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Mines and missions: Early modern Swedish colonialism in Sápmi and its legacies today

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Abstract

This paper discusses issues relating to the contested colonial history and heritage in Sápmi, focusing on the situation in Sweden, as well as some of the challenges – but also possibilities – that archaeologists and other scholars are facing when dealing with this field of tension. In particular, the discussion focuses on early modern mining and collecting of Saami material objects in Sápmi, the collecting of Saami human remains in the 19th and early 20th centuries and current debates on repatriation and reburial. The paper takes its starting point in two interrelated research projects, funded by the Swedish Research Council, *A Colonial Arena*, dealing with early modern extractive industries in Sápmi, and *Collecting Sápmi,* dealing with early modern collecting of Saami material culture and its legacies today. In the paper it is argued that Swedish colonialism in Sápmi needs to be explored more in-depth, and that archaeologists need to deal with issues of Saami self-determination in heritage management and recognize and consider cultural rights movements and decolonization processes in Sápmi.

Keywords: Colonialism, extractive industries, collecting, Indigenous land and cultural rights, Sápmi

10.1 Introduction

Swedish colonialism in Sápmi[1] is a contested issue, which has been at the center of many debates in recent years. When discussing Saami pasts, and scholarship on Saami pasts, colonial histories and relations in and around Sápmi are of fundamental importance. Much of our knowledge about Saami pasts have been, and still are, filtered through a colonial raster. Colonial histories in Sápmi are multidimensional, complex, contested and entangled with different, conflicting historical narratives and ideas about land and people in the North, which affect also archaeological research and interpretations in Sápmi.

The discussion in this paper takes its starting point in research that I have been involved with during recent years, in particular the two interrelated research projects, *A Colonial Arena* and *Collecting Sápmi*, funded by the Swedish Research Council.[2] The two research projects deal with different aspects of early modern Swedish colonialism in Sápmi, and the consequences and importance of the colonial histories and relations today.

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1. In this paper, I use the notion of Sápmi as the present-day traditional core area of the Sámi population which stretches across the state boundaries between northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. However, Sápmi is a complex and multilayered notion with many different meanings, and the borders of Sápmi have been challenged and contested in many ways (see e.g. Ojala 2009).

2. In both of the research projects discussed in this paper, *A Colonial Arena* and *Collecting Sápmi*, I have worked together with Jonas Monié Nordin, National Historical Museums in Stockholm. In the *Collecting Sápmi* project, several other researchers and museum professionals from Sweden, Norway and Finland have also been involved.

I will discuss some issues relating to the contested colonial history and heritage in Sápmi, which have been in focus in the two projects, as well as some of the challenges – and possibilities – that archaeologists and other scholars are facing when dealing with this field of tension. In particular, I will focus on early modern mining and collecting of Saami material objects in Sápmi. I will also, although this theme was not part of the two research projects, discuss the collecting of Saami human remains in the 19th and early 20th centuries and current debates on repatriation and reburial, which can be seen as part of the general history of colonial collecting and extractivism in Sápmi, and which point to the need for archaeologists to critically examine colonial histories and relations.

The paper focuses primarily on the section of Sápmi that is today part of Sweden, with some comparisons with Norway and Finland. However, it is important to keep in mind that the present-day state boundaries are most often not relevant for earlier Saami history. Still, the state boundaries have had a profound impact on the understanding of Saami past and present and have in many ways divided the Saami lands and populations. The state boundaries – in essence colonial constructions – are therefore important elements in narratives of Saami history, heritage and decolonization.

I will argue that there is a need to examine Swedish colonialism in Sápmi more in-depth, to view Swedish colonialism in a larger, international perspective, not separated from European colonial ideologies and practices in general, and also to explore the connections between early modern colonialism in Sápmi and Swedish participation in colonial processes in other parts of the world. Furthermore, I will argue that archaeologists need to recognize and seriously consider Saami claims for greater self-determination in heritage management and debates on cultural rights and decolonization in Sápmi.

In the following, I will first discuss some experiences from my earlier research within the two interrelated research projects, *A Colonial Arena* and *Collecting Sápmi.* Thereafter, I will discuss some central issues, raised in the projects, connected with the understanding of colonial histories and relations, and the struggles for Saami land and cultural rights, self-determination and decolonization in Sápmi.

10.2 Early modern colonial exploitation and extractive industries in Sápmi

The first of the projects, which is called *A Colonial Arena: Landscape, People and Globalization in Inland Northern Sweden in the Early Modern Period*, funded by the Swedish Research Council (2014–2017), dealt with early modern colonial histories and relations in Sápmi, from a historical archaeological perspective. One central focus of the project was on the early modern exploitation of natural resources, and the establishment and development of metal extractive industries, in the Saami areas in present-day northern Sweden in the 17th century.

