy in Greenland reached its early high point with the establishment of local assemblies in 1908, which eventually gave elected Greenlanders the opportunity to participate in local government.\(^{119}\) Besides administrative reforms, the revisionists wanted to modernise the economy. The executive board of the Administration, therefore, anticipated that a modern fishing industry would soon be developed in Greenland and provide employment for part of the population, either directly by fishing, or indirectly through handling and processing the catch.\(^{120}\)

**Dispute With Norway Over the Eastern Side**

Geopolitical motives do not dominate Olrik’s treatise, but the question is raised for purposes of a rational justification why the situation requires urgent action. Scottish and Norwegian hunters maintained a foreign presence in the region, and while the Northeast Coast was uninhabited, a certain risk persisted that it could be claimed by another state:

> Only then, will other nations respect Denmark’s right of ownership, when we have taken possession of the land, and when foreign ships have lost all right to navigate freely upon the coasts to continue the reckless hunting. Under those conditions, the eastern territories will start to resemble West Greenland – a protected coast where the country’s inhabitants will have

\(^{117}\) A society founded in 1905 by returning Danish officials, to provide information regarding the condition in Greenland and advise Danish politicians.

\(^{118}\) Olrik, ‘Forslag Om at Bebygge Scoresby Sund-Egnen I Østgrønland Ved Vestgrønlandske Sælfangere,’ cited from the introduction chapter (p. vii).

\(^{119}\) See e.g. Sorensen, ‘Denmark-Greenland in the Twentieth Century.’

\(^{120}\) Ejnar Mikkelsen, *De østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie*, Gyldendal (Copenhagen, 1934), 114–15; and Olrik, ‘Forslag om at Bebygge Scoresby Sund-Eggen i Østgrønland ved Vestgnølandske Sælfangere.’
exclusive rights to fish and hunt. In other words, the thought has been: ‘Greenland for Greenlanders’ – *understood in the widest sense.*

Hunting consisted not only in seasonal sealing. Norwegian fox-trapping in Northeast Greenland commenced in 1908 when Norwegian hunters wintered on Clavering Island, off Gael Hamkes Bay. Norway had gained independence just three years earlier, after six centuries of being in a subordinate position to Denmark (1319-1814) and Sweden (1814-1905). Being a young nation, Norway needed to develop a self-understanding, which it did, as Peter Fjågesund notes, through a ‘nationalist revival emphasising the ancient northern legacy.’ The country had lost its former North Atlantic dependencies as a result of the two international Kiel Treaties of 1814, but the early polar explorers bolstered a political sense of Norwegian Arctic imperialism. Fridtjof Nansen, for instance, became a national hero after leading a team who made the first crossing of the Greenland interior in 1888. Norwegian hunting should be understood in this historical setting: although the activities were economically insignificant, they had great symbolic value, which would later support Norwegian claims to sovereignty in these regions.

That Danish interest in its Arctic dependency was growing became evident when King Christian X’s (1912-1947) became the first king to visit Greenland in 1921 (Fig. 5). The brief official visit necessitated a clarification on the question of sovereignty. Many countries responded favourably to Denmark’s request and

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121 Olrik, ‘Forslag om at Bebygge Scoresby Sund-Egnen i Østgrønland ved Vestgrønlandske Sælfangere,’ 131; *author’s italics.*
122 See e.g. Peter Schmidt-Mikkelsen, *North-East Greenland 1908-60, the Trapper Era* (Cambridge, 2008); and Mikkelsen, *De østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie,* 125.
124 When Norway was ceded to Sweden, Denmark was compensated with Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. In the transition from Danish to Swedish rule, Norway was allowed to keep its constitution and thereby its internal sovereignty. See e.g. Roald Berg, ‘Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 1814: A Geopolitical and Contemporary Perspective,’ *Scandinavian Journal of History* 39, no. 3 (2014): 265–86; and Ole Feldbæk, ‘De Nordatlantiske Øer og Freden i Kiel 1814,’ *Historisk Tidsskrift* 16, no. 4 (1995): 24–34.
submitted the required recognition statements. On 10 May 1921, the Danish Government at long last claimed that Denmark had acquired sovereignty over all of Greenland. KGH’s trade monopoly, as well as the navigation ban that had long existed in West Greenland, was subsequently extended to include the far-reaching and mostly uninhabited East Coast. The Norwegians felt their interests in Northeast Greenland threatened because of the Danish annexation, which led to a struggle between the two countries over jurisdiction. The Norwegians insisted that Eastern Greenland should be conceived of as terra nullius (land belonging to no one). They developed a telegraph station in Myggbukta [73°30’N] in 1922 as retaliation for the Danish territorial extension, an initiative that moreover stimulated a series of Norwegian trapping- and exploratory expeditions to the northern parts of Greenland.

A compromise agreement between the two countries was made in 1924. It abolished the monopoly extension, apart from the inhabited area of Ammassalik, and opened East Greenland, whereby Norwegian hunters could continue their economic activities. This agreement gave sealers legal rights they had not enjoyed before and established the right to erect permanent stations in hitherto protected territories. What is more, article six of the agreement specifically mentions a potential settlement in Scoresby Sound:

Insofar as the proposed establishment of an Eskimo settlement in Scoresby Sound is implemented, this Agreement shall not be a hindrance to specific provisions being drawn up, consistent with the interests of the indigenous population in Greenland, nor to land being reserved for their use, as deemed necessary.

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127 The impetus came from the United States, because the Americans wished to purchase the Danish West Indies. See Janice Cavell, ‘Historical Evidence and the Eastern Greenland Case,’ *Arctic* 61, no. 4 (2008): 433–41.
128 Ibid.
130 See e.g. Schmidt-Mikkelsen, *North-East Greenland 1908-60, the Trapper Era;* and Cavell, ‘Historical Evidence and the Eastern Greenland Case.’
131 See e.g. Cavell, ‘Historical Evidence and the Eastern Greenland Case.’
Possession of a trading station most definitely signalled an effective control of that particular territory, for the mother country in question. The agreement does not rule out Norway initiating the colonisation. Using native Greenlanders in expansionist claims of territorial sovereignty could thus turn out to be a double-edged sword. Domestic commentators were well aware of the possibility that the competitor could just as well employ the quite recently colonised East Greenlanders. Dr Jur. Knud Berlin argues in *Berlingske Tidende* on 19 February 1924:

> How remarkable is it, then, that not a single word states that it must be a Danish settlement …. Judged by the statement alone, a Norwegian Eskimo settlement is not excluded, if a sufficient number of Eskimos in East Greenland voluntarily render themselves subservient to Norwegian sovereignty, which no one could prevent them doing …. [It is evident] that the Eskimos in East Greenland can be subjects not only of Denmark but Norway as well. The Danish government must act quickly if Denmark wants to ensure national sovereignty in Scoresby Sound.\(^{134}\)

**Interim Period of Preparation**

Upon the publication of Harald Olrik’s proposal, the colonisation of Scoresby Sound became a matter of public debate. Even though the government did not support the plan, it nevertheless piqued some interest from Greenland enthusiasts – Ejnar Mikkelsen among others. When the disputes between Denmark and Norway became intense in 1922, he approached Harald Olrik. Mikkelsen was very critical of the agreement between Norway and Denmark and used his position as a journalist for *Nationalttidende* (published by *Den Ferlewske Presse*) to publicise his views. Mikkelsen scorched what he perceived as a general sluggishness of the Administration and the Ministry of the Interior.\(^{135}\) The governmental initiative in this matter was the foundation of a hunting company in 1919 – the *A/S Østgrønlandsk Kompagni* – for the purpose of sending Danish hunters to Northeast Greenland so that the increasing, and efficient, Norwegian hunting in the area could be curtailed. The whole enterprise proved rather unsuccessful; hunting was not economically feasible, and a few hunters even died of scurvy. Moreover, navigation was much more challenging than expected and the company’s ship, *Teddy*, was not able to make its

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way to Scoresby Sound, neither in the summer of 1922 nor in the following year when it became lost in the ice.\footnote{136}{Birthe Lauritsen, 	extit{Fangstmandsliv og de Danske Fangstkompagnier i Nordøstgrønland 1919-52} (Copenhagen: Tom Høyem, 1984), 59; see also Schmidt-Mikkelsen, 	extit{North-East Greenland 1908-60, the Trapper Era}.}

Mikkelsen considered it a crucial mistake to send European hunters to Northeast Greenland. The conditions there were so unusual, in his opinion, that they required people who were accustomed to this kind of hunt from early childhood.\footnote{137}{See Mikkelsen, 	extit{De Østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie}; and Koch, 	extit{Kaptajnen: Logbog over Polarforskeren Ejnar Mikkelsens Togt Gennem Tilværelsen}, 156–7.} Mikkelsen realised that the existence of the company was an impediment of any other independent undertakings:

\begin{quote}
\cite{138}{Mikkelsen, 	extit{De Østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie}, 119.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
[A]ll attempts to exploit East Greenland’s hunting opportunities with the land’s own children had to be abandoned – or, at best, be suspended until Danish hunters had proven the impossibility of obtaining basic earnings for Europeans from the rugged coasts of East Greenland.\footnote{138}{Ejnar Mikkelsen, 	extit{Med 'Grønland' Til Scoresbysund}, Gyldendal (Copenhagen, 1925), 11.}
\end{quote}

A party of interested enthusiasts founded the 	extit{Scoresby Sound Committee} on 26 March 1924, to promote and facilitate the establishment of a colony in East Greenland. Founding members were: 	extit{Viceadmiral} Carl F. Wandel (president), 	extit{Commander} Gustav Holm, 	extit{Dr Phil.} Louis Bobé, 	extit{Royal Inspector of South Greenland} Ole Bendixen, 	extit{Ship-owner} Christen Kraemer, 	extit{Advocate to the Supreme Court} and 	extit{Co-owner of the Ferlewske Press} Carl Levis (cashier), 	extit{Editor} Valdemar Galster and Ejnar Mikkelsen (vise-president and later president), then a journalist for 	extit{Nationaltidende}.\footnote{139}{The 	extit{Ferslewske Press Syndicate} was from the start a robust and vocal supporter of the enterprise. The Committee’s primary purpose was to ‘facilitate economic development as well as promote closer ties between East Greenland and the West Greenlandic colonies and Denmark.’\footnote{140}{Scoresby Sound Committee. (1924, March 26). [Minutes of meeting]. A370 ‘Scoresbysund komiteen’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 1), Copenhagen, Denmark.} The first task was to start a major national collection to provide funds to establish the colony since the state had clearly indicated that it would not finance the venture.

