

## Finnish research on the Veps language during the Continuation War: an examination of field researchers' language attitudes

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In the field of humanities, there has been a lot of debate about the colonial features of fieldwork in recent years. Efforts have been made to decolonize field research, e.g. by dissolving the roles of researcher and informant into a research partnership. During war, the fieldwork carried out under exceptional conditions emphasizes the inequality of the power relations even further.

During the Continuation War (1941-1944), the Finns carried out fieldwork collecting cultural and linguistic materials in the territory they occupied in Karelia. This presentation examines the attitudes individual wartime field researchers expressed towards the Veps language and its speakers. The study is based on wartime fieldwork reports and other archival material of two Finnish researchers who collected material in the Northern Veps area. Studying Veps and collecting linguistic material was seen as the duty of Finns during the war, and a notable amount of Veps vocabulary, place names and proverbs were collected in a short period of time from the occupied areas. Reino Peltola and Jussi Rainio were early career Finnish linguists sent to the Veps villages shortly after the beginning of the occupation. Both researchers' relationship with the Veps people continued long after the war as well. Reino Peltola continued his fieldwork with the Veps who moved to Finland in the post-war years. Jussi Rainio kept in close contact with the Veps until the end of his life and made several trips to the Veps area over coming decades.

In this presentation, it is considered whether the explicit attitudes of the Finns who did fieldwork among the people of Veps differed from the attitudes of researchers simultaneously collecting Finnish dialectal materials in the Finnish countryside. Through critical analysis of archival data, we try to find out how Rainio and Peltola perceived the Veps language at the beginning of their fieldwork and later, as their knowledge of Veps accumulated: was Veps from their point of view, for example, undeveloped, exotic, under the threat of disappearing, permeated by Russian influence? Is colonialism a useful concept in regard to war time Veps research for describing the attitudes, underlying language ideologies and power relations between the researchers and the Veps people? In particular, the long temporal perspective of Jussi Rainio's materials gives an opportunity to examine how the attitudes of an individual researcher towards the Veps language and its speakers developed over the decades, as

Rainio's position evolved from a representative of the conqueror to a supporter of the Veps people and, through his marriage to a Veps woman, also a part of a Veps family.