In the project, we have explored three main case studies. One of the cases has concerned the copper and iron industries in the Torne River Valley in the 17th century, with sites such as Kengis/Köngänen/Geavŋŋis (outside of Pajala/Bájil), Masugnsbyn, Svappavaara/Vaskivuori/Veaikevárri, and Leppäkoski and Pahtavaara (nearby Jukkasjärvi/Čohkkiras). Iron ore was discovered in Masugnsbyn in the 1640s; and in the 1650s, mining of copper ore was started in Svappavaara. From the 1640s, an industrial enterprise and industrial landscape developed in the Torne River Valley, centering on the copper and iron works in Kengis (Nordin and Ojala 2017; Ojala and Nordin 2019). This was the beginning of the mining history of the region, leading up to the later, large-scale mines in Kiruna/Giron and Malmberget (Hansson 2015). In collaboration with Åsa Lindgren from Norrbotten County Museum, we have surveyed and documented 17th-century mining and works sites in the Torne River Valley (Lindgren et al. 2020; Nordin & Ojala 2020). There are many well-preserved remains, which have been little, or not at all, studied archaeologically, and which are in many cases not very

well protected. For instance, in Svappavaara, the archaeological remains of the 17th-century mining village, which is located in the middle of the current mining area, as well as the copper works in the present-day Svappavaara community, are threatened by present-day exploitation.

We have also explored the historical contexts and importance of the 17th-century silver mine at Nasafjäll/Násavárre (Bromé 1923) and the silver works at Silbojokk/Silbbajåhkå (Awebro et al. 1989; Nordin 2012, 2015), and at Kvikkjokk/Huhttán (Awebro 1983; Bäärnhielm 1976; Nurmi 2019). Silver ore was first discovered in 1634 in Nasafjäll, high up in the mountains by the border with Norway, which led to high hopes of great future riches for the Swedish crown and became the start of the exploitation of mineral resources in Sápmi, which is still ongoing. Local Saami people were, during certain periods, forced to work for the mine, especially with transportation, and there exist many histories and memories of hardships and exploitation of the Saami populations, against which Saami groups also protested, e.g. by submitting written complaints to the authorities or by evading the forced labor (see e.g. Awebro 1983: 183–230; Bromé 1923: 152–169).

A third case study dealt with the early modern church and market places, which were established by the Swedish state and the Swedish church in the inland Saami areas from the beginning of the 17th century. The church and market places that were established in the early 17th century in the inland Saami areas, such as Lycksele/Lïkssjuo, Arvidsjaur/Árviesjávrrie, Jokkmokk/Jåhkåmåhkke, Jukkasjärvi/Čohkkiras and Enontekiö/Markkina/Márkan, can be seen as nodes or central points in the colonial landscapes, where trade, taxation, legal and religious affairs as well as social interactions were concentrated during certain periods of the year – when the local Saami populations had to be present – and which were important spaces in the process of tying the inland Saami areas and populations closer to the Swedish crown and church (see Bergling 1964; Ojala and Nordin Forthcoming; Wallerström 2017).

We have studied these sites – but also the mining and works sites – as colonial contact zones or 'colonial arenas', where different groups of people interacted, and where different kinds of relationships, identities, material cultures and power relations were played out, negotiated and transformed (Nordin and Ojala 2017, 2020; Ojala and Nordin 2019; Ojala and Nordin Forthcoming; cf. Lindgren et al. 2020). However, it is important to keep in mind that these sites were also part of Indigenous Saami landscapes, with roots stretching far back in time. In our view, there is a need for much more research on the early modern Saami communities and their transformations during this period of great external and internal pressures. There are still many blank spots in the knowledge of Indigenous landscapes in Sápmi and the Torne River Valley area during the 17th century, and more archaeological research is needed.

Some of our central questions have dealt with notions of Swedish colonialism in Sápmi, and the roles and positions of the local Saami – and in the Torne River Valley area, also Finnish or Tornedalian – communities in the colonial processes, especially concerning Saami agency and involvement in the extractive industries, but also resistance and protest. We have also discussed the early modern development of extractive industries in Sápmi and the Torne River Valley in a larger international perspective, as being involved in international networks of trade, capital, people and ideas in the 17th century. Here, we have focused especially on the Dutch-Swedish industrialists, the brothers Abraham and Jakob Momma-Reenstierna, who took over and developed the copper and iron industries in the Torne River Valley in the 17th century, and their involvement in different international networks (Nordin and Ojala 2017).