The plans succeeded and popular support of the plans increased in parallel with growing criticism from Norway.\footnote{141}{The collection soon had enough subscribers,}
to warrant the undertakings, but the Committee had yet to secure political support.\textsuperscript{142} The three political bourgeois parties largely approved the plan, while the Social Democrats were worried about the plight of \textit{A/S Østgrønlands Kompagni} and warned against repeating an experiment of similar nature.\textsuperscript{143} Harald Olrik’s approach was still the basis of the proposition, and the Committee asked for permission to relocate hunters and their families from the Northwest Coast to Scoresby Sound. While adopting, for the most part, Olrik’s plan, the Committee nevertheless requested that the colony should be principally, if not wholly, a private affair. The colony would, accordingly, belong to the colonists although administered by the Committee.\textsuperscript{144} No doubt this design was inspired by Knud Rasmussen’s Thule station, a trading post established in North Greenland (1910) by Rasmussen among the Inughuit (formerly known as ‘Polar Eskimos’, the northernmost people living in Greenland).\textsuperscript{145}

The Ministry of the Interior was utterly against providing a private party monopoly for carrying out commercial activities and refused to authorise the Committee to act on behalf of the State in this matter. What is more, it rejected the suggestion that people from West Greenland should be relocated:

\begin{quote}
The Ministry cannot confer the right, to transfer Greenlanders from their current residence to Scoresby Sound, to a private company. In the Ministry's opinion, the West Greenlanders should absolutely not be influenced in any manner whatsoever so as to cause them to leave their homeland on the west coast of Greenland, where they now reside, and the living conditions are relatively secure; with access to church and school and where they live in proximity to their family. It is not sensible to transfer them hundreds of mile away to an entirely unknown and deserted territory, where they are unfamiliar with the hunting opportunities, and where there can be no certainty that the land offers better conditions than they have now.\textsuperscript{146}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnoteref{142} See e.g. Mikkelsen, \textit{De Østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie}.
\footnoteref{143} Mikkelsen, \textit{Med ’Grønland’ til Scoresbysund}, 13.
\footnoteref{144} Scoresby Sound Committee. (1924, March 26). [Minutes of meeting]. A370 ‘Scoresbysund komiteen’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 1), Copenhagen, Denmark.
\footnoteref{146} Ministry of the Interior. (1924, June 4). [Letter to the Scoresby Sound Committee]. A094 ‘Korrespondance, redegørelser, diverse optegnelser mm. (Ejnarr Mikkelsen)’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 3, Folder 39), Copenhagen, Denmark.
\end{footnotes}
We can see in the above quote latent aspects of the conflict over whether colonial rule should be operated through a presumption of difference, or one of likeness, and assimilation into modern society. Because the inhabitants of West Greenland had already been incorporated into political and cultural forms of progressive liberalism, they were not seen as subjects that could be asked to perform this task for the state.

Unsatisfied with the response, the Committee replied to the Ministry and was critical of the requirement that East Greenlanders should be transported. A considerable number of West Greenlanders had already expressed their willingness to participate in the colonisation of Scoresby Sound, and the Committee felt that they should be allowed to exploit the resources found in Northeast Greenland ‘since the hunting in Greenland is getting poorer each year.’ Moreover, the alterations did not fit well with the Committee’s shipping schedule, and since the ice-free period in Scoresby Sound was very short, the Committee was worried that this ‘could entail failure with grave consequences.’ The Committee offered to place themselves, to one degree or another, under state control but suspected that the government wanted to postpone the whole enterprise for another year. To hasten the progress of the proceedings, the committee members abandoned the hope of obtaining West Greenlandic colonists. Mikkelsen later admitted that it had indeed been a sensible decision:

[Since] the West Greenlanders would, in the long, hardly have been able to endure the isolated conditions on the East Coast, nor the more primitive life that they – forced by the circumstance – would have led there.

The final proposition from the Committee was hard to refuse. The committee would establish the colony in 1924, but the state would populate it the year after and henceforth administer the settlements. The Ministry and the Administration emphasised, in a letter to the Committee (17 June 1924), that the colony had to be ready and equipped before the settlers arrived. Houses were to be assembled, both in the trade station and the outposts, and essential supplies provided to last the settlers for two years, or three years depending on necessity. These conditions were expected

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147 Scoresby Sound Committee. (1924, June 27). [Letter to the (Interior). A094 ‘Korrespondance, redegørelser, diverse optegnelser mm. (Ejnar Mikkelsen)’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 3, Folder 39), Copenhagen, Denmark.
148 Ibid.
149 Mikkelsen, *De Østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie*, 134.
to diminish any concerns about economic security during the early years, and the underlying assumption was that the state would not to bear any cost incurred by the colonisation. Once the Ferslewske Presse provided an extensive assurance that the enterprise would be fully funded, the case was considered to be in order. Jens Daugaard-Jensen, Director of the Greenland Administration, nevertheless followed the progress closely and did not hesitate to interfere with the preparation, when he deemed it necessary.

**The Colonisation of Scoresby Sound**

On 10 July 1924 s/s *Grønland* departed from Copenhagen, loaded with the building materials, the provisions and the necessary equipment. Ejnar Mikkelsen was the ship’s captain and aboard was a crew of twenty-one men. The vessel arrived at the mouth of Scoresby Sound on 24 July, but an ‘immense ice sheet stretched fast and solid from coast to coast.’ The ship moved ahead with severe difficulty and after having waged a very prolonged struggle, the rudder finally broke. The situation was indeed grave, but the crew was able to bring the ship to Rosenvinge Bay, on the west side of Jameson’s Land. Seeing that there was an excellent harbour, named *Amdrup’s Havn* by the colonisation expedition, they decided to establish the centre of the settlement there, on Ferslews Cape. The cornerstone of *kolonibestyrerboligen* (the store and the residence of the colony manager) was laid on the eighth day of August, and the Danish flag was hoisted for the first time. Mikkelsen recalls his speech, prepared for the occasion (Fig. 6):

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150 Ministry of the Interior. (1924, June 17). [Letter to the Scoresby Sound Committee]. A094 ‘Korrespondance, redegørelser, diverse optegnelser mm. (Ejnjar Mikkelson)’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 3, Folder 39), Copenhagen, Denmark.


152 The Administration of Greenland. (1924, June 19). [Letter from Daugaard-Jensen, Director of the Greenland Administration, to the Scoresby Sound Committee]. A094 ‘Korrespondance, redegørelser, diverse optegnelser mm. (Ejnjar Mikkelson)’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 3, Folder 39), Copenhagen, Denmark.


Comrades, Scoresby Sound is now joined with the Danish-Greenlandic colonies. This foot’s breadth of land, by our doing, is now a Danish possession – may good fortune favour this new colony!¹⁵⁵

Many of Mikkelsen’s countrymen doubtless shared his high-toned sentiment of national pride. Mikkelsen preserved dozens of telegrams and letters he received, both from common supporters and public figures, congratulating him on his triumph that day. They all share something of the enthusiasm and incitement observable in the letter cited below:

s/s Grønland.

Dear Captain Mikkelsen

I can see before me Dannebrog over Scoresby Sound. My thanks to you all, for your effort and result.

May we at home learn to cherish every place over which our flag still flies. We seem reluctant in that respect. It’s a shame we weren’t all with you when you did your bit [tog torn i] ... and later saw the white cross shine on the red cloth over the ice as a symbol of Victory.

This sight, perhaps, could have dispersed … the fog of complacency that narrows our national horizon and dulls the offering joy of selflessness.

I salute you. Take care of yourself.

Flensburg Thomsen¹⁵⁶

Four weeks later, on 4 September, s/s Grønland made haste and carried the rest of the building materials to the proposed outposts. Six men led by painter Magnus Bengtsson remained to erect storage sheds and dwellings for the colonists. These were the naturalists Bjerring-Petersen, Alwin Pedersen, and Aage Nielsen, along with three carpenters; Nyels Hansen, Ewald Rasmussen, and Kaj Rasmusse.¹⁵⁷ Each outpost was established in territories where the largest remains of previous indigenous habitations

¹⁵⁵ Mikkelsen, Med ‘Grønland’ til Scoresbysund, 60.
¹⁵⁶ Flensburg Thomsen. (1924). [Letter to Ejnar Mikkelsen]. A094 ‘Korrespondand, redegørelser, diverse optegnelser mm. (Ejnar Mikkelsen)’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 3, Folder 40), Copenhagen, Denmark.
were found, as they seemed to indicate good hunting grounds.\(^{158}\) Besides the kolonibestyrerboligen, two dwellings were erected in Scoresbysund (Ittoqqortoormiit), two at Cape Stewart (Ittoritseq), two at Cape Hope (Ittaajimiit) and two at Cape Tobin (Uunarteq) (Fig. 7-9).\(^{159}\) It took five or six days to build a house; each one adapted for use by two families. Inside the communal space for household-based economic activity was very small. The quality of the houses, it must be said, was poor, and it was difficult to heat them with simple seal oil lamp.\(^{160}\)

While the men continued their work in Scoresby Sound, the Administration issued a letter to Johan Petersen, the colony manager of Ammassalik, with the announcement that the colony in Scoresby Sound had been established. The letter requested that Petersen invite ‘capable hunters’ to volunteer as colonists.\(^{161}\) Eighty-five people eventually made the journey and brought 16 umiaks, 2 sledges, 10 dogs, and 77 tents. Seventy came from the Ammassalik district, and fifteen were of West Greenlandic origin, comprising the administrative personnel (Fig. 10).\(^{162}\) Assistant Hendrik Høegh settled with his family and received training from Johan Petersen, to prepare him for the duties of a colony manager. Superior catechist Sejer Abelsen, who had lived in Ammassalik with his family, became the educator and the priest of the colony (Fig. 11).\(^{163}\) The colonists travelled to Scoresby Sound with Gustav Holm (formerly known as Grønland) in August 1925, with a brief stop in Ísafjörður, a small fishing town in Northwest Iceland (Westfjords region), to acquire the last load of provisions.

The short visit to Iceland was a marvellous source of excitement for both the visitors and their host. Modernity had made its entry into the rural fishing town of


\(^{159}\) Bengtsson, Ene med Dyr og Mennesker: Et Aar i Scoresby Sund.


\(^{161}\) Mikkelsen, De Østgrønlandskes Eskimoers Historie, 142.

