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Connecting Nordic Colonialism and the American West: Gustaf Nordenskiöld, Mesa Verde, and Colonial Entanglements

On September 17, 2020, *Native News Online* and *Indian Country Today* announced "Tribes' Ancestral Remains Return Home After Over a Century" and "Tribes Celebrate Mesa Verde Repatriation: Hopi Tribe, Acoma Pueblo, Zia Pueblo, and Zuni Pueblo Ancestors and Associated Funerary Items Repatriated and Reinterred at Mesa Verde National Park."[1] They were marking the occasion of a significant repatriation process that crossed national boundaries and showcased how the settler colonization of the American West linked with the world. In this case, with Finland and Sweden. While neither had globe-spanning colonial empires of their own, people from Finland and Sweden were intimately connected and involved in the colonial processes in the nineteenth-century, both in the American West and in the context of other empires. Finns and Swedes participated as settlers, missionaries, administrators, soldiers, travelers, explorers, and scientists. Mesa Verde forms just one thread in these entanglements that tied Nordic peoples and countries with the broader world of colonial empires. It exhibits Nordic mobilities of peoples, knowledge, and materials in transnational spaces. And it also shows how the durabilities and legacies of these connections still resonate and shape lives today, and how they remain partially unsolved.[2]

What was being returned on September 2020 were a parts of a collection of an estimated 600 artefacts Gustaf Nordenskiöld collected from the Ancestral Puebloan (often referred to as Anasazi) ruins at Mesa Verde in southern Colorado during the summer of 1891. An aspiring scholar and a Swedish citizen of Finnish descent, Nordenskiöld's excavations were mired in controversy at the time. He was even shortly arrested in Colorado, but there being no laws preventing the exporting of cultural artefacts, he managed to ship the items to Sweden. From there the collection ended up in Finland at the predecessor of today's Finnish National Museum in Helsinki, the Finnish capitol. There most of the items remain as only 10% of the collection was returned in 2020.

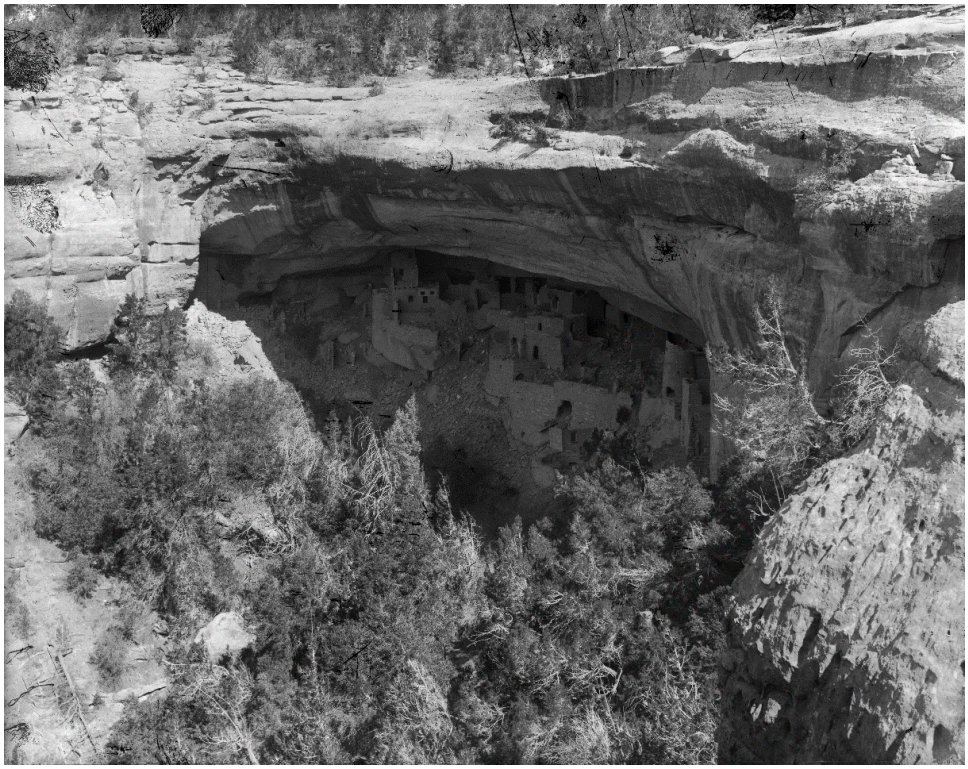

Figure 1. One site of Gustaf Nordenskiöld's excavations in 1891, Cliff Canyon, Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde. Photo by Gustaf Nordenskiöld. Finnish Heritage Agency, VKK420:4. Released under CC BY 4.0., at https://www.finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.450C93405F144BB34792E22CD8C8ED78?sid=2909537668

This article charts some of the forms of colonial entanglements Nordenskiöld's actions and his collection involve.[3] It looks at the movements of peoples, knowledge, and material artefacts to highlight the connections between the American West and Nordic colonialism. The article is divided into four sections. The first briefly positions Gustaf Nordenskiöld in the transnational framework of Nordic colonialism in the American West. The second part discusses what happened in 1891 when Nordenskiöld visited Mesa Verde and how he operated within a settler colonial setting. The third section outlines Nordenskiöld's dissemination of knowledge, while the fourth segment brings the story to the present day, on questions of colonial durabilities and restitution, and Finnish understandings of historical colonial involvement and complicity.