10.4 Early modern collecting of Saami material culture

The second project, which is in many ways closely connected with the *Colonial Arena* project, is called *Collecting Sápmi: Early Modern Globalization of Sámi Material Culture, and Sámi Cultural Heritage Today*. This is a larger project, funded by the Swedish Research Council (2014–2018), with participants from universities and museums in Sweden, Norway and Finland.

The aim of the project has been to examine the history of early modern collecting of Saami material culture, and early descriptions of Saami culture, from the late 16th century until the early 18th century. In the project, we have aimed to study early modern international networks of scholars and collectors who were interested in Saami material culture, and to investigate how, where and why the collecting of Saami objects was conducted, as well as to follow the movement of the objects between different collections and collectors in the Nordic countries and other European countries.

Furthermore, the aim of the project was to study the importance of the early modern collecting and the collected objects in today's society, including how some objects in recent times have returned to the Saami areas, and have been 're-activated' in Saami communities, as part of repatriation and revitalization processes. Thus, in the project, a number of critical issues have been raised concerning colonial histories and relations in Sápmi, the motivations and ideologies of collecting, as well as the right to Saami cultural heritage.

The project consisted of a number of case studies. It included, as a central part, a survey of museum collections in the Nordic countries and in other European countries with early modern Saami objects, from before the 1800s – trying to find as much information as possible about these early collections (Harlin et al. Forthcoming; cf. also Harlin 2017). One very important aspect is to make the information about these early collections of Saami objects available to Saami communities, although there are also ethical issues to consider when making this kind of information public, especially concerning sacred and sensitive objects. Most of the oldest Saami objects are kept in museums outside of Sápmi, and information about these collections are generally difficult to access, as earlier overviews to a large extent are lacking.

One of the most important categories of early modern Saami objects are the sacred Saami drums, which were important objects in the Indigenous Saami religion in the 17th and 18th centuries (Christoffersson 2010; Manker 1938, 1950). Many Saami drums were confiscated by force by the Swedish crown and church, for instance during court sessions in Kemi Lappmark in 1671 and Åsele/Sjeltie in 1725, as part of the mission work and the campaigns against what was perceived as non-Christian religious beliefs and practices (Harlin et al. Forthcoming; Kroik 2007; Nordin and Ojala 2018). Drums were also confiscated by missionaries and clergymen in Norway. Many drums, as well as Saami sacred sites and sacred *sieidi* (sacred stone or wooden object) were also destroyed by the authorities and their allies. On the one hand, the drums were seen as instruments for Saami sorcery and idolatry and the use of the drums was prohibited with threats of serious punishment. On the other hand, the Saami drums attracted much curiosity and were strongly coveted by collectors and scholars around Europe, as exotic and magical objects. As a result, some of the drums ended up in collections around Europe, where some of them still exist today (Duoddaris 2000; Edbom 2005; Harlin 2008; Harlin et al. Forthcoming; Snickare 2014).

We have also been interested in the academic networks at Uppsala University in the 17th century, and their importance for the construction of ideas on Saami culture and history. One central person in the history of constructing notions of Saaminess was Johannes Schefferus (1621–1679), professor in Uppsala. Schefferus was the author of *Lapponia*, the first major monograph on the Saami, which was first published in 1673 and which had profound impact on later views on Saami culture and religion (Schefferus 1956 [1673]). One of our case studies has aimed to explore the networks of Schefferus and *Lapponia* (Andersson Burnett 2019; Nordin and Ojala 2019). We are interested in his Saami and

non-Saami informants – and how *Lapponia* was built on networks consisting of many different actors. Schefferus also built his own library and museum building in Uppsala, where he kept a collection of drums, *sieidi* stones and other Saami objects (Nordin and Ojala 2015, 2018). The building is still standing in central Uppsala, close to the Cathedral. He also wrote about mineral deposits in Sápmi in *Lapponia* and corresponded with people involved in the extractive industries in Sápmi, exemplifying the interconnections between the different agents in the colonial processes.

As mentioned above, another important part of the project is to study the meaning and importance of the early modern Saami objects today, for instance in different cultural revitalization processes, and to follow these objects in current debates on cultural heritage. Here, the debates on repatriation of Saami cultural heritage, and greater Saami self-determination concerning heritage issues, are central (Harlin 2017, 2019a, 2019b; Nordin and Ojala 2018; Ojala 2017, 2018).

As part of the project, we have made a special study of two collections in Sweden with early modern Saami objects, the Royal Armory in Stockholm and the Skokloster Castle by Lake Mälaren. In collaboration with Sunna Kuoljok, ethnologist from Ájtte – the Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum, and the Saami crafts persons and tradition bearers Lisbeth Kielatis and Per-Ola Utsi, the Saami objects in these collections were studied in detail (Kuoljok 2020).