\(^{162}\) Of the 70 emigrants from Ammassalik, 13 were married couples, 2 were single women, 38 were children under 15 years, and there were three girls and a boy over 15 years. Giving a total of 15 families. See Robert-Lamblin, ‘Ammassalik, East Greenland - End or Persistance of an Isolate?: Anthropological and Demographical Study on Change.’

\(^{163}\) Mikkelsen, De Østgrønlandskes Eskimoers Historie, 142.
Ísafjörður and new technologies provided different forms of sociality and cultural possibilities. The townsfolk did their best to show their guests the comfort, wonders, and excitement of modern life. The colonists were invited to a car ride and a picnic in a small forest on the edge of the town. The locals organised an indoor fair later that day, where local gymnasts performed their exercises, followed by a church choir, and finally a motion picture (Fig. 12). Afterwards, the women’s club served coffee, cakes and biscuits. The central event, however, was Sejer Abelsen’s ordination as the pastor of the Scoresby Sound benefice. Seven Icelandic priests were present, as well as the Danish provost for Greenland Schultz-Lorentzen; each one in full ceremonial dress (Fig. 13). The ceremony was performed within the bounds of Christian formality and ratified Abelsen’s spiritual and secular authority over the East Greenlandic population. Sixteen East Greenlandic men and eight women sat in the front row. Once they had gathered inside, townspeople and visitors began to crowd the church, to catch a glimpse of the ceremony. Provost Lorentzen had given a lecture the day before, on the early native-missionary encounter in East Greenland. The talk was well attended, and the locals were keen to learn about customs and traditional indigenous life. The audience was particularly interested in Lorentzen’s tales of ‘galdramenn’ (angakkoq, or shamans) and their sorcery – or their conjuring tricks, as the man of God described them: 165

The churchgoers were consequently surprised to find, not wild heathens but people that were ‘neatly dressed’ and behaved ‘in accord with principles of piety and virtuous behaviour’. 166 A journalist writing for a Christian magazine gives an account of the service, and the expectations of his fellow countrymen:

[A]nd it spontaneously came to mind, that these men, who many look down on and are hardly considered as civilised people, nevertheless put to shame some of the «civilised men», for it is undeniably too common that churchgoers show little grace during Church service … but the Eskimos, these men who we often call, and consider to be, Skraelings [barbarians, a derogatory label], 167 fold their hands and bow their heads solemnly with reverent expression. 168

164 ‘Frá Grænlendingum á Ísafirði,’ Morgunblaðið, August 28, 1925.
166 ‘Frá Grænlendingum á Ísafirði.’
167 A generic term the Norse Greenlanders used for all the indigenous people they encountered in North America and Greenland.
The Ammassalikers did not look as ‘out of place’ as the Icelandic journalist had assumed. Danish colonial rule had already transformed their political and religious life, in a somewhat withdrawn effort to civilise the ‘backward’ people.

**Isolation in Scoresby Sound**

The lives of the Greenlandic churchgoers demonstrated a historical experience that was markedly different from the experience of their Icelandic spectators. The settlers’ existence was inevitably affected by geographical seclusion, from the Ammassalik communities and each other. Setting individual families apart across Rosenvinge Bay and Hurry Fjord was a deliberate strategy, according to Mikkelsen: ‘[to] build the Greenlander houses as far as justifiable from the colony’s natural hub, the administration’s seat, and its alluring store.’\(^{169}\) However, founding a dispersed settlement in an unknown region was certainly not without adversity. The added complication of remoteness became apparent in the course of the first few days, seeing that nearly all of the East Greenlanders had caught influenza before leaving Tasiilaq.\(^{170}\) Regardless of the poor state of health, *Gustav Holm* sailed with five families to Ittoritseq, only five days after the arrival. The settlers were not heard from in nearly two weeks, and the news they then brought was dire indeed. A couple had died in the epidemic, and the rest of the settlers had been in a sate of starvation for the men had been unable to hunt.\(^{171}\)

Precarious ice conditions could make the journey between settlements difficult as is evident from one of Hilma Hansen’s journal entries (*see chapter 3*) written at the same time of year when the colonisation took place:

All the hunters from Cape Stewart came to the trading station [*koloni*] today. It’s been ages since their last visit. The ice sheet has been quite thin most of the time, and they cannot travel in their kayak because the ice cuts them to pieces. Now a thick ice has lain over the waters for some period,

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\(^{168}\) ‘Angmassalik og Kirkjumál Grænlands,’ 178.

\(^{169}\) Mikkelsen, *De Østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie*, 139.

\(^{170}\) The indigenous population in East Greenland still did not have immunity to many of the diseases brought by Europeans, such as influenza, measles, smallpox etc. See e.g. Nuttall, *Arctic Homeland: Kinship, Community and Development in Northwest Greenland*, 13.

but covers only half of the fjord, so they have not been able to get here on sledges either.\textsuperscript{172}

The three families destined for Uunarteq could not settle until later that month, because ‘a mélange of sea ice and icebergs extended down-fjord, from the coast of Walrus Bay to Cape Hope.’\textsuperscript{173} Another three families were supposed to go to Ittaajimmit but had to wait until December. Only one family made the move to begin with, and they seem to have suffered from the isolation, according to Johan Petersen:

The family who moved to Cape Hope has, according to what has been reported, moved to Cape Tobin to settle there. Allegedly, the reason they did not want to stay at Cape Hope, was that the place was «haunted»!\textsuperscript{174}

The East Greenlanders also believed Ittoritseq was haunted and had abandoned the settlement by 1931, ‘without any justifiable reason’ – as Mikkelsen puts it.\textsuperscript{175} When Mikkelsen visited Ittoqqortoormiit, on an official mission in 1936 as the Inspector of East Greenland, he discovered that the inhabitants had moved one of the houses from Ittoritseq to Ittaajimmit. Although it is but a small example, their action articulates resistance, embedded within the politics of lived space.\textsuperscript{176} The removal of the house challenged the hegemony of Danish spatial imaginations. Mikkelsen finds fault with them for the unauthorised displacement of the house and castigates colony manager Høegh for failing to keep the settlement dispersed:

It’s rather unfortunate that colony manager Høegh has, on this problem as well as other similar ones, undermined our efforts to spread hunters over

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\textsuperscript{172} Hilma Hansen. (1931, November 2). [Journal Entry by Hilma Hansen]. A456 ‘Renskrevet (af Kirsten) dagbog af Hilma Hansen under ophold i 1931-32 i Ittoqqortoormiit som medfølgende hustru til tømrer Charles Hansen’, Danish Arctic Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark.
\textsuperscript{173} Petersen, ‘Ujuâts Dagbøger fra Østgrønland 1894-1935,’ 138.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{175} Mikkelsen and Sveistrup, ‘The East Greenlanders Possibilities of Existence, Their Production and Consumption,’ 105; see also Sandell and Sandell, ‘Archaeology and Environment in the Scoresby Sund Fjord: Ethno-Archaeological Investigations of the Last Thule Culture of Northeast Greenland,’ 94.
\textsuperscript{176} The key idea here is taken from Lefebvre’s social theory of spatial practices and politics. See e.g. Henri Lefebvre, \textit{State, Space, World: Selected Essays}, ed. L. Brenner and S. Elden (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2009); for further discussion, see L. Brenner and S. Elden, ‘Henri Lefebvre on State, Space, Territory,’ \textit{International Political Sociology} 3 (2009): 353–77.
as great area as practicable. On the contrary, he has advanced, or perhaps even encouraged, concentration near the colony.  

Mikkelsen did not accept Høegh’s statement of the motives for the abandonment, ‘which arose after a single winter when the snowfall was unusually severe and the ice gripping.’ As often before, Mikkelsen refers to the existence of old ruins as an indicator of living conditions: ‘for Cape Stewart was, traditionally, the largest settlement in Scoresby Sound. In other words, we can safely deduce that the hunting from here has been better than from other places in the fjord.’ It is true that the position of the settlement at the mouth of Kangersaajua (Hurry Inlet) is good from a hunting point of view. However, as Sandell and Sandell point out, Ittoritseq is very exposed, particularly in the summer ‘when spells of bad weather – storms and fog – prevent hunting.’

Although Mikkelsen believed the family’s retreat to be groundless, he on other occasions recognised the ill affects of possible detachment from other groups. He was well aware how essential it was for success that the settlers did not feel isolated or lonely and that they experienced some connection with their native territory: ‘We wanted them to be hunters [fangere], not to feel like prisoners [fanger].’ Because of the difficult access to Kangertittivaq (Scoresby Sound), there would be no, or only sporadic contact between the two communities of Ammassalik and Scoresby Sound. They were, to all intents and purposes, completely separated from each other. The feeling of remoteness and entrapment must have been further enhanced by this separation from relatives and friends in Ammassalik. Hilma Hansen’s account of one particular banquet, she and her husband Charles gave in Ittoqqortoormiit, is quite telling. They invite their East Greenlandic neighbours and, over the course of the

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178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
180 There are in fact no traces of earlier summer hunting settlements in Kangersaajua. See Sandell and Sandell, ‘Archaeology and Environment in the Scoresby Sund Fjord: Ethno-Archaeological Investigations of the Last Thule Culture of Northeast Greenland,’ 94.
evening, show their guests photographs taken during Charles’ previous visit to Ammassalik and Scoresby Sound:

But the pictures Charles took in Ammassalik when he journeyed home evoke the greatest joy. After all, they’re all from there and know every face in the pictures. They haven’t seen them for 6 years, not since they came up here. Many have grown up, and others are now married, etc.\(^{182}\)

It was far from easy to return to Ammassalik. During the first decade (1924-1933) of the settlement, ten ships sailed to Scoresby Sound on twenty-five occasions, many of which were in the service of scientific expeditions. This makes one visit in every five months if spread evenly over the period, but judging from the records of arrivals and departures, the sea around Kangertittivaq was navigable for approximately six weeks, or from the last week of July into the first week of September.\(^{183}\) Moreover, it was rather unlikely that any ship that visited Scoresby Sound was on route to Ammassalik.\(^{184}\) Mikkelsen tells a story of a bereaved woman who missed her brother and made the journey to Ammassalik with her family. According to Mikkelsen, the family was greeted with friendly gestures, but as visitors rather than as family members returning home: ‘They finally reached Ammassalik, where her brother’s greeting must have made the weary travellers shudder slightly: When will you go back?’\(^{185}\) The woman decides to travel back to Scoresby Sound but must wait for a ship to take them northwards. For two summers they camped beside the harbour, with all their worldly possessions. The chance finally came in the third summer.