Empires and colonies, historians Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton write, "were never fully self-contained or hermetically sealed systems."[4] Instead, different empires and their agents – the administrators, entrepreneurs, workers, soldiers, and settlers, as well as scholars and explorers like Nordenskiöld – produced forms of interconnectedness. These varied from intense competition to cooperation and imperial comparisons that operated on a variety of scales within and between empires, and inside and beyond the boundaries of formal territorial rule. As Volker Barth and Roland Cvetkovski point out "imperial elites formed multiple, specialized

and intertwined epistemic communities."[5] Imperial spaces were porous and connected spaces for people like Gustaf Nordenskiöld, who as a mobile transmitter of knowledge, worked in globally interlinked networks, and lived transimperial lives. Meaning that his lived experience transcended the space of any single empire or nation, and he actively partook in circulations of peoples and commodities and transfers of knowledge. He had access to Mesa Verde provided by settler colonization, yet his access was also contested. He disseminated information to global audiences and engaged in material exchange across borders; writing letters and books of his findings and taking overseas Indigenous items that had been in the Southwest for centuries, with an intention that this transfer would be permanent and the items would be placed in public display at their new destination, Sweden.

The American West and Nordic Colonialism

Historian Patricia Nelson Limerick was right on the mark all those years ago when defining the American West as a "place undergoing conquest and never escaping its consequences" and as "one of the great meeting zones of the planet"[6] It is these intersected forms of colonial entanglements that define the America West's place in the world as its principal settler colonial domain others have sought to emulate and outdo. Throughout its history the trans-Mississippi West has been a significant space of convergence and conquest, a crossroads for peoples, commodities, and ideas between the Atlantic and the Pacific worlds. It has been a shared and contested world of empires and expansionists, before becoming the settler colonial project it remains today. It has continually attracted outsiders, the Spanish, French, British, Russian, and United States empires, as well as groups of Indigenous expansionists, and it once comprised shared spaces with an international cast. By the mid-1800s the West became a prime example of the global phenomenon of settler colonialism, a fundamental reimagining and remaking of space. In fact, the West lead a global "settler revolution" where the US pursuit for sole sovereignty in the region fueled and coincided with transnational immigrant flows, market revolution, elimination of Natives, nationalization of space, and extension of state power.[7] During Nordenskiöld's time the West became the global benchmark for efficient territorial incorporation. As Sven Beckert has pointed out, the size and speed of US expansion, of peoples, administration, and infrastructure and the settling and the acquisition of resources, had set the standard for other settler projects around the world. The West fronted new kind of connections between territory, state power, and capital– forcing all European powers to take notice.[8]

Traditionally the Nordic experience of settlers and travelers has been viewed almost in isolation from this broader US context of settler colonization. This in turn reflects a more comprehensive Nordic – Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish – understanding of the past that shies away from colonial self-understandings altogether and rejects colonial undertones as unfitting to a Nordic history, while clinging to notions of "exceptionalism." This accepted wisdom proposes that colonialism was something that happened far away and proved

inconsequential for Nordic histories. It also detaches Nordic peoples from colonial networks of settler projects, knowledge production, and material exchanges, or at least suggests that their participation shows cases of a more peaceful, benevolent colonial association. This in turn supports the Nordic countries' self-image as harbingers of humanitarian causes. As Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin explain, people often assume that Nordic "participation in colonial politics was benign and their interactions with the peoples in Africa, Asia and America were gentler and based on collaboration rather than extortion and subjugation."[9]

Recently, scholars such as Gunlög Fur, John Hennessey, Rinna Kullaa, Linda Andersson Burnett, and others working on Nordic colonial histories have criticized these kind of notions as self-congratulatory, misleading, and alarming. They have also started to expose the rich and complex histories of Nordic colonial involvement around the world.[10] Scholars have examined Nordic participation in the global slave trade, settler colonialism in Sámi lands, or various forms of involvement by Nordic individuals and groups with other European empires.[11] They have shown how Nordics actively initiated and participated in colonial projects on their own, in Northern Europe and around the world. They have also conducted comparative studies across national boundaries in order to understand differences and similarities in the national histories of colonialism in the Nordic countries or between Nordic countries and the world.[12]

Some have also investigated the Nordic experience and legacies in North America via the colonial lens.[13] People from Nordic countries were indeed an active part in the settler colonization of the American West, although in traditional migration histories Nordics have typically been viewed in isolation from the broader US settler colonial contexts, and as somehow remarkably benevolent in their transactions with Indigenous peoples. However, Nordics profited from, and further advanced settler colonial conquest and structures, as well as participated in the production of settler colonial narratives. They were impacted by and generated settler colonial cultures, material practices, and modes of knowledge production.[14] One of them was Gustaf Nordenskiöld.

