

## **Experiencing Arctic in the Past:**

### **French visitors to Finnmark between 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries**

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#### **Introduction**

This chapter traces three French visitors to northern Norway long before the area began receiving attention as a tourist destination *per se*. Drawing from archival records and relevant literature, it recounts the travel experiences of the three visitors, who showed interests in the Arctic nature and its people between the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first story comes from Prince Louis Philippe's stay in northern Norway. The second story is about Léonie d'Aunet, who is thought to be the first French woman tourist in the Arctic. She travelled on *La Recherche*, a scientific research expedition vessel that was commissioned by the Prince Louis Philippe. The research vessel travelled to northern Norway, including North Cape and Spitzberg. As the wife of one of the expedition members on the vessel, her motivations could most closely be related to those of leisurely and touristic visits to the Arctic today. The last example is Roland Bonaparte, a grandnephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, who travelled to northern Norway at the end of the 1880's with an interest of taking photos of Sami people.

Observing their motivations and conditions of travel from their experiences to the unknown Arctic in the past, the aim of the chapter is to contextualise the historic visitors' experiences in the Arctic within centre-periphery notion. This is done so in the context of conceptualising 'periphery' in tourism. How do we understand today's periphery within tourism context when we recall the stories of the pre-tourism era visitors to the Arctic?

### **Visits to the Arctic in the past**

The Arctic has always fascinated people throughout past and present. It would be highly unlikely that the fascination would discontinue in future, as our desire to explore hard-to-reach places on earth and beyond has been increasing rather than diminishing. We witness such trend in recent interest in space tourism (Crouch, Devinney, Louviere, and Islam, 2009, Collins, Iwasaki, Kanayama, and Ohnuki, 1994). In terms of physical geography, Arctic represents the area above the Arctic Circle. The term also Arctic is closely connected to many cultural interpretations particularly in the past. To those, who dream about the Arctic as a place of beautiful landscapes and unique environments, it is a natural winter wonderland. However, to some others, it is somewhere above the borders of the unknown with harsh climate where a determined fight for survival is essential. This kind of dream and perception of Arctic was more prevalent in the past largely due to limited progress and knowledge in natural sciences and also the sheer lack of mode of transportation to the area. Many places on Earth, Arctic for certain, was explored little around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was perceived as simply "white areas" on the map. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, more than 80% of the populations of Europe was farmers, who stayed at the same place from their birth to death, cultivating the fields and looking after animals. Only the wealthy and privileged were able to afford travelling beyond their daily boundaries of life. Even to those who were able to travel, the reality of travel was very harsh. Travelling to unknown places of the Earth

was not seen as 'leisure' as such but rather 'madness'. Journeys could last from several months to several years and the travellers did not know if they would ever come back and see their families again with high risks of death on the road. While the cultural connotation on the Arctic may be open to many different interpretations, these stories, true or not, were passed on from one generation to another.

Research and scientific expedition was one of main reasons to travel to the Arctic during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Those, who undertook such trips, were motivated by their will to discover new areas or study new aspects of the world. Researchers and scientists have been travelling to northern Europe to explore fauna and flora. The Arctic was connected to the northern part of Fenno-Scandinavia or Lapland. A few existing reports written by priests or researchers, who had reached to the Arctic, are often inaccurate and some times have contributed to create inaccurate images of the Arctic. In addition, some visitors did not hesitate to add wrong information in their stories on the Arctic to sensationalise and heighten their adventure in the Arctic.

### **Louis Philippe's Arctic: unknown hideaway for a political asylum**

Louis Philippe (1773-1850), also named as Duke of Orléans, travelled to northern Europe in 1795. He was 22 years old when he started his journey to northern Norway. The reasons for this trip were several: Louis Philippe's interest for science was high hence said to be one of main driving forces for his trip to the Arctic. The practical reason, however, was political. At the time when Prince Louis Philippe started his trip, the French Revolution was at its peak with many of the French aristocrats captured by the people. The death of Louis XVI, King of France and uncle of Louis Philippe, in 1793 and of his wife Marie-Antoinette in 1794 showed

that the political regime of that time, named “terror” (Encyclopædia Universalis, 1985, Thesaurus volume 2: 2923) had no mercy for the country’s nobility. Louis Philippe’s father, Philippe Égalité, a brother of the king Louis XVI also died under the guillotine because of his strong connection to General Dumouriez. Dumouriez was accused of trying to overthrow the newly established regime, supporting the reestablishment of the monarchy. In 1793, the French government decided to expel all the members of the royal family, who was regarded as a constant danger for democracy and the newly established republic. They wanted to avoid any possible return of the royal family. That is the reason why the descendants of the royal family had to leave France. Louis Philippe started his trip to the northern Norway in anonymity. Nobody should know that he was travelling because he was seen as a potential new king, should the monarchy be established. He chose, thus, to travel under a false identity and took the name Muller. His travelling companion, who was the Italian Count of Montjoye decided to take the name Froberg.