For Mikkelsen, the woman’s journey was a testimony to the prosperity in Scoresby Sound. After all, the family ‘cried for joy, when they came back again.’\(^{186}\) However, I believe we can derive a different interpretation from his passage. The relocation to Scoresby Sound evidently entailed a loss of a locale for the displaced family members, as they had become marginalised within their old community.


\(^{183}\) See Mikkelsen and Sveistrup, ‘The East Greenlanders Possibilities of Existence, Their Production and Consumption.’

\(^{184}\) Mikkelsen, De Østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie, 165.


\(^{186}\) Mikkelsen, De Østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie, 165.
The Policy of Dispersal and Continuing Dispute Over Sovereignty

Erik the Red’s Land! Our land, the land of our youth, more rugged and weather-beaten, more grim and harsh than all Norway, but our land once again …. But why did we do it? Because the land itself had taught us to be ready …. We knew that the hour of fate had arrived. The Danes had already moved up under the coast to take the land from us, this land only we can exploit. [John Giæver, *Office Manager for the Norwegian Polar Institute from 1948-1960*]187

By establishing permanent settlements in Scoresby Sound, the government succeeded in asserting effective territorial control. The 1924 treaty was however still valid, and since it had not settled competing sovereignty claims, access to uninhabited areas in Northeast Greenland was still free for both Danish and Norwegian subjects. Norwegian trappers continued hunting north of Kangertittivaq, while Denmark very assuredly expanded its influence in East Greenland, preeminently by means of ambitious geological expeditions.188 In 1930 it was announced that Lauge Koch would lead an expedition to Northeast Greenland, for a period extending over four summers (1931–34), and chart the region between 72°N and 76°N (known as *King Christian X Land*, it stretches a long way north from King Oscar Fjord). The Three-year Expedition to East Greenland (*Treårsekspeditionen til Christian X’s Land*) was the most comprehensive expedition hitherto sent to East Greenland by Denmark. Around 40-50 scientists and assistants were to winter the first year and conduct scientific investigations of all kind.189 Wintering stations and huts had to be constructed at regular intervals, and Lauge Koch was empowered as the Danish police authority in East Greenland.

The Norwegian trappers felt this was a clear breach of their territorial rights, and eventually become involved in the Norwegian-Danish dispute over sovereignty of East Greenland. Acting in retaliation, they raised their flag in Mackenzie Bay [73°N, near *Myggbuksa*], and a month later (on 10 July 1931) the King of Norway declared, by a royal proclamation, that Norway was occupying and placing under its

188 See e.g. Sørensen, ‘Denmark-Greenland in the Twentieth Century.’
sovereignty an area between Carlsberg Fjord (Kangerterajitta Itterterterilaq) and Bessel Fjord [71°N-75°N]. This new territory was named Erik the Red’s Land. Denmark immediately took the case to the Permanent Court of International Justice, but the Norwegian government challenged the Danish claim to sovereignty over all of Greenland on the grounds that Denmark had established effective occupation in a limited area only. The rivalry between Norway and Denmark reaffirmed the necessity for maintaining a clear and significant presence at these remote locations. Danish authorities, therefore, concentrated their scientific activities on the East Coast. The two trading stations, Ammassalik and Scoresby Sound, provided a convenient base for exploration activities and ‘scientific occupation’ of East Greenland.

In 1932 the east coast of Greenland was divided between three giants of polar exploration, each man empowered with police authority. Knud Rasmussen was assigned King Frederik VI Coast (from Cape Farewell to Ammassalik), Ejnar Mikkelsen King Christian IX Land (from Ammassalik to Scoresby Sound), and Lauge Koch, as mentioned before, King Christian X Land (the region north of Scoresby Sound). The spatial practice of Danish statecraft was changing in the interwar period. What is arresting about the presence of these three figures is how it exemplifies and emblems the history of Danish Arctic research. Commenting on the considerable controversy stirred by Koch’s expedition, Christopher Ries argues that the technological modernisation marked a clear turning point. Expedition practices were shifting away from the old heroic tradition embodied by the early Arctic explorers, such as Knud Rasmussen: ‘The days of Inuit romance, dogsleds and heroic pioneers were coming to an end. This was the era of ships, aeroplanes, wireless radios, and canned food.’

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193 Frederiksen, Ejnar Mikkelsen: En Biografi, 186.

In *Seeing Like a State* James Scott explores the modern state’s ambition to rationalise social order and make populations and territories *legible* in a sense – and hence more manipulable.\(^{195}\) If legibility is the central pursuit of statecraft, certain technologies are needed to ‘map’ the state’s terrain and its people, and make them ‘more susceptible to careful measurement, calculation, and manipulation.’\(^{196}\) East Greenland was still an illegible surface to administrators but modern technology, placed in the service of the state, was entering the Arctic, and its purpose was to appropriate the ‘empty’ uninhabited space. The function of geology was to transform that space into a legible, ordered colonial territory that could be manipulated from above and from the centre. However, as Ssorin-Chaikov notes in his comment on Scott’s critique, the scientific process that produces legibility is habitually presented as if it involves ‘neutral observation technique, while the units and differences that are produced in this vision are naturalised as social givens that exist merely to be observed and recorded.’\(^{197}\) The technologies as such are not conceived in terms of their capacity for spatial and societal organisation, either by scientists or administrators.

Grand schemes of repopulating the entire East Coast surfaced within the wider context of geopolitics. Koch was very outspoken about the urgency of examining the living conditions in the northern part of East Greenland and wanted to test the possibility for further colonisation.\(^{198}\) Mikkelsen, sure enough, had always envisioned Scoresby Sound as the southernmost starting post in Northeast Greenland, from where settlers could reach out and colonise ‘the vast hunting grounds in King Oscar- and Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord.’\(^{199}\) The *Scoresbysund Committee Second East Greenland Expedition* was, as the name indicates, funded by the Scoresbysund Committee. In response to the territorial dispute between Denmark and Norway, the Committee extended its sphere of activity to include new tasks, ‘for instance scientific investigation, though in such a manner that the economic interests and distribution of


\(^{199}\) Mikkelsen, *De Østgrønlandske Eskimoers Historie*, 117.
the native population along the east coast of Greenland should always be the principal object.\textsuperscript{200} The ambition of the expedition, apart from the scientific activities, was to erect a number of houses at suitable locations. These houses could later serve as points of support for hunters and their families, enabling communication between the settlements of Ammassalik and Scoresby Sound.\textsuperscript{201} The Prime Minister and the Greenland Administration were, however, directly opposed to this idea. The Danish authorities felt they had their hands full already with Ammassalik and Scoresby Sound and had absolutely no wish to be responsible for posts that could develop into colonies.

Mikkelsen was typically at odds with the authorities. When, however, the International Court at the Hague overruled the Norwegian claim (5 April 1933) on the grounds that Denmark had long since established sovereignty over the whole country, it was no longer possible to ignore how greatly Mikkelsen had influenced the development in East Greenland.\textsuperscript{202} Ejnar Mikkelsen was offered a post as an Inspector General (1934–50) and granted formal jurisdiction over East Greenland issues. After his first Inspection journey to East Greenland in 1936, he pressed the Administration to take action and resettle some of the families living in Ammassalik along the King Frederick VI Coast.\textsuperscript{203} He believed that the hunting was in a too confined an area, with the result that the hunter-gatherer population of Ammassalik was no longer sustainable. The inhabitants needed assistance from the government to drive successful transformation, and quite possibly a strong incentive. The problem, as he saw it, was that the younger generation was getting too attached to their homesteads and their extended families, and less inclined to lead a semi-nomadic life. The Ammassalikers were uninclined to move to a place where they did not know the circumstances for hunting. After years of permanent residence in a single location, knowledge of previous hunting grounds and inhabited areas was forgotten.


\textsuperscript{201} Mikkelsen, ‘Report on the Expedition (The Scoresby Sound Committee’s 2nd East Greenland Expedition 1932 to King Christian IX’s Land).’

\textsuperscript{202} See e.g. Frederiksen, \textit{Ejnar Mikkelsen: En Biografi}, 189.

\textsuperscript{203} Ejnar Mikkelsen. (1936, August 25). [Letter to the Greenland Administration, concerning dispersal in the Southeast coast]. 0030 ‘Inspektor for Østgrønland Ejnar Mikkelsen: Korrespondance og rapporter vedr. Scoresbysund og Angmagssalik (1926-40)’, The Danish National Archives (Box 1), Copenhagen, Denmark.
In a memorandum sent to the Administration (1936), Mikkelsen laments this development and summarises what he believes are the main causes for the concentration:

1. People’s desire for imported goods can only be satisfied when they take up residence in proximity to the shop.
2. Inevitably, the establishment of the colony drastically changed people’s original orientation, as well as their way of life. They no longer dare to trust in themselves, as they did before, but clump together around the colonial centre, in case of catch failure or other misfortunes, to get support or help from the colony.
3. The parents want their children to be better educated than they were and therefore set up in locations where there is a priest or a catechist.
4. The Christian instruction has meant that people consider church attendance or other forms of Christian teaching necessary, taking precedence over easier means of earning a living.\(^{204}\)

Human beings in all quarters have material, social, cultural, and spiritual needs – these are the fundamental factors of security that people build into their ideals of life. Cultural aspirations played a major role in people’s wish to live close to the trading station. Proximity to Tasiilaq motivated a search for new ways for future prospects and some of these undoubtedly went in the opposite direction of the semi-nomadic lifestyle. To counteract this development Mikkelsen proposes de facto a forced relocation:

As previously reasoned, a voluntary migration from one settlement to another, not as good as the first, is an unlikely scenario. If the nature of the case is such that people are to be relocated – which is necessary for their well-being – then we must take drastic precautionary measure and bear the costs as well.\(^{205}\)

Racial epistemology epitomised the East Greenlanders as inherently different pre-political people making a critical transition into a modern world. At the same time, it was feared that progress could devastate as much as it could advance the society. A quarter-century after the relocation, Mikkelsen’s reflections give priority to preservationist ethics: ‘Should I wish for anything for East Greenland, the wish would be that it shall be left alone, that the East Greenlanders may be given whatever

\(^{204}\) Ibid.
\(^{205}\) Ibid.
needed, without interfering too greatly with their lives.\textsuperscript{206} Mikkelsen’s wish to let the East Greenlanders be is in stark contrast to the fact that the relocation to Scoresby Sound was a decisive intervention into their lives. The tension between preservation and transformation was never entirely resolved by the Danish colonising agents.\textsuperscript{207} It was manifest in contending points of view within the same administration and likewise in antagonistic principles within the same person. The next chapter will attempt to demonstrate the crux of this state of tension by taking a closer look at how the Ammassalikers were naturalised, both by Europeans and by the ‘mixed’ West Greenlanders.