By focusing on Gustaf Nordenskiöld and the Mesa Verde we can examine what kind of culture production and material cultures were established, formulated, and given meaning in relation to Nordic experiences in US settler colonialism and how they echo in the present, both in the Nordic countries and in the US. Nordics in US settler colonization expands the cast of colonial endeavours and practices of cultural looting and restitution. Adding a Nordic dimension to the understandings and discussions also shows how colonial histories, heritage, and legacies are anything but uniquely national stories that only concern the great powers.

Access

"I took two men with me and rode along the bottom of Cliff Cañon to a smaller cliff house which I decided to excavate…It was my intention to spend about one week in Mancos Cañon. That week has now gone by, and I have decided to extend my stay to

one or two months."[15] This is how Gustaf Nordenskiöld wrote to his father in Sweden on July 2, 1891 from the Ancestral Puebloan site of Mesa Verde in southern Colorado. On a world tour to seek treatment for tuberculosis, his plans changed then and there. He hurriedly informed his father and asked him to send money so that he could hire a crew of diggers and buy equipment. Nordenskiöld had decided to bank the start of his research career on Mesa Verde and build a world-class collection of his own to be housed in some Scandinavian museum. "I am certain that in one or two months' time, I could assemble a beautiful collection which ought to be most valuable,"[16] he continued. Gustaf spent the better part of summer and fall at Mesa Verde.[17]

In 1891 Gustaf Nordenskiöld was a 23-year old with a bachelor's degree in mineralogy and chemistry from Uppsala University. He was a Swedish citizen with Finnish parentage and his father was the polar explorer Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, whose world-wide fame rested on his discovery of the Northeast Passage a decade earlier. It was expected that Gustaf would follow his father in the family business. And Mesa Verde presented an opportunity to advance those goals, to start making a name for himself in the transimperial community of scientists and explorers through excavation and looting of artefacts, publishing about them, and assembling a museum collection.

Figure 2. Gustaf Nordenskiöld, in Stockholm, 1887. Finnish Heritage Agency, HK19701231x:30. Released under CC BY 4.0., at https://www.finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.611A5362264B8C8

What brought Gustaf Nordenskiöld to the US in the first place was a global disease, tuberculosis. He received his diagnosis in late 1890, just four years after the disease had taken his sister's life. At the time, travel cure was common for tuberculosis, with a widely held belief in the healing effect of a change in climate. Being white, educated, from established background, and sufficiently wealthy, privileged men like Nordenskiöld could travel around the world quite freely. Having a famous father did not hurt either. Gustaf was well-connected and welcomed into

colonial communities. He knew how to act, how to socialize, whom to contact. And he could take advantage of the recent revolution in transportation and communication; the ocean liners, transnational railroads, road networks, and the telegraph. Yet, Mesa Verde was not initially part of Nordenskiöld's plans. Instead, his travel itinerary, and search for cure, took him to specialists in Berlin, and then to Rome, Naples, Marseille, Paris, and Antwerp, before sailing to New York. After the East Coast it was Chicago, Denver, Yellowstone National Park, and San Francisco, followed by Yokohama, Shanghai, Canton, and British India. Gustaf planned to head home to Sweden via the Suez. But Nordenskiöld never even made it to Yellowstone or to any of the destinations thereafter. During his stopover in Denver, Nordenskiöld visited the local historical society and saw an exhibition on the Mesa Verde artefacts. Next he wanted to see the place for himself.

If the search for cure brought Nordenskiöld to Colorado, it was settler colonization that allowed him access to the place. Settler colonialism made the lands available for Western science to disseminate knowledge about the place, its peoples and its past. And to dig, capture, and export its materials. It was just five years earlier that the Chiricahua Apaches under Geronimo surrendered to the US Army near the Mexican border, which brought an end to the so called "Indian wars" in the US Southwest. The quest to terminate the Apaches' independence had been ongoing since the US captured the Southwest from Mexico in the US-Mexican War in 1846-1848. It had witnessed a succession of violence, of massacres, raids, and military campaigns targeting the material base and homes of the Apaches.18 But it had been just one of many violent conflicts in the Southwest as the US sought to crush the independence of different Ute, Navajo, and Apache groups. Mesa Verde is located on what used to be an overlapping borderlands zone of Indigenous sovereignty. There had been a violent clash in the immediate vicinity of Mesa Verde as late as 1885, known today as the Beaver Creek Massacre, during which settlers killed several Utes over claimed cattle theft. By 1891 the area was subordinated to US rule, with surviving Indigenous peoples pushed to reservations and subject to forced assimilation. Indeed, Mesa Verde bordered/overlapped with the Ute Reservation, and had the large Navajo Reservation as well as several Pueblo Indian communities relatively close by.