The objects at the Royal Armory are part of a so-called Saami equipage – with a sledge, a life-size mannequin with Saami clothing, a stuffed reindeer with equipment, a drum and other objects – which was given as a gift to the Swedish king Karl XI in the 1690s from the County Governor of Västerbotten Gustaf Douglas (Nordin and Ojala 2018). The Saami objects at Skokloster Castle are known from inventories to belong to a collection that existed in the early 18th century. The objects at the Royal Armory and Skokloster Castle thus constitute some of the oldest surviving collected Saami objects in Sweden. The special study aimed to contribute to an exchange of knowledge between museum professionals and Saami tradition bearers and crafts people and more generally to a revitalization of old museum collections and knowledge about older Saami handicraft and traditions. The knowledge of Lisbeth Kielatis and Per-Ola Utsi contributed greatly to the understanding of these early modern objects, concerning e.g. their techniques, materials, patterns and social and cultural contexts. At the same time, information about these early Saami objects could be returned to Saami communities.

10.5 Contested colonial history and heritage in Sápmi

The two research projects, briefly discussed above, are situated in a field of tension between past and present, in which issues of colonialism are central. The development of extractive industries and the collecting of Saami material culture must be seen as part of a larger context of colonial and missionary policies and practices in the Saami areas in the 17th and 18th centuries: colonial policies and practices that affected, involved and engaged lands, as well as the bodies and minds of the people living in Sápmi – and which have had serious, long-lasting impact in Sápmi and Sweden.

In the following, I will raise some of the current debates and contested issues connected with the understanding of colonial histories and colonial exploitation and collecting in Sápmi, which scholars working with historical archaeology in this area are facing, and which have been in focus in the two described projects.

In Sweden, many people, including some scholars, do not recognize the colonial dimension in Swedish history, and the very word 'colonialism' in relation to the Saami areas is still today quite controversial (see discussions in Fur 2006, 2016; Höglund and Andersson Burnett 2019; Naum and Nordin 2013; Ojala 2019; Ojala and Nordin 2015, 2019; cf. also Lehtola 2015). Some researchers prefer using 'internal colonialism' as a term for the historical situation in Sápmi, in order to distin-

guish this situation from overseas colonialism. However, the use of the concept of internal colonialism in the Saami context has been criticized, as it presupposes an already existing state structure within which colonial practices take place (e.g. Lindmark 2013). The historian Gunlög Fur, who has studied Swedish involvement in colonial ideologies and projects, has expressed her view on colonialism in the following way, which I find relevant in the Saami context:

> *My point of departure… is in a definition of colonialism as a process through which a state power unilaterally seizes the right to decide over an Indigenous people's territory, culture and economy, under the pretense that they possess a superior social system. This implies that colonialism also involves notions of racial/ethnic and cultural inequality between ruling and subaltern people, the pursuit of political dominance, and the physical and economic exploitation of Indigenous people* (Fur 2016: 244; my translation).

There has been a general reluctance to acknowledge Sweden as a colonial power, and a tendency to see Swedish colonialism as a different kind of colonialism, somehow 'kinder' and 'less colonial' than that of other colonial powers. This is the case not only in relation to Sápmi and the Saami populations, but also concerning the colonial projects of the Swedish state in other parts of the world, such as the Swedish colony 'New Sweden' in North America in the 17th century (see e.g. Fur et al. 2016).

In general, the knowledge about the colonial history of Sweden is very limited among the public in Sweden – and this is a theme that has not been much discussed in schools, or in universities for that matter, until very recently. However, the understandings of colonial histories and relations, and colonial expansion and exploitation in Sápmi, have direct relevance for present-day conflicts over land and cultural rights in northern Sweden.

Some scholars have recently started to discuss Swedish involvement in colonial politics and economics, arguing for the need to examine Swedish colonialism in relation to wider European colonial ideologies and practices (see e.g. Fur 2006, 2013, 2016; Höglund and Andersson Burnett 2019; contributions in Naum and Nordin 2013).

Colonialism, and its currents of discrimination, racism, segregation and assimilation, has had strong impact on the politics of identity and belonging in Sápmi, a theme which has been discussed by several researchers (see e.g. Beach 2007; Gaski 2008; Åhrén 2008). For instance, in Finland, there has been a heated debate on definitions of indigeneity and criteria for Saaminess, especially for the electoral register for the Saami Parliament. The debate is connected with notions of colonialism and their impact on processes of Indigenous identities today, as well as with views on the roles and positions of Saami research (see Junka-Aikio 2019; Lehtola 2015; Nyyssönen 2015; Valkonen 2019). These debates illustrate the complex and contested nature of politics of belonging, and politics of inclusion and exclusion, in Sápmi.

