

PHASING OUT THE COLONIAL STATUS OF GREENLAND, 1945–54: A HISTORICAL STUDY. By ERIC BEUKEL, FREDE P. JENSEN and JENS ELO RYTTER. Translated by NANCY E. AKE AAEN. Copenhagen, Denmark: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010. ISBN 987-87-635-2587-9. Meddelelser om Grønland 347; Man & Society 37. 478 p., map, sources, bib., index. Softbound. US\$69.00; €53.

This book is an English translation from Danish of a report published in 2007, which the three authors were commissioned to produce on behalf of the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). Urged by Greenland Premier Hans Enoksen, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen commissioned the DIIS to undertake a historical study of the circumstances surrounding the decolonization of Greenland by which Greenland became a part of the Danish realm in 1953.

The report, now a book, has 11 chapters, a conclusion, and a number of annexes. In summary, the chapters have three themes: Greenland's political position after World War II, negotiations in the United Nations relevant to the decolonization process, and the status and development of international law as these relate to the question of self-determination. One annex, written by the Greenlandic researcher Jens Heinrich, diverges from the method applied in the book—a theme to which we will return. This method, well known from much research on Greenland's history, consists primarily of reading and analyzing a vast number of written sources available in archives and libraries in Denmark, Greenland, and the United States. On the basis of this work, the authors have produced a meticulous and well-documented report analyzing the decolonization process as it took place in the United Nations and the role played by Danish politicians and bureaucrats and the few key Greenlandic representatives who were involved in the process. The analysis goes behind the political scene in Denmark to examine the roles of the various players, including their visions concerning the future of Greenland. This empirical research opens the way for many new interpretations of the post-war political climate between Greenland and Denmark and thus permits readers to examine the subtle processes that accompany any kind of decolonization.

The questions to which the book seeks answers were formed by the political circumstances after the turn of the millennium and focused on four main issues. First, were the Greenlanders and the advisory Provincial Council in favour of the constitutional change as put forward by the Danish government? Second, was the process of changing Greenland's colonial status in accordance with international law? And more specifically, why was no referendum held in Greenland? Third, was the Provincial Council fully informed about the consequences and the options available? Fourth, what did the people of Greenland wish, and what future did they envisage after World War II?

The answer by the authors to the first two questions is: yes! The elected Greenlandic representatives in the

Provincial Council were informed about and supportive of the constitutional proposal, and the authors give us much evidence for this interpretation. However, the authors are not completely persuasive when they substantiate their conclusion with “the Greenland representatives in the [Parliament] Greenland Committee expressed a strong desire for *a closer association of Greenland with Denmark*” (p. 119) (emphasis added). This is, as we will see, something different. In answer to the third question, the authors give ample evidence that this was not the case. There were issues in which the Greenlanders were not involved, and the Danish government deliberately withheld information from them. The book deals thoroughly with this withholding of information. When an internationally known professor of law suggested that Greenland should be informed about the alternative options to integration (independence, free-association, and the Faroese model), the Danish government did not want the Greenlanders to learn about these options. The authors cite three reasons: it was against the Danish wishes, it could “come to play a negative role when the integration solution was presented to the UN,” and “it could turn the issue of Greenland into an international hot issue” (p. 375). The authors seem to legitimize these positions when they write that “At no point had Greenland put forward any wishes for an independence model or for a Faroese solution...” (p. 375). Given the fact that the research project was requested by the Danish government, such statements cast doubt on the objectivity or neutrality of the researchers.

This leads to the final question. The authors write that independence was against the wishes of Greenlanders. This is most probably true, but where do they know this from? And is the question of independence the most relevant question? One of the annexes, as mentioned above, deals with the wishes and visions of Greenlanders as these can be deduced, directly or indirectly, from the Greenlandic newspapers and magazines published in the 1940s and 1950s. If any conclusion can be drawn from Jens Heinrich's annex, it seems to be that the Greenlanders wanted to be equal with Danes: nothing more, nothing less. But these viewpoints and wishes cannot be found in the Danish archives. And in fact, many Greenlanders accepted the paternalistic Danish attitude of those days and never openly opposed the Danes. The authors mention these factors but do not include them in the conclusions. Now, to the question of whether the integration with Denmark and the constitutional change made the Greenlanders equal, the answer is simply: No! Salaries of Danes and Greenlanders in Greenland remained unequal, even for the same work. Greenland remained a closed country, and people (Greenlanders or Danes) who were critical of Danish policy were relocated by the authorities or simply thrown out of Greenland. Critique was unwelcome. The Danish authorities did not listen to the wishes of the Greenlandic representatives if the suggestions were against Danish policy. Keeping information secret from the Greenlanders continued—and continues to this day, as often noted in the media. Criticism was seen as

offensive by many Greenlanders, as well as by the Danes, and open opposition did not appear until after the constitution had been changed.