Nordenskiöld was fully aware that settler colonization provided him access. Gustaf not only narrated stories of past violent clashes between Indigenous peoples and whites, but wrote as if he was entering an area where violence could still erupt. He offered the hostility of the local Indigenous peoples as one of the main reasons why no previous excavations had been conducted at Mesa Verde. Soon after reaching Mesa Verde he wrote to his father how "now they [the Indians] are quite docile," suggesting that this allowed him to conduct diggings. In his own mind, Nordenskiöld had arrived during a temporary lull in violence and he was determined to take full advantage of it.[19]

Nordenskiöld went to work systematically. He made site plans and penned voluminous notes, making sketches of the architecture and artefacts and organizing

the objects by numbering and naming them. His crew of diggers worked meticulously when going through the different cliff houses. Yet, Gustaf's access was in fact soon disputed as it become better known what he was doing. Local settlers, government officials, and apparently also local Indigenous peoples raised their voices in protest, accusing Nordenskiöld of destroying the ruins and looting artefacts. In August, the federal Indian agent of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation issued a $1000 fine for foreigners entering the reservation without a permit. While Nordenskiöld quickly obtained a permit from a local army garrison, it carried "the inconvenient addendum that 'this pass do not include any right of making excavations on the ruins,'" as Nordenskiöld admitted to his father.[20] Yet, Gustaf ignored this specification curbing his activities and instead continued his operations. Moreover, he assured his father that he had been promised by an unknown but "influential acquaintance" that he would not be bothered as long as "no ruins were destroyed."[21] Next the agent notified his superiors that he was charging Nordenskiöld with abusing his permit. The agent pronounced that he acted due to the damage caused on the ruins by Nordenskiöld's activities. He also remarked that some Indigenous people had protested that Nordenskiöld disrupted the remains of their dead ancestors.[22]

Figure 3. One of Gustaf Nordenskiöld's crew members standing with a shovel in front of an old cliff house at Wetherill's mesa, Mountain Sheep Canyon, during the summer of 1891. Photo by Gustaf Nordenskiöld. Finnish Heritage Agency, VKK420:172. Released under CC BY 4.0., at https://www.finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.B2AEC767321C2A4321B31752FA492597?sid=2909537668&lng=en-gb

Some local settlers also protested that Nordenskiöld was destroying the famous ruins, stealing as much as he could and taking it abroad. Nordenskiöld sensed the mounting criticism and pressure. He wrote how locals "have begun to oppose my excavation" in ways "that makes it desirable for me to soon leave this area."[23] But he would not depart without the artefacts. In turn, Gustaf complained that the settlers did not understand or value his scientific work but would rather let the local cowboys and miners, in his eyes amateurs in search of profit, dig as they pleased. He also implied that the fact he was a foreigner had aroused the officials and the citizenry against him.[24] As his access seemed to evaporate, he implied that mob action was not out of the question. After all, Nordenskiöld felt he was in a region steeped in recent violence and amongst settlers prone to violence. In a letter to his cousin, Gustaf even suggested that the locals considered lynching him for stealing the ruins.[25]

Meanwhile the circulation of the materials Nordenskiöld had taken from Mesa Verde was also at risk. By summer's end, Nordenskiöld had packed his first findings in crates and barrels and hauled them by wagon to Durango for shipment east and then overseas to Sweden. When a few weeks later Nordenskiöld returned to Durango with another load of items, he heard that the first shipment had been seized by local authorities and that the railroad declined to send this new lot. At this time Gustaf was also arrested because of his excavations.[26]

Dissemination of Knowledge

When going to Mesa Verde, excavating, and collecting, Gustaf Nordenskiöld became part of global networks where colonial empires connected in knowledge production.[27] In fact, he contributed to what historians Christoph Kamissek and Jonas Kreienbaum have termed the "imperial cloud," a global shared reservoir of knowledge, practices, and norms that was not bound to a single empire. This "cloud" drew from multiple professions, nationalities, and classes of peoples on the move in the world made of entangled, competing, and cooperating empires.[28]

Nordenskiöld wrote different kinds of publications, serving different ends and catering to different audiences. Some of his personal letters were published quickly in 1891 in the newspaper of the Swedish capital, *Stockholms Dagblad*.[29] His travel memoir *Från Fjärran Västern: Minnen från Amerika by G. Nordenskiöld* was also made available the same year by a Stockholm publisher.[30] It narrated Gustaf's day-to-day exploits in the American West, a region already made popular across Europe by dime novels and human exhibitions such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. The travel memoir depicted Nordenskiöld's personal encounters with nature and the Indigenous inhabitants of the area. An energetic writer, his scientific articles were released in Swedish academic journals in 1892. Nordenskiöld also wasted no time in writing his major scientific work *The Cliff Dwellers of the Mesa Verde, Southwestern Colorado. Their Pottery and Implements*. It was released in 1893 both as a Swedish and an English edition. Here the tone was very different from the travel memoir.