What do we know about this trip? Very little, indeed, because Prince Louis Philippe never wrote a book or a diary of the trip. The sources available are letters he wrote to the people who hosted him to thank them for their hospitality. Other sources are the books or diaries written by explorers or travellers, who went to the same places as Louis Philippe and were told about his visit. The people who met Louis Philippe and Count of Montjoye remember them as friendly, polite and cultured people whose interest for science and research was high. Skjöldebrand, who travelled to the northern Norway in 1799 refers to the prince’s visit in “*Voyage pittoresque au Cap Nord*” twice. Skjöldebrand reports in his diary about the price he and his travelling companions had to pay to their hosts in Kautokeino. Surprised that food was much more expensive than anywhere else in Norway, they asked why the prices were so high. The answer was that a French prince who had come to Kautokeino earlier had paid the same

price (Skjöldebrand, 1805: 141). In addition, Skjöldebrand refers to Louis Philippe when he came to Alta: “*We were told in Alta that the French prince we had been told about in Kautokeino was the elder son of Égalité, named Duke of Orléans. This young prince travelled under the name of Müller with a former aide-de-camp of Dumouriez, named Montjoye, who called himself Froberg. They had come from Scotland to Norway and, according to the information I got about their journey, they had travelled to the North Cape*” (Skjöldebrand, 1805: 169-179). He explains further that Prince Louis Philippe wrote a letter from Copenhagen to the mayor of Alta Sommerfeld to thank him for his hospitality, signing with his real name. Léonie d’Aunet, who travelled to the northern Norway together with the expedition *La Recherche* cites Louis Philippe in a letter. Together with the other members of the expedition, she went to the house of Havøysund’s merchant Mr. Ullique, whose father had hosted two travellers named Muller and Froberg a few decades ago. Someone told the father of Mr. Ullique a few years later that the visitor, whose distinction and instruction had deeply impressed him, was a French prince. Léonie d’Aunet explains also that the Louis Philippe never forgot his hosts and sent presents to them for a few decades consecutively. He gave a statue of his own bust to remember the trip of 1795 (Knudsen, 2002: 164). The bust was given during a ceremony during which they drank champagne and where cannons were shot to celebrate the French king (D’Aunet, 1995: 151). Where the Duke of Orléans visited during his stay in the northern Norway seems contested from the available sources.

Wessel (1993) researched on this topic and wrote a book about the trip of Louis Philipp in Finnmark. He found out that the prince indeed had stayed in Måsøy. But there were no descendants of the family left, who had hosted him there. In addition, the house where he had stayed had been sold and moved to Havøysund (Wessel, 1933: 10). The study further verifies that the bust of Louis Philippe remained there until it was destroyed during the World War II.

President de Gaulle donated a new bronze statue to replace the former one in 1959. Today, the statue is exhibited at the North Cape Hall whereas the remainders of the old statue are at the museum in Honningsvåg (Stavhaug, 1990: 47-48). Several other sources also recount witnessing Louis Philippe's trip to Finnmark. For example, a church register for funeral dates and notes on the residents of the area that a Bastian Abrahamsen Rosenkrantz died with the mention of Louis Philippe's stay at his place (Wessel, 1933: 25). Today, a very few people in France know about Louis Philippe's trip to Norway. In Norway, the situation is slightly different since it is possible to find people who still show an interest for the trip of the last king of France to Finnmark.

Figure 1

<A MAP OF FINNMARK WITH PLAES MENTIONED HERE>

### **Léonie d'Aunet: first French woman tourist in the Arctic?**

The second story of the visitor to the Arctic has a close relation to the first on the Prince Louis Philippe. The Royalty was re-established in 1830, the Prince was crowned (Encyclopædia Universalis, 1985, Thesaurus volume 3: 1782). As the newly instated King of France, his interest for science and research was still very high. It is therefore not surprising that the King approved to finance a research expedition vessel to Northern Norway with a great enthusiasm when requested by then a famous traveller Paul Gaimard. The traveller sent a letter of request to the government, which was forwarded to the King himself, for a government support for a research vessel expedition named *La Recherche* to Northern Europe. Not having forgotten his visit to the northern Europe and the Arctic, a condition for the funding was that Paul Gaimard should take presents to give to Norway. With this condition accepted, the expedition vessel *La Recherche* was equipped to survive the Arctic conditions.