10.6 Extractive industries and protest movements

In recent years, there has been a mining boom with plans for many new mines in Sápmi, as well as in many other parts of the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions. The mining boom in the Swedish part of Sápmi has been facilitated and encouraged by the Swedish state's mining policies, aiming to develop Sweden's position as a leading mining country (Haikola and Anshelm 2016; cf. Ojala and Nordin 2015). However, the expansion of the mining sector, adding to other exploitations of natural resources in Sápmi with roots stretching back to the early modern period, leads to shrinking spaces for and multiple pressures on reindeer herding and other economies and threatens traditional livelihoods and

landscape uses (Gärdebo et al. 2014; Sehlin MacNeil 2017; Össbo 2014). These added pressures have fuelled protest movements among Saami groups, as well as among environmentalist groups.

The Saami Parliament in Sweden has called for a cease in new exploitations of mineral resources in Sápmi until the Swedish government can guarantee the protection of Saami Indigenous rights. The Saami Parliament has especially emphasized the need for mechanisms for ensuring the principles of free, prior and informed consent in natural resource exploitation (see *Sametinget, Gruvor i Sápmi*).

Several mining projects in the Saami areas in Sweden have been met by protest movements. The protests at Gállok, outside of Jokkmokk, have become an important symbol for the Saami struggle for greater self-determination and for a decolonization of the policies and legislation of the Swedish state (Liliequist and Cocq 2017; Persson et al. 2017). Another example are the plans for a new mine at Nasafjäll, on the Norwegian side of the border. Nasafjäll has, since the 17th century, been a symbol for the colonial oppression of the Saami, a symbol which is activated in today's protests. There have also been disputes and conflicts in Finland concerning extended mining activities in the Saami areas (e.g. Komu 2019; Lassila 2018).

In these protest movements, the question of Saami land rights and the role of indigeneity and Indigenous rights in Sweden are central – and, consequently, the understanding of history and the connections between past and present becomes very important. In the conflicts over land rights, Saami activists are talking not only about a colonial *past*, but also about a colonial *present*.

Not least the conflicts over land rights and mining in Sápmi have attracted attention in the mass and social media, and have led to discussions on the role of Saami Indigenous rights in society. One very important court case – with much public attention – the case of the Girjas Saami Village versus the Swedish state, dealing with the rights of the Girjas Saami Village to hunting and fishing, has also activated debates on the position of the Saami as an Indigenous people and the application of Saami Indigenous rights in Sweden (see e.g. Allard et al. 2015 and Brännström this volume). At present, there are on-going discussions in Sweden about a truth commission concerning the Swedish state's policies and practices towards the Saami, dealing with themes such as discrimination, racism, forced assimilation, language policies, boarding school experiences, racial biological investigations and the loss of Saami land rights. Saami groups have emphasized the importance that a truth commission must be Saami-led and involve Saami voices and experiences, in order to handle the often very sensitive and traumatic histories, and that this work should lead to concrete results and changes in policies (see *Sametinget, Sanningskommission*). The Swedish government should have a special responsibility to facilitate, and provide funding, for such work. This could also be argued in relation to repatriation processes, which also require resources and funding, and which will be further discussed in the next section of the paper.

In Norway, there is an ongoing truth commission concerning the Norwegianization process towards the Saami and Kven populations. In Finland, a process has been started concerning a truth commission dealing with the Saami population. The Swedish church has also initiated a reconciliation process with the Saami people. The Swedish church has, among other things, published a two-volume anthology on the historical relations between the church and the Saami people (Lindmark and Sundström 2016). The Swedish church has also been actively supporting Saami requests for repatriation and reburial of Saami human remains in collections (see further below). Furthermore, in Sweden, a truth and reconciliation commission concerning the Swedish state's treatment of Tornedalians, the Meänkieli-speaking minority population in the Torne River Valley region, has recently been established by the Swedish government (cf. Persson 2018)

10.7 Anatomical collecting and demands for repatriation and reburial

The collecting of Saami material culture in the 17th and 18th centuries was transformed into a more large-scale ethnographical collecting of Saami material objects in the 19th and 20th centuries. With the development of anatomical, and racial, research in the 19th century, the national and international interest in the Saami led to the collecting of not only material objects, but also human remains in Sápmi. This aspect of colonial collecting in Sápmi has been, and still is, very painful and traumatic for many Saami people, and the human remains in collections have been at the center of recent repatriation and reburial debates. In the following, I will discuss this theme, as it is such an important part of colonial collecting, and as it illustrates some of the challenges that archaeologists and other scholars confront when dealing with colonial history in Sápmi.