This was a serious scholarly book. Nordenskiöld had written a meticulous, highly detailed, and well-illustrated monograph on the subject of his excavations that became the authoritative reference on the Mesa Verde cultures.[31]

Moreover, Nordenskiöld's writings were one of the many practices of settler colonialism, showcasing Indigenous elimination. He advanced conceptual displacement, prophesizing the disappearance of Indigenous peoples by writing linear and modern settler histories of the area's Indigenous past. Nordenskiöld saw those who once lived at Mesa Verde as a lost civilization, making them static objects belonging in a dead past. Still, while identifying connections between the Mesa Verde residents of the past and the contemporary Hopis (whom he called Mokis), Nordenskiöld highlighted cultural deterioration and disconnects, severed connections with the past. He also saw contemporary Utes disappearing in the face of white settler civilization: "Like most of the North American tribes the Ute Indians are rapidly dying out, and form but the last remnant of a once great and powerful nation."[32] As did Gustaf, most whites at the time depicted Indigenous peoples as backward, destined to either vanish or to assimilate with the help of the whites.

Being an explorer and a scholar meant publishing an assortment of texts. It was what one did to build a reputation as a scientist as well as a public hero. All the famous explorers did so in the Victorian world. Gustaf's father had done it, and his most prestigious book on the discovery of the Northeast Passage was published in 1881. *Vegas färd kring Asien och Europe* (*The Voyage of the Vega round Asia and Europe*) became a best-seller, with translated editions released in several countries. During his stay at Mesa Verde Gustaf had his father send copies of the *Vega* book as gifts to the people who aided him. Thus testifying to the practical value of exploratory publications, Gustaf used his father's book as social currency with those helpful and useful in advancing his interests.

Making claims for scientific authority on the world stage, Gustaf Nordenskiöld saw that he was doing something unprecedented. Highlighting the scientific quality of his works, he compared them to previous publications of Mesa Verde, and found his works far superior. Those earlier scientists, who had visited the site in the 1870s, had only "noted the existence of some ruins, and that was about all," Gustaf tried to convince his father.[33] Having collected only a few items and taken some pictures, they had provided "incomplete knowledge of the appearance and extent of these remarkable ruins," Gustaf assessed.[34] For the most part, he continued, the collecting before him had been "handled only by cowboys and dilettantes."[35] As a result neither "the Smithsonian nor any museum in Europe has any collection from the cliff ruins of Colorado."[36] Besides, he added, the earlier findings "have not been described in writing."[37]

Museum collections and writings, two hallmarks of public and scientific engagement with the past, were missing from Mesa Verde. Not anymore. Nordenskiöld published plenty and he hauled the artefacts to Europe, for the honor of the scientific community there. He practiced the kind of science that saw the world and its peoples servicing the needs of that science. It took from other people's lands,

without permission or moral squabbles, and used it to the benefit of the scholar's personal and national aims. It was very much what colonial science did.

Circulating Artefacts

"My collections will travel ever so calmly home to Sweden, and everything is once again in the best of order."[38] This was how Gustaf Nordenskiöld wrote back home from Colorado on October 23, 1891. He also added that "I have just completed a 10-day 'photo trip' with my camera, and have taken over 100 views…I am sending the plates directly home."[39] Nordenskiöld was shipping to Sweden the approximately 600 artefacts from Mesa Verde, alongside numerous photographs of his findings, the excavation process, and the area.[40] Furthermore, among the materials sent were also several human remains, as shown by Gustaf's own inventory from October 22. He knew he was taking away the remains of the ancestors of those Pueblo Indians who continued to live in the area. His *Cliff Dwellers* book had a whole appendix on the human remains he had excavated.[41] In all, he sent out, in his own calculations, some 1,400 pounds of materials.[42]

After being arrested Nordenskiöld was swiftly released from jail the next day with the help of influential friends connected to Swedish diplomats. By early October his case was dismissed in the local court. He had broken no laws as taking artefacts out of the country was not illegal. Yet the court issued that he should not take any human remains.[43] This Gustaf chose to ignore.

Reaching home in Stockholm by New Year's Day 1892, Nordenskiöld used his Mesa Verde collection for preparing publications. But he wanted to demonstrate his accomplishments in exhibitions too. In 1892, Gustaf, together with his father, partook in the Columbian Historical Exposition in Madrid. Honoring the 400th anniversary of Columbus and his "discovery" of America, the exposition brought "together in the new palace destined for the National Library and Museum in Madrid the greatest collection of Americana ever under one roof," as one contemporary scholar put it.[44] There was some 250,000 pieces on view, from dozens of nations showcased by their leading scholars. Gustaf took his Mesa Verde materials: the photographs he had taken, artefacts, and the models he had built of the cliff dwellings. He left with a gold medal and a rising international reputation.