The authors note that the Greenlanders wanted to be equal, they wanted development, they wanted integration with Denmark, and they wanted no longer to live in a closed colonial territory; however, the only question the authors really answered was whether the Greenlanders accepted the constitutional change. They do not discuss whether the Greenlanders, or even the negotiators, had any clear idea of the implications of their choice. The Greenlandic representatives who took part in the negotiations in Greenland, in Denmark, and in the United Nations probably thought that the constitutional change would give them equality. The history since the 1950s has proven that this was not the case, and it was the main reason why the Greenlanders claimed Home Rule in the 1970s and self-rule at the beginning of the new millennium. The reasons for not dealing with this perspective in the present book should be found in the way that the Danish report came about.

The political situation 50 years after the events analyzed in the report is important, but only cursorily mentioned in the book. This is unfortunate, because it was the ongoing negotiations between Greenland and Denmark on the introduction of self-rule in Greenland that gave rise to severe critiques of the then current political arrangement and its historical background. After the turn of the millennium, there were powerful circles in Greenland wanting independence and they severely criticized the way in which Greenland was included in the Danish Constitution when its colonial status was abolished in 1953. If the conclusions in the Danish report went against the interpretation of the events in the early 1950s by today's Greenlandic politicians, who had used the events to argue for self-rule or independence, the authors of the report would run the risk of simply being criticized for running errand of the Danish government. And that was exactly what happened, whether we deem this to be fair or not. The report had to deal with the political realities, and the authors responded to the a priori Greenlandic critique. Instead of making what seems to be a word-for-word translation of the report into an English book, the authors could have taken up these issues in the translation, published three years later, and substantiated their interpretations. There should have been ample reason after the report was delivered to take up and analyze issues that were outside the scope of the report, but important for a scientific analysis of this significant period in the history of Greenland.

If we are looking for empirical and political information about the circumstances connected to the abolishment of Greenland's colonial status, this book is a gold mine. If we want information about how a benevolent colonial power legitimizes its own policy, this is also the book. The book is a most interesting report on Danish policy in Greenland, and as such, it stays within a long Danish tradition. For those who want to know what happened when the negotiations on Greenland's colonial status took place in Denmark

and in the United Nations, this book has compiled a great deal of information about the process, the politics, and the people who negotiated on behalf of Denmark.

*Jens Dahl*  
Malenevej 14A  
3060 Esbjergærde, Denmark  
jensdahl@mail.tele.dk

JE VEUX QUE LES INUIT SOIENT LIBRES DE NOUVEAU: AUTOBIOGRAPHIE (1914–1993). By TAAMUSI QUMAQ. Traduit de l'Inuktitut par LOUIS-JACQUES DORAIS. Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2010. ISBN 978-2-7605-2580-1. 153 p., b&w illus. Softbound. Cdn\$18.00.

This book, translated into French from Inuktitut, chronicles the changes in Nouveau-Québec from camp life to settlement life. In the introduction, the translator, Louis-Jacques Dorais, discusses his own personal relationship with the author and the latter's uniqueness. This small autobiography is encapsulated in the title, which in turn reflects the author's passion and resulted in, among other accomplishments, an encyclopedia on the history and customs of the Inuit of Nouveau-Québec, particularly eastern Hudson Bay, and an Inuktitut dictionary. These works emphasized Qumaq's desire to ensure the culture was not lost. As a result, he was honoured by both the Quebec and Canadian governments.

The autobiography is organized into five parts, each indicating a significant development for the Inuit of the region, especially around the present settlements of Puvirnituk and Inukjuak. In addition the narrative proceeds year by year, illustrating in the process both traditional life and social, economic, and political changes.

Born in January 1914 at a camp north of Inukjuak, Qumaq was raised in a traditional manner, including a period with his grandparents, during which "Les Inuit vivaient tous, avec leurs familles, dans des campements, dont les chefs étaient très compétents" (p. 35). Hunting seal and caribou, fishing, and trapping wolves and foxes reflected the nomadic lifestyle. He describes family life, learning traditional skills (including his first hunt with elders and building an igloo), and the role the Anglican church played in their lives. The author describes this life in the first part of the book, which covers the period from 1914 to the mid 1930s. It was a period in which they did not lack for food, in spite of the vicissitudes of game, as they shared food. He noted a famine a bit later (p. 58). Two developments occurred: the filming of *Nanook* by Robert Flaherty and the coming of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), which would replace the French company Revillon Frères.

In the second part of the book, covering the period from 1936–53, the author describes changes that began when the HBC achieved a trade monopoly. According to the author, this change led to impoverishment for the Inuit, since the