It should be noted, however, that the decision by the King to finance the expedition was not purely due to his friendship and gratitude to Norway. It was also a strategic move. Indeed, he wanted to give France an international role in the polar research. Countries like England or the Netherlands had already begun to send expeditions to the Arctic and Louis Philippe wanted to affirm the dominating role of France in the world, including on the polar research field. Apparently, it was for the first time in polar exploration history that the expedition funded by the French King was gathering scientists not only from France but also from Denmark and Sweden (Knudsen, 2002: 164). Paul Gaimard believed that the scientists from different countries could share their knowledge and experiences and contribute to attaining a more advanced research. It was also anticipated that if the expedition party interacts together with their counterparts in the countries they visited, that would solve language and integration problems they may have trying to interact with the local populations. Three working groups were formed in the expedition party: one group would travel to Alta and spend the winter 1838-39 to study the aurora. The second group would be traveling to the Spitzbergen archipelago. The last group would travel from northern Norway (Finnmark) to the Finnish and Swedish Lapland and then return to Stockholm. Léonie d'Aunet was part of the second group. We will provide a relevant account from the first group to start with in the Arctic tourism context.

The first group that would study the northern lights had seven scientists (3 from Sweden and 4 from France) and a French artist, Louis Bevalet. Wanting to find out how high in the atmosphere the aurora was appearing, they decided to establish a research station. It was the first time a research station was ever established at such latitude in the Arctic (Knudsen, 2002: 130). The station was built at Bossekop in Alta. The site was carefully chosen to ensure that the earth did not contain iron, as they were concerned about inaccurate results due to the iron

content in the ground. Various instruments for the measure of the aurora were brought on board *La Recherche*. The data collection had to be performed regularly at the same time every day in order to be able to compare the results with the earlier findings by French scientists, who had been travelling to the Iceland in the past. It was a fastidious work, which took a long time since the scientists had to write many figures in books in the dark. In addition, the artist of the expedition Louis Bevalet had to draw the aurora. The working conditions were hard and it was difficult to draw the northern lights outside in the cold weather with fingers freezing. Moreover, the aurora was changing quickly and several drawings had to be done within a few minutes. While the scientists were very keen to perform rational scientific research, they were also interested in the myths and legends connected to the northern lights (Knudsen, 2002: 142). The research station still stands on the same ground as it was built then in Alta.

The second group travelled to the Spitzbergen. The same group travelled to Havøysund to offer the bust of King Louis Philippe. A woman named Léonie d'Aunet was among them. She was 19 years old and the only woman who participated in *La Recherche* expedition. Her husband was the sculptor of the expedition and this is the reason for her participated in the expedition. It was unusual to see women participating in such national expeditions at that time. In a book that she wrote about her trip to Norway and Spitzbergen, Léonie d'Aunet cites several times that some of the members of the expedition disapproved of her participation, arguing that the trip would be too harsh for a woman and wondering why a person without any special qualification should join a research expedition. That is the reason why she said to be the first French woman, who travelled to these latitudes on a “touristic” purpose (D'Aunet, 1995: 152). Léonie d'Aunet wrote a book about her trip to the northern Norway titled as “*Voyage d'une femme au Spitzberg*” (D'Aunet, 1995). The book was published for the first



time in 1854 and it contains a series of nine letters that Léonie wrote to her brother during the trip. For the reasons for the trip, she explains that she met Paul Gaimard, who told about a former expedition to the Falklands Islands in which the wife of the vessel captain had suffered from the hard conditions. Léonie d'Aunet agreed with Gaimard to manage to convince her husband François Biard to join the expedition on the condition that she could join it too. At that time, no woman was allowed to participate in such national expeditions in France (D'Aunet, 1995: 15-16). Léonie d'Aunet writes that the trip was everything but easy and comfortable and that she had to leave her Parisian clothes for more practical and warmer clothes. During the trip, she cut her hair short so that she does not have to brush them in such hard living conditions, even if no distinguished woman had short hair in France at that time. Her letters give information about the history of Norway, the traditions, the towns she visited, the landscapes, the population, the itinerary of the trip and her experience onboard *La Recherche*. She explains that she travelled in a steamboat to Hammerfest and first joined *La Recherche* there. Once *La Recherche* had come back from Spitzbergen to Finnmark, she travelled to the village of Kaafjord. Of this place, she writes that she was surprised to see the “beautiful houses” of the owners of the mines who came from England. She explains that the houses looked similar to those she had seen in France or in England. Her trip continued through Lapland with horses and guides, even if the Englishmen had deterred her from doing so, saying that the trip would be too tough and the landscapes boring. She recalls later that her decision was madness and regretted several times of joined her husband through Lapland instead of travelling back to France on *La Recherche* (D'Aunet, 1995: 201-203).