\textsuperscript{206} From an interview in \textit{Aftenbladet} (23.12.1950). Here cited in Frederiksen, \textit{Ejnar Mikkelsen: En Biografi}, 263.

\textsuperscript{207} Danish policy makers were not occupied as such with the problem of choosing between either modernity or non-modernity, but rather, as Christina Petterson suggests, with the question of ‘what kind of Danish influence they wanted to adopt and how to apply the power relations most efficiently so as to optimise the outcome.’ See Petterson, \textit{Missionary, the Catechist, and the Hunter: Foucault, Protestantism and Colonialism}, 143.
Chapter Three:
Colonial Encounters in East Greenland

[T]his first funeral, which took place so shortly after our arrival, had a powerful effect on all of us, and I am certain that every one of us started to contemplate the thought: which one of us will be the next one, who will rest in this cemetery.

It was not easy to decide where the deceased should be laid to rest. East of kolonibestyrerboligen [the colony manager’s residency], where we otherwise would have liked to place the cemetery, no suitable spot could be found since the river runs through the landscape; so there was no place to choose but the terrain between the kolonibestyrerboligen and the Greenlander houses next to Ferslew Cape. Other places were either too sodden or too rocky. [Johan Petersen (Ujuât), September 1925]208

From the beginning, death separates the two groups of colonists. On one side the appointed officials of State, Trade and Mission, on the other the Ammassalikers. The colonial site itself is a materialisation of the socio-political order and an organising structure of a powerful set of exchanges. Through physical structures, space becomes profoundly implicated in colonial relations. This chapter moves closer to settler perspectives, while critically examining the dialectical situation of inclusion and exclusion in East Greenland, and the complex socio-cultural interplay between disparate groups living in Ittoqqortoormiit.

Eskimology and ‘Real’ Greenlanders

Brian Larkin has argued that the fundamental aspect of colonial rule was its future orientation: ‘It operated in the present, but with a powerful sense of the range of possible futures open to it. Its actions were geared toward shaping how that future

208 Petersen, ‘Ujuâts Dagbøger fra Østgrønland 1894-1935,’ 137.
might be.’

A futurist thinking, as a continuation of Enlightenment belief in progress, was certainly not absent from governmental decisions concerning prospects for economic and social betterment in East Greenland. However, in keeping with Nicholas B. Dirks’ analysis of colonial rule, colonial agents not only aligned themselves with progress and rationality but also displaced ‘many of the disruptions and excesses of rule into institutions and cultures that were labelled as tradition.’

This is most certainly true for the Danish colonisers, as they were implicated in discussions originating from new, self-consciously modernised sciences. In a Scandinavian context, figures like Knud Rasmussen and Fridtjof Nansen paved the way for ‘comparative Eskimo research’ – a branch of science founded by scientists like H. J. Rink, Gustav Holm and H. P. Steensby. The term ‘Eskimology’ first appears in print in 1940, in an obituary for Gustav Holm, written by William Thalbitzer:

The Eskimos soon became one of the best-known naturfolk in the world, thanks to G. Holm’s establishment of the Danish ethnological school, which deals with the Greenlanders, the Inuit people, ‘Eskimology’.

In the nineteenth century, anthropology was emerging as a discipline. The development of science and medicine had decisive effects, particularly in the practice of physical anthropology, much concerned with ‘racial character’ and driven by the

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212 Naturfolk is a term borrowed from the German ‘Naturvolk’. See e.g. Kirsten Thisted, ‘Postkolonialisme I Nordisk Perspektiv: Relationen Danmark-Grønland,’ in *Kultur på Kryds og Tvaers*, ed. Henning Bech and Anne S. Sørensen (Århus: Klim, 2005); and Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North: A Cultural History to 1920*.

aim of charting human biological diversity. In such spirit, Lieutenant Garde examined forty-six East Greenlanders, during the Women’s Boat Expedition, and a similar number of people from the southern part of the West Coast. Garde measured and described physical properties of the living population, but he also collected parts of skeletons and brought these samples to the Anatomical Museum in Copenhagen. Knud Poulsen, a member of Amdrup’s expedition, continued this work while wintering in Ammassalik. He was a natural scientist at heart and carefully surveyed everything from height, nasal index, body hair and the skin of genitalia – partly to find the East Greenlander’s proper place among the races, this ‘only surely unmixed Greenland group of Eskimaux.’ Poulsen starts from the supposition previously made by Søren Hansen, in his article Contribution to the Anthropology of West Greenlanders (1893), that the ‘place of the Eskimaux in physical respect is in the lowest end [in ‘series of races’].’ However, he also refutes some widespread misconceptions about their physical make-up and notes that the East Greenlanders are ‘on the whole … a sound and strong race, well adapted to hold their own in the rough climate.’

In Erobringen af Grønland, Søren Rud explores the distinctly modern way of representing the ‘Other’ in Greenland. He argues that expeditions to the remote and uncolonised east coast of Greenland prompted an ideology critical of civilisation. The ethnographic analyses undertaken resulted in an understanding of East Greenlanders, as ‘real’ Greenlanders who should remain uncorrupted, isolated from European civilisation.

We can read Rud’s inquiry alongside Hanne Thomsen’s article Ægte Grønlændere og Nye Grønlændere, where she argues that the late nineteenth-century Danish colonial administration bolstered the image of the ‘real’ Greenlander as a

214 On the history of the search for a scientific foundation for racial difference, see e.g. Ann Fabian, Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and Americas Unburied Dead (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
215 The police-surgeon, Dr. Søren Hansen presented the data and gave a representation of the appearance of the East Greenlanders. See Søren Hansen, ‘Bidrag til Østgrønlændernes Anthropologi,’ Meddelelser om Grønland 10 (1886): 1–41.
218 Poulsen, ‘Contributions to the Anthropology and Nosology of the East-Greenlanders,’ 146.
Sealer and a Kayaker. She notes how the dual image of the Greenlanders as ‘noble savage’, that is the hunter, and the ‘semi-civilised and lazy colonial Greenlander or half-Greenlander, who must be provided for by others’ became a prevailing one at the beginning of the twentieth century.\(^2\) This essentialist ideology motivated a conservative regional development policy, which in turn reinforced control over the native population and diminished their occupational status as hunters and primary producers.\(^2\)

By the twentieth century, these images were well established and unmistakably influenced the few Europeans who were allowed to visit East Greenland in the first years of settlement. The impression of primordial untaintedness and exoticness captivated both Western imagination as well as an academic interest. Sophie Petersen gave an account of her visit to Ittoqqortoormiit, as a student of theology, when the church was consecrated in 1930:

> It was fascinating to study the various types of Greenlanders: just a few West Greenlanders, mixed types of a particular sort. The rest were East Greenlanders, pure Mongolian type with prominent cheekbones and dark complexion. Almost all the women had their hair put up in the characteristic top, adorned with a colourful ribbon – not something you often see in West Greenland today.\(^2\)

Not all expectations, however, corresponded to reality. When Pastor Rüttel first visited Tasiilaq, he was disappointed when the inhabitants did not resemble the wild natives so vividly described in detail in the ethnographic narratives from Holm’s expedition:

> We were happy because we had arrived at their location, but, undeniably, also became saddened at the sight of them; for they did not greet us as the untouched people we had hoped to find! They were already ‘civilised’ – but what a civilisation! Last year we met at Itivdleq a flock of East Greenlanders, about which we could say: yes, one can see that they are ‘wild’ human beings. This year we meet in Ammassalik East Greenlanders, of which one was wearing a high hat, another knee-breeches; stockings; and shoes, so one would think he wanted to go to the

\(^2\) Ibid., 23.
Emperor’s court festival in Germany. One joins the group wearing a coat, another with a shirt on his back! etc. etc.¹²²³

Ethnographic representation is not merely a reaction to the lack of familiarity but is rather the product of a power dynamic. Ann Fienup-Riordan has termed the naturalised, essentilised, and idealised images of Alaskan Eskimos as ‘Eskimo Orientalism’.²²⁴ Kirsten Thisted proposes, on similar grounds, the term ‘Arctic Orientalism’ in her investigation into Danish narratives about Greenland.²²⁵ Both concepts emanate from Edward Said’s famous notion of ‘Orientalism’ and his critique of Western systems of cultural description.²²⁶ In line with Said’s criticism, Fienup-Riordan suggests that non-natives have constructed the Western stereotype of the ‘Eskimo’ as a counter image of themselves: ‘The Eskimo [is seen] as an idealised image of ourselves identified with the Rousseauian nonviolent ‘noble savage’, pure until corrupted by civilisation … an original image of ourselves.’²²⁷ If East Greenlanders were ideally in unison with nature, they were nevertheless at risk of being corrupted by civilisation. Einar Storgaard participated in Lauge Koch’s East Greenland expedition of 1926–27, a year after Ittoqqortoormiit was founded. He laments the influence of the abrupt cross-cultural contact made in Iceland:

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Many of the clothing items the Greenlanders were wearing, were anything but flattering. Admittedly, some people appeared in the attractive traditional Greenlandic clothing, but others wore European clothes. For the women, old skirts and dresses; for the men, second-hand coats and trousers. Clothes, which presumably came from the Eskimos’ short visit in Iceland, on the way from Ammassalik to Scoresby Sound.²²⁸
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Narratives of expeditions to the East Coast emphasised exotic aspects of the indigenous culture through textual, historical, ethnographic, and visual representation – but actual engagement with local people, however, often lacked the criteria for

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¹²²⁴ Fienup-Riordan, *Eskimo Essays: Yup’ik Lives and How We See Them*. The term ‘Inuit’ refers to Arctic peoples generally in Greenland, Russia, Canada and Alaska. It has replaced the term ‘Eskimo’ considered derogatory by many Inuit people. See Fienup Riordan’s (1995: xviii–xix) discussion about her choice of terminology.
authenticity. Laura Hostetler reminds us that ethnographic representation can ‘serve in contexts of unequal power relations to assist in circumscribing and limiting indigenous peoples.’

Denigrating the culture of those who are co-opted into a subservient position is part of this process, so too is the insistence that the Other remains *strange*.