Next year some of Gustaf's collection crossed the Atlantic. They did not return home, but to the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It featured Gustaf's Mesa Verde photographs and numerous items from the site, as well as miniature replicas of some of the houses. Gustaf, however, did not attend.[45] He had been busy finding a permanent place for his collection, but no museum was interested in the purchase. So Gustaf faced a dilemma, especially as his trip had proven very costly and he had debts. Finnish physician, collector, and friend of the Nordenskiöld family, Herman Fritjof Antell came to the rescue. He supplied funds with Gustaf's collection as collateral. As Antell died soon thereafter in 1893 with no offspring, the collection was left to the Finnish people, ending up with the predecessor of today's National

Museum (Finland was not independent until 1917).[46] Gustaf Nordenskiöld himself died soon too, in 1895, as tuberculosis cut his life short.

Figure 4. A fragment of a bowl painted on both sides, Rock Canyon, Wetherill Mesa, Mesa Verde. From the Gustaf Nordenskiöld Collection, Finnish National Museum, VK4834:197. Released under CC BY 4.0., at https://www.finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.65E8C5DEE43541C6E0E1E4A88F8D57DA?sid=2962578624

Fast forward to 2015, and to a time when the Hopi people made requests to return the Mesa Verde items to the Southwest. Communications, however, froze between the Hopi advocate, who was not an official representative of the tribe, and the Finnish National Museum. The issue resurfaced, as Sonja Salminiitty explains, after the US President Donald Trump and the Finnish President Sauli Niinistö agreed over the issue. Meetings opened in November 2019 between the US embassy people and curators from the National Museum.[47]

Eventually, after some confusion and communication problems, human remains and burial items were returned in 2020 to the Hopi-led Pueblo delegation, who buried them accordingly. At the time Finnish media comments hurried to claim that Finland had nothing to apologize for. Articles noted how Nordenskiöld did not do anything wrong as he did not break any laws with his actions and had only acted as was customary at the time.[48] These claims were in itself true as there were no laws preventing looting and export of artefacts in 1891. And in many ways Gustaf Nordenskiöld was a man of his times, meaning he felt privileged as a European scholar to act as he deemed proper, to interfere in the domains of other cultures and to capture their material heritage for his own benefit and for the name of science. But in 2020, this kind of media discourse mostly proved how Finland sought to disconnect itself from being implicated in any kind of colonialism. It suggested that denial would make the matter disappear. It would not.

Today the question of restitution has become such a global question of contested debates that it impacts Finland too. Numerous former colonized peoples demand the return of their heritage and history from the museums in the Western world.[49] The 2020 restitution to the Pueblo was the first formal case where Finland agreed to return human remains back to another country. In 2021, the National Museum returned thousands of artefacts to the Sami peoples in the Arctic north. One precious stone ruler symbol taken by Finnish missionaries from German Southwest Africa also headed back to Namibia in 2023 (two other stones have already been sent back earlier by the Finnish Missionary Society). Yet, the National Museum still has multiple collections originating from colonial expansions and times, from Russian Alaska, German Southwest Africa, the North American Plains, and the Belgian Congo, among other places. There is no knowledge of what awaits these items.

The colonial heritage of Finland as exemplified by these collections and the historical and present-day connections they carry remains unresolved and understudied. Much more provenance research is needed.[50] Furthermore, roughly 90% of the items that Nordenskiöld amassed still remain in Finland in 2023, in the collections of the National Museum.[51] Regardless if further restitutions will take place, Gustaf Nordenskiöld's actions and his collection have created an enduring connection for Finland with US settler colonialism.

Conclusion

The actions of Gustaf Nordenskiöld at Mesa Verde carried wide-ranging ramifications. Not only did his collecting launch transnational mobilities but his visit motivated the local white residents to petition for a national park to preserve the site. The park was set up in 1906, as the seventh national park in the US. During the same year the Antiquities Act became the earliest US legislation to regulate the removal of cultural heritage. Here too Gustaf Nordenskiöld had played a role as a dangerous precedent on what could happen if sites remained unregulated. However, not until 1990 and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act did Native American tribes have legal rights over their own heritage and ancestral remains.

In Mesa Verde Nordenskiöld's thinking connected a number of important "firsts": of scientific excavation, major collection in a major museum in Europe, and proper published academic studies. These were the avenues he could pursue when seeking recognition as a scholar on a global stage. Yet, Gustaf's excavations aroused controversy. Locals protested his actions and Nordenskiöld knowingly removed ancestral remains of Pueblo Indians living in the area. In essence he was stealing things. Nordenskiöld's actions and their legacies demonstrate how Nordic peoples, from countries without colonies of their own, played a part in the accumulation and distribution of knowledge and materials that connected the American West with the world.