In the 19th and early 20th century, a large amount of human remains, especially crania, were collected, or plundered, from deceased people, as well as burial grounds and churchyards in Sápmi, in search of genuine Saami human remains for anatomical and later racial biological collections and research (Ojala 2009, 2016; Svanberg 2015). There are also many accounts about local protests and resistance against the collecting or plundering of human remains in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and of the often unethical and offensive ways in which the excavations or collecting took place, often in secrecy and with different kinds of manipulations (Ojala 2009: 242–251, 2016). Today, there are several collections of Saami human remains stored in different museums in the Nordic countries and other parts of the world, resulting from this practice of collecting.

In recent years, demands have been put forth by Saami activists and Saami institutions, such as the Saami Parliament, for the repatriation and reburial of Saami human remains in collections, with references to discourses on human rights and international law, demanding a thorough investigation of the historical background to these collections as well as a decolonization of the policies and practices of the Swedish state as concerns Saami heritage management. These collections are today deeply disturbing to many people, and the anatomical collecting of Saami human remains – often seen as part of Swedish colonialism in Sápmi – is an emotionally and symbolically very important issue.

The demands for repatriation and reburial connect with the international movement of Indigenous peoples, seeking the right to self-determination, and are part of a larger discussion on Saami Indigenous rights. However, the situation as concerns Saami influence and control over cultural heritage matters vary greatly among the different states. In Norway, the Saami Parliament has part of the responsibility for Saami heritage, including the right to control the old anatomical collections of Saami human remains (Holand and Sommerseth 2013), but in Sweden the Saami Parliament does not have the power to decide in these matters.

During the 19th century and the early 20th century, three large anatomical collections were created at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Uppsala University and the University of Lund, with human remains from Saami groups, as well as from many other groups of people in Sweden and other countries (Svanberg 2015). According to a recent report, commissioned by the Swedish government, Saami remains are stored in at least 11 museums in Sweden. The same number of museums store human remains from Indigenous groups from other countries (Drentzel et al. 2016).

Internationally, debates on repatriation and reburial issues have been important for a long time (see e.g. Colwell 2017; Fabian 2010; Fforde 2004; Fforde et al. 2002; Hillerdal et al. 2017; Jenkins 2011; Turnbull 2017), but these issues have begun to be debated in Sweden only recently. In the Saami context, claims for greater self-determination in heritage issues, and claims for repatriation and reburial, have been raised for instance at Saami conferences in the recent decades (see e.g. *Duoddaris* 2002; Harlin 2019b: Mulk 2009; Ojala 2009: 228–233; Xanthaki et al. 2017). Saami museums in

Sweden, Norway and Finland have initiated survey projects, attempting to gather information on the extent of the collections of Saami human remains (Edbom 2005; Harlin 2008; these surveys have, however, not been complete).

In 2007, the Saami Parliament in Sweden decided, after demands from Saami cultural workers and activists, to demand, firstly, a complete survey of all Saami human remains in state collections and how they have become part of these collections, and secondly, a repatriation and a worthy reburial of the human remains (*Sametinget* 2007; cf. Ojala 2009: 251–262). The demands led to a broader debate on these issues in Sweden, which raised the awareness among the public in Sweden of the old anatomical collections and their histories. The Saami Parliament in Sweden has also recently appointed an ethical committee. One of their priorities has been issues concerning repatriation and reburial of Saami human remains in collections.

In 2017, the proposal of the Swedish government for new national cultural heritage policies raised the issue of repatriation of Indigenous human remains, and has pointed to the need for national guidelines for handling human remains in collections and responding to repatriation claims, which have not existed in Sweden earlier (*Proposition Kulturarvspolitik* 2017). The National Heritage Board has been responsible for developing these national guidelines for museums, which have recently been published (RAÄ 2020a, 2020b).

There have been only a few reburial cases with Saami human remains in Sweden. One of these concerns the so-called Soejvengeelle's grave in Tärna/Dearna, Västerbotten County, in 2002 (Heinerud 2004; Stångberg 2005), and another the so-called Gransjö grave, near Frostviken/Frööstege in Jämtland County, in 2011 (Hansson 2012). In both of these cases, new analyses and datings were conducted before reburying the remains, illustrating the possibility to combine scientific historical investigations with respect for the requests of local communities for reburial of the human remains.