**Strange Bodies**

The encounters with the East Greenlanders influenced both the Danish colonial politics and the self-perception of West Greenlanders. Johan Petersen, or Ujuât as the East Greenlanders called him, was born 1867 in Sagdlît, just north of Cape Farewell. Johan Petersen was a colony manager in Tasiilaq for twenty years, as well as the colony manager for Illoqqortoormiit during the first years of settlement. His father, Andreas Martin Petersen, served as *udstedbestyrer* (storekeeper at an outpost) and his mother was Karen Margrethe Hansen (Hansèrak’s sister, *see below*), a native Greenlander of mixed-heritage. Johan spent much of his childhood and youth in Denmark, in the countryside north of Copenhagen, but West Greenlandic was always his second mother language.

He served as an interpreter in the Danish Women's Boat expedition, an expedition that was described by B. Rosenkilde Nielsen as a ‘clash between nature people and Western European civilisation.’ Johan was truly at the centre of this clash. He assisted Gustav Holm with his ethnographic observations and collections when they wintered with the East Greenland community in Ammassalik. Johan kept a journal of the expedition, and his portrayal of the East Greenlanders can be stark; including recent manslaughters, infanticide and cannibalism. He expounds on the issues but tries to make light of the violence, as belonging to a tragic and departing past.

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231 See Holm, ‘Ethnologisk Skizze af Angmagsalikerne.’
There are other, mundane details, however, surfacing his narrative, which signify and insinuate strangeness and savagery. On Christmas day 1895, Holm’s party invited the natives to their quarters for a celebration:

In the afternoon, all our guests went home. The living room was in need of a good airing after they’d left, for the Eastlanders [Østlændinger] usually leave a strange smell that’s less comfortable to breathe in for Europeans.233

When engaged in face-to-face contact, foreign elements of the embodied other – such as postures, gestures, and odours – penetrate our understanding in subtle ways. In *Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative*, Elleke Boehemer discusses the role of the physical body in constructing hierarchies of difference. She analyses the categories designated through colonial- and postcolonial narrative: ‘To rehearse some of the well-known binary tropes of postcolonial discourse, opposed to the coloniser … the Other is cast as corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw.’234 Johan Petersen’s uncle, the superior catechist Johannes Hansen (Hanséraq), was on Holm’s expedition as well. He requested to join the expedition and undertook, with considerable vigour, the responsibility of introducing Christianity to the heathens. His fascination with the bodies and the clothes of the East Greenlanders is far more embroidered than Johan’s (Fig. 14):

And how surely we, who had not seen such people before, became wide-eyed at the sight of them! The ship descended as the land came closer, and they came down to receive us; the men holding leather traces [kobberemme, made from walrus skin] and pieces of bearskin in their hands, without proper trousers, only this short thing, which roughly covered the front but left the posterior completely exposed. One could not detect a trace of shame, though there was every reason to be embarrassed [the underlined part is an edited version, the original sentence is presented in endnotes: ‘even though their long hair was sticking out of their pants on both sides around the genitals’] when they bent down, one could simply not look at them (bearing the shame on their behalf)!235

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233 Ibid., 22.
Cooper and Stoler have suggested that it is misleading to think ‘that the intellectual efforts that set indigenous cultures starkly against Europeans ones were those of colonising elites alone.’ 236 Hansen writes about his heathen countrymen as a civilised West Greenlander. His impression expresses his Christian morality. Nudity, in general, was a sign of impropriety and cultural inferiority. In the intimate setting of this remote place, strangeness cannot be held at a distance. The exposed bodies of the East Greenlanders impose a threat to the catechist and his Western readers. Colonial encounters entail a transgression, or as Sara Ahmed puts it: ‘strange bodies threaten to traverse the border that establishes the ‘clean body’ of the white subject.’ 237 The translator painstakingly conceals the unconcealed, perhaps in an attempt to shield us from the transgression. We recognise the repulsive, and seductive, qualities of the Other, so bewitching to the Western imagination. The foreignness upsets Johannes Hansen and, every so often, he is weary of what he perceives as a lacking in moral character. He seeks solace in the company of his fellow voyagers:

Our Europeans are good and act as Christians among the heathens. Only with them am I at peace, when I draw comfort from their demeanour. 238

The stranger figure takes shape in Hansen’s narrative and is produced as an effect of recognition. It defines the boundaries of belonging. He is not at home with these bodies, or more precisely; his subjective formation of a ‘home’ is determined by the act of expulsion. In Strange Encounters, her most thorough work on the social construction of the stranger, Ahmed observes that the strange body becomes a ‘fetish which both conceals and reveals the body-at-home’s reliance on strangers to secure his being – his place – his presence – in the world.’ 239 Johannes Hansen is a case in point, and his sentiments illustrate the importance of relational interpretation of identity to avoid homogenising. It is necessary to be aware of the many strange encounters and their implications.

238 Hansen, ‘Hanséraqs Dagbog,’ 152.
Mrs Hansen is a little yap, yap, yap, but I still like her, she’s a cheerful and a practical little one, and terribly kind to the Greenlanders. They both are, and the Greenlanders are very fond of them. The telegrapher and his wife are also quite sweet, now that they don’t need to show off anymore. But the thing about them is that they look down on the Greenlanders and refuse to be in the same room as they. She is the daughter of an Inspector of the Royal Fisheries [fiskemester] on the West Coast. The Greenlanders are aware of this, and they never get meat, whereas Mrs Hansen always has plenty of meat and fowl.

I now understand why you hate the Danish types of officials up here in the North, and you’ll even find them in the Faroe Islands, I think. They want to be kings. [Sven Mikkelsen, 12 August 1931]

Sven Mikkelsen’s letter to his father, Ejnar, portrays the two Danish families living in Ittoqqortoormiit at the time of the young man’s visit to the colony. The woman in question is Hilma Hansen (cited in the previous chapter), who arrived in East Greenland in the 1931 summer with her carpenter husband (fig. 15). Charles Hansen had once before lived in Ittoqqortoormiit while building the settlement’s church, but this time, Charles was assigned by the Administration to deploy a radio station for the 1932–33 French International Polar Year. The building itself was to be erected a step from the church, according to the original plans, and come under the care of the Colony once it had served its purpose. Charles and Hilma lived in Ittoqqortoormiit for nearly a year, and she kept a journal during her whole stay there. Hilma’s sketches afford us a glimpse of the daily life of the colony’s permanent residents, particularly the Danish and the West Greenlandic elite.

Mrs Kaldhal, the telegrapher’s wife, gives Hilma a hearty, hospitable reception when she arrived, and the Hansens entered a leisurely life of dinner parties and games of bridge, mutually enjoyed by all the colonising agents. Danish settlers in Greenland ‘som Skik og Brug’ stuck together, according to Hilma, but boundaries ran along colonial hierarchies as much as nationality or ‘race’ – at least to a certain extent:

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240 Sven Mikkelsen. (1931, August 12). [Letter to Ejnar Mikkelsen]. A094 ‘Korrespondance, redegørelser, diverse optegnelser mm. (Ejnar Mikkelsen)’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 3, Folder 42), Copenhagen, Denmark.
241 Jean-Baptiste Charcot had selected the site for a French scientific station at Scoresbysund and in 1932 Pourquoi Pas? and the French icebreaker Pollux carried personnel to set up the station. See Higgins, Exploration History and Place Names of Northern East Greenland, 44.
Yesterday, Tuesday, we had a ‘feast’. Last week, we had already invited the entire ‘Colony’, as she so puts it. By that, she means; themselves, the colony manager and his wife, and the priest and his wife. \(^{242}\)

Phenomenologically, Frantz Fanon argued, ‘it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and perpetuates his existence.’ \(^{243}\) However, he straightaway accompanies this assertion with a counter-proposition: ‘The settler owes the fact of his very existence … to the colonial system.’ \(^{244}\) The settler is constituted by the colonial discourses and not contrariwise. \(^{245}\) While the small settler community begins to form an inhabitable social zone for itself, it promotes the separation and distancing already introduced by the colonial system:

Last night we went to a very elaborate dinner, and God knows what, served at the colony manager’s house. He's so afraid he won't be counted as man enough for his position, or counted as Dane. What a feast it was. The telegrapher, Kaldahl and his mistress, the priest and his mistress, and us. Dear, they certainly were dishing up the food. First the fish-course (poached), then hare, followed by salted herring, all kinds of smørrebrod [open sandwiches], and finally pudding. Then rum punch and fruits, finishing with coffee and cakes. When the four of us, the Danes, went home, we simply made fun of his extravagance. He is so pretentious, for he thinks that he, being the manager, must outstrip everyone else in the colony. \(^{246}\)

In *A Correct Admixture*, Søren Rud traces late nineteenth century efforts to educate selected Greenlanders, almost exclusively from mixed heritage families, who could eventually be employed by the Trade. This development was ‘played out in an ideological climate in which the protection of indigenous Inuit culture dominated,’ and the educated Greenlanders were supposed to stay Greenlandic in terms of many

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\(^{244}\) Ibid.


cultural traits – but ideally ‘supplemented’ with European qualities. Whether the ‘admixture’ was successful or not was much often scrutinised by the colonisers.

Whilst the dinner party in the above anecdote is described purely from Hilma’s vantage point, it offers a setting within which the social position of Høegh and his wife can be judged. The colony manager’s generosity is undermined by the subtext of mockery, and the West Greenlandic couple seems unsuccessful in winning approval of the Danish women. In a recent study, Toft and Seiding note that, from the European colonists’ perspective, it was expected, and almost a relief, that, despite the mixed population’s access to the ‘European cultural sphere’, they lacked the ‘ability to act in it as a European.’ Toft and Seiding’s argument can be read in conversation with Homi Bhabha’s work. In Location of Culture, he suggests that ‘hybridity’ unsettles the categorical binaries archetypical for colonial circumstances and renders colonial authority ‘ambivalent’ when imitated or reproduced. Although blandinger were useful as mediators, especially so in the more isolated settlements less appealing to Danes, their ‘mimical’ consumption contradicted their marginalised state and blurred the distinction between the two colonial populations on which the power balance inevitably rested.