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Notes

[1] Kyle Edwards, "Tribes' Ancestral Remains Return Home After Over a Century," *Native News Online*, September 17, 2020, https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/tribes-ancestral-remains-return-home-after-over-a-century; "Tribes celebrate Mesa Verde repatriation. Hopi Tribe, Acoma Pueblo, Zia Pueblo, and Zuni Pueblo ancestors and associated funerary items repatriated and reinterred at Mesa Verde National Park," *Indian Country Today*, September 17, 2020, https://ictnews.org/the-press-pool/tribes-celebrate-mesa-verde-repatriation (both accessed March 9, 2023).

[2] This article is based on my earlier research. See Janne Lahti, "Gustaf Nordenskiöld and the Mesa Verde: Settler Colonial Disconnects and Finnish Colonial Legacies," Rani-Henrik Andersson and Janne Lahti, eds., *Finnish Settler Colonialism in North America: Rethinking Finnish Experiences in Transnational Spaces* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2022), 259-284.

[3] This research was supported by the funding from Academy of Finland.

[4] Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global, 1870-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 12.

[5] Volker Barth and Roland Cvetkovski, "Encounters of Empires: Methodological Approaches," Volker Barth and Roland Cvetkovski, eds., *Imperial Co-operation and Transfer, 1870-1930: Empires and Encounters* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 15.

[6] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987), 26-27; Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 19.

[7] On "settler revolutions," see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). On American West and its global connections, see Janne Lahti, *The American West and the World: Transnational and Comparative* Perspectives (London: Routledge, 2019).

[8] Sven Beckert, "American Danger: United States Empire, Eurafrica, and the Territorialization of Industrial Capitalism, 1870-1950," *American Historical Review* 122, no. 4 (2017), esp. 1139-1146.

[9] Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin, "Introduction: Situating Scandinavian Colonialism," in Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin, eds., *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena* (New York: Springer, 2013), 4. See also Gunlög Fur, "Colonialism and Swedish History: Unthinkable Connections?," in Naum & Nordin eds., *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*, 17–36.

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[11] See, for example, Raita Merivirta, Leila Koivunen, and Timo Särkkä, eds., *Finnish Colonial Encounters: From Anti-Imperialism to Cultural Colonialism and Complicity* (New York: Palgrave, 2021); Rinna Kullaa, Janne Lahti, and Sami Lakomäki, eds., *Kolonialismi Suomen rajaseuduilla* (Colonialism on the Finnish Borderlands) (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2022); Kristín Loftsdóttír, *Crisis and Coloniality at Europe's Margins: Creating Exotic Iceland* (London: Routledge, 2019).

[12] John Hennessey and Janne Lahti, eds., "Nordics in Motion: Transimperial Spaces and Global Experiences of Nordic Colonialism," special issue of *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 51.3 (Summer 2023); Johan Höglund and Linda Andersson Burnett, "Nordic Colonialisms and Scandinavian Studies," *Scandinavian Studies* 91.1-2 (2019), 1-12; Kristín Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen, eds., *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region* (New York: Ashgate, 2012); Suvi Keskinen, "Intra-Nordic Differences, Colonial/Racial Histories, and National Narratives: Rewriting Finnish History," *Scandinavian Studies* 91.1 -2 (2019), 163–181; Gunlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins. Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland* (Boston: Brill, 2006).

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[14] Andersson and Lahti, *Finnish Settler Colonialism in North America,* especially 1-20.

[15] Letter No. 15, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, July 2, 1891, in Irving L. Diamond, and Daniel M. Olson, eds., *Letters of Gustaf Nordenskiöld: Written in the year 1891 and Articles from the Journals Ymer and Photographic Times* (Mesa Verde National Park: Mesa Verde Museum Association, 1991) (hereafter *Letters*), 29.

[16] Letter No. 15, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, July 2, 1891. 29.

[17] Letter No. 15, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, July 2, 1891. 29.

[18] On the US-Apache violence, see Janne Lahti, *Wars for Empire: Apaches, the United States, and the Southwest Borderlands*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017); Robert Wooster, *The American Military Frontiers: The United States Army in the West, 1783–1900* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2012).

[19] Letter No. 15, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, July 2, 1891, in *Letters*, 30.

[20] Letter No. 24, Gustaf to his Father, Navajo Canon, August 23, 1891, in *Letters*, 45–46.

[21]Letter No. 33, Gustaf to his Father, Durango, September 27, 1891, in *Letters*, 54–55.

[22] Florence C. Lister, *Trowelling through Time: The First Century of Mesa Verdean Archaeology* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 24.

[23] Letter No. 32, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, September 19, 1891, in *Letters*, 53.

[24] Letter No. 32, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, September 19, 1891, in *Letters*, 53.

[25] Letter No. 40, Gustaf to his cousin Karl, Mancos, October 23, 1891, in *Letters*, 63.

[26] Judith Reynolds and David Reynolds, *Nordenskiöld of Mesa Verde: A Biography* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2006), 69–72. See also Letter No. 29, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, September 9, 1891, in *Letters*, 51.