The largest reburial case in Sweden has concerned human remains from the 17th- and 18th-century church yard in Lycksele/Likssjuo, Västerbotten County, which were reburied in August 2019 (see Aurelius 2019; Samefolket 2019). Lycksele was, as mentioned above, one of the church and market place established by the Swedish crown in the early 17th century, as part of the expansion of the Swedish state into the Saami areas in the north, with the aim to control trade, taxation, judicial and religious affairs. The church yard was excavated in the 1950s and the human remains were transferred to the Historical Museum in Stockholm for analyses. However, the remains 'disappeared' in the museum and were 'rediscovered' only a few years ago. They were subsequently sent to the Västerbotten County Museum in Umeå/Ubmeje, when a reburial process was initiated. A very interesting local process took place, in which the Lycksele Saami Association/Liksjuon Sámiensiäbrrie, the Lycksele municipality, the Swedish church and the Västerbotten County Museum participated – working not only for the return and reburial of the human remains, but also to investigate what had actually happened in the 1950s and how the remains had been treated since then. At the reburial ceremony in Lycksele in August 2019, with several hundred participants, the Sámi Parliament, several museums, the Swedish church and the Swedish government were represented, and the Historical Museum made a public excuse for the ways in which the remains had been treated.

In Finland, there has also been a reburial of Saami human remains from the anatomical collections at the University of Helsinki in Inari/Aanaar in 1995 (Lehtola 2005). In Norway, there have been a few reburial cases, the largest one being the reburial of Skolt Saami human remains from the anatomical collections at the University of Oslo in Neiden/Njauddâm in 2011. This was a debated case with different opinions in the local Saami community whether to rebury the remains or conduct more research on the remains in order to explore local history (see Svestad 2013, 2019; see also Mathisen 2017).

There are also some ongoing cases being discussed in Sweden. The most debated case concerns the human remains excavated in 1915 from the old churchyard at Rounala, north of Karesuando/

Gárasavvon, which were brought to the anatomical collections at Uppsala University (see Ojala 2009: 258–261; Wiklund 1916). Demands have been put forth for the reburial of the human remains and the Sámi Parliament has also been engaged in this issue. At the same time, new research has produced datings of the burials to the Middle Ages, much older than earlier thought, which give new important perspectives on the medieval history of the area and medieval influences from Christianity (Aronsson 2013; Fjellström 2020; Lidén et al. 2019; Wallerström 2017). At present, the human remains are deposited at the Ájtte – Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum in Jokkmokk, but without the right to rebury the remains. This example illustrates some of the complexities and dilemmas of reburial debates, and points to the need for more research on the medieval and early modern history in this region of Sápmi, not least concerning the history of Christian influences and mission before the 17th century (see also Lundmark 2016; Rasmussen 2016).

Another case concerns the excavated human remains from the early modern church yard at Silbojokk/Silbbajåhkå in Norrbotten County. Silbojokk was the silver works, refining the silver ore from Nasafjäll, in the 17th century, and as such a powerful symbol for Swedish colonialism, forced labor and forced conversion in Sápmi. Due to erosion from the damming of the Lake Sädvvájávrre, rescue excavations have had to take place at the old church yard (see Lindgren 2015, 2019). Some demands for a reburial of these bones have been put forth, but it is at present unclear what will happen with the human remains from Silbojokk.

When discussing claims for repatriation and reburial it is also important to consider the perspective of international law. In particular, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples contains a number of paragraphs dealing with Indigenous cultural rights, including statements about the right of Indigenous peoples to the repatriation of their human remains (Ojala 2009: 234–235; *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;* see also Xanthaki et al. 2017). However, the UN Declaration has not yet been applied in practice in Swedish legislation or heritage management practice, and needs to be considered and discussed by the different actors in the heritage field in Sweden.

The repatriation and reburial demands have mostly concerned the old anatomical collections of Saami human remains. It is important to see the anatomical collecting in the larger historical contexts, as part of a history of colonial collecting and appropriation, but also to recognize that the anatomical and later racial biological research, for which many Saami human remains were collected, contributed to notions of the Saami as an inferior people, which in turn have legitimized discrimination, marginalization and oppression of Saami groups and individuals (Ojala 2016).

However, repatriation debates have not only concerned collections with human remains. Also, material culture objects, such as the sacred Saami drums, which were collected or confiscated in the 17th and 18th centuries by agents of the Swedish crown or church, have been in focus for repatriation claims. Often in research, most attention has been put on sacred objects, such as the Saami drums or *sieidi* stones. However, as Eeva-Kristiina Harlin has pointed out, everyday objects may be as important, or more important, for Saami communities, as they carry the potential to convey details of everyday life, traditions, handicraft techniques and materials, and also a sense of attachment and belonging (Harlin 2019a).