Hilma poses a threat herself, albeit of a different kind, as an outsider. She conforms to the dominant racial hierarchy that pervades the settlement but is at the same time unattached to it to some extent. Hilma and her husband are quite creative and fashion diverse social relations in the colonial system, using whatever association available in this assembled community. They befriend the East Greenlanders and reinforce those social relationships by mutual visits. The young couple benefit much from informal barter with the hunting families and their neighbour, Rachel, assists Hilma with her daily chores. Hilma eventually hires Rachel as her housekeeper – or kiffaq – even though Hilma’s position does not entitle her to do so. Hilma’s

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249 Ibid.
250 Homi K. Bhabha, Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994).
infringement of rigid colonial etiquette evidently upsets Mrs Kaldhal, as she had been raised in West Greenland where the social order was long-established. She is even critical of Hilma’s being there in the first place:

That a mere wife of a carpenter dares to come to Greenland, is not something that would be tolerated on the West Coast, Mrs Kaldhal bluntly told me. Only those, who are employees of the Administration are allowed to come.252

The Kaldahls considered their position as superior to that of the East Greenlanders and refused to be entertained under the same roof as the natives. Colony manager Høegh and his wife typically followed suit. Although not surprised by Mrs Kaldhal’s haughtiness, Hilma rejects her arrogant behaviour toward the indigenous population – and she is particularly indignant over Høegh and his wife’s conduct:

When you hear her talk about the situation on the West Coast, one might believe that Greenland and the Greenlanders are there for the Danes and not vice versa; that the Danes are there to guide and inform the Greenlanders. If it is as she says, then I say – what a sad situation it must be, over there, when the Danes feel so superior to the natives and think they can treat them in whatever manner suits them. But what can one say about a man like Høeg, not to talk about his wife, both of whom are themselves Greenlanders, but still feel too posh to associate with riff-raff [pak] like the Greenlanders. That’s like giving oneself a great slap in the face, I think.253

All the same, Høegh’s interaction with the East Greenlanders begins to change under the influence of the uninhibited behaviour of the young couple, according to Hilma:

‘Charles and I do as we please, and we don’t think we’re too good to associate with Greenlanders, so the manager and his wife, of course, don’t want to be known for thinking they’re too ‘good’. They are, after all, themselves half-Greenlanders.’254

Hilma and her husband even decide to throw a Christmas party in the French radio station, for everyone in Ittoqqortoormiit, seeing that the house is nearly ready – and


thereby contravene a custom as old as the colonialism in Greenland itself; of throwing separate celebrations, one for the natives and one for the colonial staff.255

**Social Domination and Control in Scoresby Sound**

Although Danish authorities never officially attempted to change existing forms of leadership in East Greenland, they introduced new forms of social domination and control.256 It is worth noting that the administrative organisation differed from the one on the West Coast since the two East Greenlandic colonies were administrated directly from the central administration in Copenhagen and not through municipal- and provincial councils. The political devolution instituted absolute power of the state structure and effectively excluded the East Greenlanders from formal influence. Within this system, the resident colony manager was the local power-holder. However, an official grant of authority did not necessarily guarantee a final say in a corresponding sphere of influence. The 1894 ‘Instruction for the Colony Manager and Other Personnel Serving at the Newly Established Trading Station on Greenland’s East Coast’ states that the appointed colony manager must consult the missionary and seek his approval in particular aspects concerning the colony’s welfare.257 No arguments are made for the missionary’s central role – but it is not implausible that the motive is conditioned by the fact the first missionary was Danish while the colony manager was born in Greenland from a mixed marriage. The script was in fact revised in 1904 when the Danish missionary was replaced with a West Greenlandic priest. The amendment reversed the relationship so that it was now the colony manager that had the final word in case of a disagreement.258

Ittoqqortoormiit was a small and remote station and could not sustain a separate stratum of Danish official bearers, assisted by an intermediate substratum of lower

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257 ‘Instrux for Handelsbestyreren og det øvrige i Administrationens Tjeneste Stående Personale ved det nye Handelssted på Grønlands Østkyst’. (1894). [From Mikkelsen’s collection]. A094 ‘Korrespondance, redegørelser, diverse optegnelser mm.’, Danish Arctic Institute (Box 1, Folder 1), Copenhagen, Denmark.
functionaries. However, although both Høegh and Sejer Abelsen had been chosen to administer the colony, this did not necessarily mean that the administration considered them entirely trustworthy of their positions. The official dossiers compiled by Ejnar Mikkelsen are, on the contrary, a testimony to distrust. The competence of the two West Greenlanders is frequently questioned and their integrity and self-mastery measured. In a yearly report written for the Administration, Mikkelsen remarks:

My personal impression of Pastor Sejer Abelsen is that he is slothful and will only fulfil the minimum requirements of his duties.\(^{259}\)

Mikkelsen repeats the criticism in his biographical publications. In *Fra Fribytter til Embedsmand* (1957), he describes Abelsen as ‘well-meaning – but [he] hardly shines like a burning torch in the kingdom of heaven.’\(^{260}\) Three years later, in *Svundne Tider i Østgrønland*, he is even more cynical about Sejer Abelsen’s abilities, or lack thereof:

[U]nfortunately, one could neither … expect a spiritual growing season for the Scoresby Sound population, since the colony’s first priest, schoolmaster, and spiritual leader for the somewhat stubborn and self-confident colonists was a West Greenlandic superior catechist … a man who could barely speak a single word in Danish himself. This, I was up against – and it was an experience dearly paid for.\(^{261}\)

To carry out the duties assigned to the Office of Inspector for East Greenland, Ejnar Mikkelsen relied on information and reports compiled by the local represents. Colony manager Høegh was, in principle, responsible for this task but was repeatedly passed over by Mikkelsen. On one occasion, Mikkelsen even asked carpenter Charles Hansen to report figures on recent catch and inform him about local affairs in general. Høegh came to know of this and was, according to Hilma Hansen, very critical of his exclusion.\(^{262}\) Høegh’s resentment was stirred again when the French scientific expedition arrived, this time by telegrapher Kaldhahl’s intervention. Høegh could not


speak any language in common with the Frenchmen, which caused obstacle when interacting with them. He, therefore, had to resort to communicating through Kaldahl, who quickly assumed full authority in the affair. Mikkelsen recognised the complication but was apologetic over Kaldahl’s authoritarian behaviour:

It is only natural that he – as the necessary intermediate – has gradually assumed an unwarranted authority and has, in several cases, made independent decisions, though, of course, he often should have passed the inquiries and the requests over to the colony manager.263

Høegh already felt humiliated on account of his dispute with Kaldahl over the choice of location for, and the future title over, the building housing the French radio station. Since Høegh had a much larger family, he felt entitled to the house, which was the most spacious one in the settlement. Kaldahl ultimately had his way, with support from Mikkelsen. The house was erected next to his lodgings, on the hill overlooking the settlement. As soon as the Frenchmen left his family moved in.

The quarrel between the two men undermined Høegh’s authority as a colonial official and prevented his governing well, as stated by Mikkelsen:

This has, in both cases, given Kaldahl a position against the expeditioners and Høegh, where Kaldahl has assumed increased importance, but has, at the same time, impaired Høegh’s authority. When Kaldahl acts in a very assertive and cross-grained manner, this undermines Høegh’s position vis-à-vis the foreign expeditioners. The Greenlanders also quickly realised that Hoegh was being placed in the shadow of the more forceful telegrapher, and this has affected their relationship with the colony manager.264

What is more, Kaldahl, as he admits to Mikkelsen, frequently interfered with Høegh’s monthly reports and ‘corrects’ them, ‘e.g. when Høegh wanted a message to be delivered, informing [me] about the general state of distress of the population.’265 Mikkelsen’s solution was not to reprimand Kaldahl for his infringement of Høegh’s duty, for he believed that the heart of the problem was inherently in the fact that

264 Ibid.
Høegh was a Greenlander. He proposed instead to substitute Høegh for a Dane, at a suitable time:

Since the prevailing attitudes of Danes and Greenlanders differ somewhat, it will always cause difficulties, sooner or later, when the colony manager is a Greenlander and the telegrapher a Dane. It would therefore likely lead to a significant enhancement of the colony’s welfare if a Dane became the manager. But since the settlements in East Greenland are isolated and small, the manager, or any other official, should not remain there for too long.\(^\text{266}\)

Mikkelsen’s resolution is quite revealing in several ways. First, he is well aware that the idea of reserving public office for Danes is in some sense open to doubt. The Danish officials would need to be rotated regularly out of the province, to protect them from detrimental effects of social isolation. Interestingly, Mikkelsen hardly ever raises this issue in relation to the West Greenlandic office bearers, and never in relation to the hunting families. Second, although the proposition may serve to curtail the authority of the colony manager against the population, it can also be seen as a ‘control’ mechanism, undermining the independence of the local office. Finally, this arrangement, once operating, is adapted for perpetuating the dialectics of dominance and subordination.

**Coming-Together**

With respect to Mikkelsen’s last point, the ideal of maintaining separation between administrative personnel and the colonial subjects was becoming increasingly unrealistic – but for reasons that had less to do with Høegh’s race and more to do with the fact that the East Greenlanders resisted marginalisation. Sixteen hunters drafted a formal complaint in 1935, addressed to the Administration, in which they criticise Hendrik Høegh’s conduct as a colony manager. Sejer Abelsen acted as their interpreter and transcriber. The letter is loosely structured around a series of topics, as the men take turns in an extended discussion on everyday acts of domination and discrimination. Although it may not yield much insight into the daily lives of the

community, it offers valuable insight into the tense relationships in the koloni. Below are excerpts from the three-page letter:

Julius: Most of us think so (presumably that they regret that colony manager Høegh is coming back after a leave) because most days the manager is unfriendly towards us.

Jens: Josva’s thought is as follows: it is significant when the hunters want to change the instructions made by the Administration. Therefore, we must not act as if we were children, who are just playing.

Job: asserted, that the hunters were not satisfied with being treated and scolded like children, and he did not think that they should hold their peace but seek ruling on their case.

Ole: I sometimes had a meal with them, when I came to the colony, but at other times I was nothing but air to him, for no reason at all. Some he appreciates, but others are like air to him.

Manasseh: We have also noticed that when a Dane comes into the shop while we trade, he deliberately tries to detain him (delay the time)

Magnus: The manager has often told us that when we visited the Danes who wintered here, they were gracious enough towards us, but then spoke ill of us behind our backs.