[27] See, for example, Christof DeJung, David Motadel and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *The Global Bourgeoisie: The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Janne Lahti, ed., *German and United States Colonialism in a Connected World: Entangled Empires* (New York: Palgrave, 2021); Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[28] Christoph Kamissek, and Jonas Kreienbaum, "The Imperial Cloud? Conceptualising Interimperial Connections and Transimperial Knowledge," *Journal of Modern European History* 14, no. 2 (2016), 166.

[29] Reynolds and Reynolds, *Nordenskiöld of Mesa Verde*, 61.

[30] The first full English edition did not appear until 2010. Gustaf Nordenskiöld, *From the Far West: Memories of America*, translated by Larry E. Scott and Kent R. Olson (Rock Island, IL: East Hall Press, 2010).

[31] The original in Swedish *Ruiner af Klippboningar i Mesa Verde's Canons* came out in February 1893, with the English edition released a few months later. Gustaf Nordenskiöld, *The Cliff Dwellers of Mesa Verde, Southwestern Colorado: Their Pottery and Implements* (Stockholm: P. A Norstedt and Söner, 1893).

[32] Nordenskiöld, *Cliff Dwellers*, 3.

[33] Letter No. 15, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, Colorado, July 2, 1891, in *Letters*, 30.

[34] Letter No. 16, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos Valley, July 3, 1891, in *Letters*, 32.

[35] Letter No. 19, Gustaf to his Father, Durango, Colorado, July 29, 1891, in *Letters*, 37.

[36] Letter No. 19, Gustaf to his Father, Durango, Colorado, July 29, 1891, in *Letters*, 37.

[37] Letter No. 19, Gustaf to his Father, Durango, Colorado, July 29, 1891, in *Letters*, 37.

[38] Letter No. 40, Gustaf to his cousin Karl, Mancos, October 23, 1891, in *Letters*, 63.

[39] Letter No. 40, Gustaf to his cousin Karl, Mancos, October 23, 1891, in *Letters*, 63.

[40] Some of these photos have later been published as Gustaf Nordenskiöld, *Mesa Verde as Captured by the Camera of Gustaf Nordenskiöld* (Mesa Verde National Park, 1984). The FINNA online database contains 181 images taken by Nordenskiöld in the American Southwest. See https://www.finna.fi/Search/Results?limit=0&filter%5B%5D=%7Eformat_ext_str_mv%3A%220%2FImage%2F%22&filter%5B%5D=%7Eauthor_facet%3A%22Nordenski%C3%B6ld%2C+Gustav+Erik+Adolf%22&lookfor=mesa+verde&type=AllFields (accessed March 28, 2023).

[41] Letter No. 38, Gustaf to his Father, Durango, October 22, 1891, in *Letters*, 61; Gustaf Nordenskiöld, "On Some Remarkable Ruins," in *Letters,* 78–79; Nordenskiöld, *Cliff Dwellers*, Appendix.

[42] Letter No. 41, Gustaf to his Father, Mancos, November 1, 1891, in *Letters*, 65.

[43] See Reynolds and Reynolds, *Nordenskiöld of Mesa Verde*, especially 72–81, for the official correspondence and maneuvering concerning Nordenskiöld's arrest and release.

[44] Walter Hough, "The Columbian Historical Exposition in Madrid," *The American Anthropologist* VI (July 1893), 271.

[45] Reynolds and Reynolds, *Nordenskiöld of Mesa Verde*, 117–119.

[46] Reynolds and Reynolds, *Nordenskiöld of Mesa Verde*, 155–156.

[47] Sonja Salminiitty, "The Question of Repatriation at the National Museum of Finland," (Master's thesis, University of Leiden, 2020), 42–44.

[48] Ulla Veirto, "Miksi 23-vuotias suomalainen tyhjensi Mesa Verden intiaanien haudat – Miten vainajat päätyivät Suomeen ja tehtiinkö siinä rikos?," *Apu*, February 29, 2020, https://www.apu.fi/artikkelit/miksi-23-vuotias-suomalainen-tyhjensi-mesa-verden-intiaanien-haudat-miten-vainajat-paatyivat-suomeen; Jukka Huusko, "Viimeinen matka Mesa Verdeen," *Helsingin Sanomat*, September 25, 2020, https://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000006647282.html; Mikko Marttinen, "Donald Trump veti Suomen kansallismuseon historiallisen eleen osaksi vaalikampanjaansa," *Ilta-Sanomat*, September 17, 2020, https://www.is.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000006639546.html.

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[50] Maria Tolsa, "Suomi palautti Namibiaan pyhiä kiviä, mutta Kansallismuseossa on yhä arvokas kokoelma siirtomaa-ajoilta – 'Suomessa on tahto luovuttaa niitä,'" December 1, 2021, https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-12210842.

[51] For the Finnish government memo, see Ministry of Education and Culture, "Kansallismuseon Mesa Verde –kokoelmiin sisältyvien ihmisjäänteiden ja hautaesineiden luovuttaminen," August 7, 2020, https://valtioneuvosto.fi/paatokset/paatos?decisionId=0900908f806cfd84.