Repatriation has often been discussed in a rather simplified manner, as a conflict of interest between researchers and museum professionals on the one hand and members of local and Indigenous communities on the other. However, reality is often much more complex, and the concept of repatriation also needs to be critically examined. Often, repatriation processes are complex and ambivalent processes, with many voices, interests and values represented by different stakeholders. Over time, the positions, views and interests of the stakeholders might change. It is also important to recognize that there often are a variety of views, interests and priorities in each of the groups, such as for instance within a local Indigenous community or among professional archaeologists.

Although repatriation has often been viewed as a conflict of interests, there are also positive examples that repatriation processes can lead to new relations and collaborations (see contributions in e.g. Fforde et al. 2002; Gabriel and Dahl 2008; Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014). Repatriation is not only about a return of objects or human remains, often it is also about development of new relations between museums, scholars and local and descendant communities. Many repatriation processes entail exchange of knowledge and experiences, and co-production of new knowledge and understanding. In these processes, it is also important for archaeologists and osteologists to inform about the value, and potential, of scientific studies of human remains for the study of local and regional histories.

10.8 Conclusions

To conclude the discussion in this paper, I would like to raise some final points, stemming from the research in the two projects, *A Colonial Arena* and *Collecting Sápmi*, which I think can be relevant for the wider field of Saami studies. The two projects have demonstrated the complexities of colonial histories in Sápmi and the connections between past and present, as well as the need to critically examine notions of Swedish colonialism in Sápmi and the positions of archaeology and heritage management in Sweden.

I have discussed different aspects of early modern colonial history in Sápmi, and some of the legacies of this history today. I would argue that the exploitation of natural resources in the 17th century and the early modern collecting of Saami material culture, as well as the 19th- and early 20th-century collecting of Saami human remains, are closely interconnected, through the colonial relations in Sápmi, past and present, representing different aspects of extractive practices and colonial collecting over time. The early modern mining and works sites, the objects, such as the Saami drums, but also the human remains, are part of different, sometimes competing and conflicting, narratives about the past and the present: what stories are told, and whose voices are allowed to be heard?

In my view, there is a strong need for historical perspectives on the present-day conflicts over land rights, for instance concerning mining in Sápmi: not only perspectives on the mining activities as such, but also on the cultural, political and ideological contexts of historical mining. As has been discussed in this paper, the current land conflicts have deep historical roots, stretching back at least to the 17th century. At the same time, archaeologists also need to be aware of the present-day contexts in which historical-archaeological research will be interpreted and debated.

Furthermore, I think archaeological perspectives can be of importance in these societal debates: engagements with places and landscapes, and the traces of earlier times in the ground, which have the potential to give voice to people, places, things and events, which were never recorded in the historical records. As the case studies in the project *A Colonial Arena* have shown, there is a great archaeological potential at many of the early modern sites in Sápmi. Many of these sites are also rather poorly protected and vulnerable for future exploitations.

The research projects have also demonstrated that in current conflicts over land and cultural rights, the notions and understandings of colonial history and heritage in Sápmi are central. In sum, Swedish colonialism in Sápmi needs to be explored more thoroughly – also in relation to European colonial ideologies and practices elsewhere in the world. It is also very important to acknowledge and analyze Saami agency, participation, opposition, resistance and protest in the colonial processes, including the mining and the appropriation and collecting of material objects as well as human remains. Here, it is important to recognize and examine the complexities and dynamics involved in colonial encounters and relations in Sápmi, including diversity, changes, innovations and individual and intergenerational differences within local Saami communities.

More research is needed on the histories of appropriating and collecting material objects and human remains. The relations between the collecting of Saami material culture in the 17th and 18th century and the collecting of Saami human remains in the 19th and early 20th century is an important theme, which has been little examined in earlier research. The international trade and exchange with Saami human remains has also been little studied: Where are the human remains today, at what museums and institutions, and how did they end up there? These are some issues that future research needs to address.

The cases discussed in this paper – mining in Sápmi and the early modern collecting of Saami material culture, which have been explored in the two research projects, as well as the collecting of Saami human remains in the 19th and early 20th centuries and the present-day demands for repatriation and reburial – illustrate the complexities of connections between past and present, complexities which archaeologists should consider. They also show that colonialism is not located only in the past, but is part of the field of tension in which archaeologists work today. In Sweden, there is a great need for more discussions on power relations and Saami self-determination in the field of heritage management – and the roles and responsibilities of scholars and museums and other heritage institutions.

Finally, as an archaeologist and researcher, I would like to add that if we want to contribute to a process of 'decolonization' in Sápmi, we also have to recognize and deal with archaeology's own colonial history and present, and the power relations involved in current archaeological research and heritage management. This is a mission we need to embrace together.

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