Ole: We know well that all Danes are good to us.²⁶⁷

The hunters labour the point that the meeting was not ‘a mere play’ but a somber procedure. Moreover, they to make it known ‘without hesitation, that they had expressed their position as Men.”²⁶⁸ Their mode of expression parallels a salient element of Danish colonial discourse, which characterised the Greenlanders, in Toft and Seiding’s words, as ‘helpless children being raised to mature civilisation by the colonisers.”²⁶⁹

Although the letter is dated 11 March 1935, it was formally delivered much later due to the infrequent and uncertain shipping. A formal investigation was halted and Mikkelsen, in any event, was unable to make the necessary inquiries until his

²⁶⁷ Ejnar Mikkelsen. (1936, March 11). [A Complaint Telegram Received From Hunters in Scoresby Sound]. 0030 ‘Inspektør for Østgrønland Ejnar Mikkelsen: Korrespondance og rapporter vedr. Scorebysund og Angmagssalik (1926-40)’, The Danish National Archives (Box 1), Copenhagen, Denmark.
²⁶⁸ Ibid.
official visit in 1936. Many of the hunters were having second thoughts by that time Mikkelsen started his investigation, and he ultimately dismissed the hunters’ dissatisfaction, since he believed that the Greenlanders had been influenced against Høegh, ‘probably by Pastor Sejer Abelsen, as there has been a certain tension between the two for several years.’

Still and all, during his visit Mikkelsen approached the malcontent hunters and gave attention to these and other grievances. From the very beginning of colonisation in East Greenland, luxury articles, such as coffee, had been withheld from the hunters and their families to avoid ‘spoiling’ them. The hunters living in Scoresby Sound were sorely displeased with this arrangement and wanted to be able to have their say about what they did and did not trade in. They requested that everyone in the colony should be allowed to buy coffee. They advocated their wish on the basis that, first, they could now afford to buy coffee. Second, they got so much coffee from the colony manager, the priest, and from other permanent or temporary residents in the koloni that they had gotten in the habit of drinking it. Last, there were instances of inter-marriage between East- and West Greenlanders, so it was hardly condonable that the one group was allowed to get coffee, and the other not. Mikkelsen concedes all premises:

Moreover, the Scoresbysund population is a mixture of West- and East Greenlanders. Though the latter group far outweights the former in size, when they live in the same colony and pursue similar activities, they should also have the same rights. If not, it will over time, only cause justified bitterness and create an unfortunate barrier between them.

In an essay on social production during British rule in India, historian Ranajit Guha defines subaltern classes as representing ‘the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the “elite”.’ His use of the word ‘subaltern’ proceeds from the definition given by Antonio Gramsci.

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270 Ejnar Mikkelsen. (1936, November 18). [Comments for the Greenland Administration on the Complaint Telegram Received From Hunters in Scoresby Sound]. 0030 ‘Inspektør for Østgrønland Ejnar Mikkelsen: Korrespondance og rapporter vedr. Scoresbysund og Angmagssalik (1926-40)’, The Danish National Archives (Box 1), Copenhagen, Denmark.


In Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks*, the ‘subalterm’ designate those classes subordinated by hegemony and are excluded from any substantial role in a regime of power.\(^{273}\) Subaltern classes are frequently ruled by ideological domination from above, but it is important to keep in mind that the ‘socio-cultural interplay’, as Guha suggests, between the elite and the subalterns is extremely varied.\(^{274}\) Danish colonial authorities classified and surveilled the two groups of Greenlanders in East Greenland through cultural categories of domination and subordination, but none of the categories were static. They were dynamic processes, and the subordinate group of East Greenlanders could, and did, use their collective experience to contest and resist marginalisation.

Conflicts can open an in-between space – alluding to the theorem, developed by Homi Bhabha, of the *Third Space*, and his analysis of the process of hybridity and opening.\(^{275}\) In the flow of sociality, the third space is an area of transition where cultural meanings are produced within which disparate elements encounter and transform each other. The cultures of those who possess different agendas, aspirations, and ideas meet and clash, resulting in new forms of social interactions and identities. Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of ‘contact zone’, a hybrid term she coins in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, can also give us a point of departure. The contact zone is where subjects ‘geographically and historically separated’ encounter one another and ‘establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict’.\(^{276}\) Although power relations between the colonising and colonised subject are radically asymmetrical, Pratt nevertheless treats the colonial space, not in terms of separateness, but in terms of border crossing: of ‘co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices.’\(^{277}\)

Social production in Ittoqqortoormiit was pervaded with power relations and personal purposes. What made exclusion practicable, and subordinated particular groups of people, was the presumption of irreconcilable difference between rulers and ruled. However, the rationale was given to an unstable character. The Danish colonial


\(^{275}\) See e.g. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*.


\(^{277}\) Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 

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policies, that made a hybrid colonial structure in Eastern Greenland possible, thrived on the ambivalence of these positions – it is in fact a crucial point of contention in colonial encounters. The *koloni* introduced a shared but differentiated space; a transgressive site where agents with disparate cultural background met and tried to come to terms with each other. The ground rules were self-sustained, but in the actual encounters, where players were drawn together in an indeterminate assemblage of singularities, the rules themselves were being drawn as if for the first time.
Epilogue

The chief interest and importance of this report resides in its description of the development and welfare of a backward race reduced to its very simplest. It is a small, controlled experiment in colonisation, using that term in the British Imperial sense of to-day.

Here, in tiny miniature, are the Colonial problems of those, who, having idealism, are called upon to administer backward peoples. [George C.L. Bertram in a 1946 review of Mikkelsen and Sveistrup’s The East Greenlanders: Possibilities of Existence] 278

The findings of this study add to a growing body of literature on early-to-mid-twentieth-century relocation schemes in the Circumpolar North. The schemes were indeed diverse, but they shared many similarities that point to a Circumpolar story of relocations. Assisting indigenous families to settle in unoccupied and unfamiliar regions of the Arctic was an instrumental tactic, a strategy that allowed nascent northern empires to gain the upper hand in conflicting geopolitical claims over space and land. Although it can be advantageous to understand the various resettlement events conceptually as if they were a single paradigmatic phenomenon of colonial domination, it is nevertheless important that an analysis of a singular case demonstrates the importance of contextualisation. The present study set out to elucidate the history of the colonisation of Scoresby Sound and analyse the relationship between governing bodies of an expanding and centralising state, and the colonial subjects. In consequence of this state-sponsored resettlement, Danish colonial rule became fully established on the east coast of Greenland, as the local settlers became subjected to policies of civilising quests and subordinate to Danish and West Greenlandic administrative personnel.

The aim of Danish involvement in Greenland was to make the entire island a Danish province and draw the indigenous populations into trade relations that were controlled and monopolised by Denmark. On this level, the objective of the

population dispersal policy in East Greenland was partly to ensure the continued prominence of a hunting and trapping economy. In the early decades of the twentieth century, however, this undertaking became fraught with incongruity. Colonialism based on segregation, where power operated through the logic of profound difference, was in tension with colonialism that insisted on assimilation and incorporated the colonised subjects into cultural, political forms of modern liberalism. A sense of civilisational superiority permeated the logic of Western progress. Inherent in the colonial project was a civilising mission intended to institute certain values and life forms that were not necessarily compatible with subsistence and commercial hunting existence. The relocation to Scoresby Sound was not exclusively anti-modern since straightforward traditionalism was considered backwards and not genuinely seen as a viable way or means of existence.

Ejnar Mikkelsen personified this ambiguity perfectly. From one point of view, he unremittingly promoted scattered settlements and tied East Greenlanders’ livelihoods together with traditional activities. His attitude towards the Greenlanders tapped into a deep Euro-Romanticism. He was an essentialist who saw significant transformation as constituting a loss of identity. But from another point of view, Mikkelsen strived towards raising the living standards in the ‘declining Eskimo community’ until the object – ‘a European hunter’s culture’ – was attained. The trading station in Ittoqqortoormiit represents the centre of this antagonistic ideal. It was established as a place for the administrator, the missionary, and the telegrapher: assembling determined structural relationships, regardless of the intentions of individual agents who occupied those subject-positions. The colony’s staff came to play a significant role in the everyday lives of the East Greenlanders living in Scoresby Sound, particularly the emerging West Greenlandic middle figures. Prevailing social hierarchies, coupled with racial and cultural discrimination, determined these positions, but the tendency to draw a stark dichotomy of coloniser and colonised was erected upon untenable principles. Colonial encounters were not fixed in context or content but continuously renegotiated. Future investigations will need to address legacies of hybridity, which still pertain to the ongoing (post)colonial history of East Greenlanders.

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Figures

Fig. 3. Members of the Bomen’s Boat Expedition in front of the cairn at Tasiusarsuk (their overwintering place in Ammassalik). To the left is Gustav Holm and to the right is Johan Petersen. Photo: Unknown, 1885. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [1165].
Fig. 4. The three conquistadors, Nualik. Photo: Georg Carl Amdrup, 1900. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [120607].

Fig. 5. A Royal visit. The inhabitants of Nuuk greet King Christian X of Denmark. Photo: Harald Lindow, 1921. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [23841].
Fig. 6. Ejnar Mikkelsen hoists the flag in Scoresby Sound. Photo: Unknown, 1924. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [149580].
Fig. 7. A map by J. P. Koch showing the mouth of Scoresby Sound and the location of the settlements (Meddel. om Grønl. 27. 1902). [Ejnar Mikkelsen has made a few alterations]. Published in ‘Ekspeditionen til Scoresbysund med Formaal at forberede Koloniseringen,’ Geografisk Tidsskrift 28, no. 3 (1925): 155.
Fig. 8. A young woman with two children in front of a house in Cape Stewart. Photo: Unknown, 1925. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [149646].
Fig. 9. A group of settlers by one of the houses in Cape Hope. With them is Ejnar Mikkelsen. Photo: Unknown, 1925. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [24523].

Fig. 10. The Ammassalikers aboard Grønland. Photo: Unknown, 1925. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [149687].
Fig. 11. Sejer Abelsen, Johan Petersen and Henrik Høegh in Ittoqortoormiit. Photo: Unknown, 1925. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [149618].

Fig. 12. The Ammassalikers in Ísafjörður, Iceland. Photo: Unknown, 1925. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic Institute [149686].
Fig. 13. From Sejer Abelsen’s ordination, picture taken outside the church of Ísafjörður. Photo: Unknown, 1925. Reproduced by permission of the National Museum of Iceland [Lpr/1987-119].
Fig. 14. Portrait taken of Pøruseq from Noorajik during the women’s boat expedition. Photo: Hans Knutsen, 1884. Reproduced by permission of the Danish Arctic institute [24367].
Fig. 15. Photo taken in Ittoqqortoormiit, shows Hilma Hansen standing next to a local woman. Photo: Charles Hansen, 1931-32. Danish Arctic institute [162632].
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