Today, *La Recherche* expedition is still cited as the first attempt to study the aurora in the north of Norway. A few decades later during the International Polar Year in 1882-83, Norwegian scientists went to Alta to collect data that they wanted to compare with the results

of *La Recherche*. The city of Alta is known as the Northern lights city, where research on the northern lights was conducted for the first time in Norway. In France, the drawings of Bevalet had a great success since they were the first depictions of the northern lights ever made. It was the first time that the French people could see drawings of the northern lights. The other scientists in the third group published reports about their works as well, which were on their collection of plants and stones. Unfortunately, however, with the considerable amount of collections and the large number of books published from their works, 26 volumes in total, their work has not had a real impact in France. This little impact on the society is largely due to the fact that the work was accessible exclusively to the scientific/ research community.

### **An expedition to the Arctic by a photographer anthropologist**

The last story on the Arctic visitors comes from the experiences of Roland Bonaparte (1858-1934), a grandnephew of Napoléon I Bonaparte, who was the emperor of France between 1802 and 1830. Even if he never used the title, Roland Bonaparte was a prince. Prince Roland Bonaparte was a botanist, an anthropologist and a photographer. His interest for anthropology led him to the Nordic countries in 1884 at the age of 26. His interest for the Sami people and their traditions and way of life was the reason for his trip. Roland Bonaparte was interested in taking photos of the people he met, but since he was not an explorer as such, he never participated in any expedition far away from France. He took many of his photos during exhibitions in the European capitals. His ambition was to make a detailed inventory of the world's populations captured in photography. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is characteristic by the Darwinism. The indigenous people from the world were seen as "second class" races compared to the dominating white populations. Anthropologists who had been travelling in the world brought some indigenous people to Europe to show them during exhibitions (Lehtola, 2015: 268-295). While Roland Bonaparte was interested in photographing the

indigenous peoples, he never made any descriptions of them or their way of life. That is probably the reason why his photography work has never been really accepted by his peers as a scientific contribution. It also explains why his interest moved to biology where he made a great and ambitious career some year later.

Bonaparte started the trip to the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish Lapland during the summer of 1884. He travelled together with a small group of scientists. Among them was his secretary François Escard (1836-1909) who published six short stories about the trip. Those stories, which are a kind of diary explaining the activities and itineraries day after day, were published in “*Revue géographique*” (Escard, 1884, 1885). Thanks to this publication, we have an accurate account of the places that the group visited. For example, we know that they first travelled by boat along the coast of Finnmark to the Russian border and that they crossed Finnmark to come to the villages of Kautokeino and Karesuando. Other sources available concerning that trip are the photos taken by Roland Bonaparte. These photos can be accessed online via <https://digitaltmuseum.no/search?query=roland%20bonaparte>. Although he was an avid photographer, he never provided a description of the persons he photographed, or of the places or the dates when the photos were taken. We do not either know where the people were living and what their daily activity was. Their names are missing, too. The French anthropologist Yves Delaporte has tried to sort all the photos: he went to the north of Norway during the 1980’s to interview the older generations and asked them if they could recognise some of the families or portraits. In addition, he used church registry to try to find when the people were born and who their ancestors or descendants were. A comparative study of the clothes the people were wearing and of the different Sami traditional dresses gave also information about the area or villages the people might come from. All these elements enabled Delaporte to give a name to many of the portraits taken by Roland Bonaparte.

However, there are still a few “unknown” portraits. Yves Delaporte’s work was published in a specialized journal named “*L’ethnographie*” in 1988 (Delaporte, 1988).

What do we know about the people Roland Bonaparte met? Since the group travelled along the coast, they met many Sami from the coast. The clothes worn by some of the Sami he met close to the Russian border have a style with a Russian influence. That is also why we know that he met Skolt Sami people. The photos give many details about the traditional clothes and the traditions in fashion. The colours, the shape and the patterns give a hint about the activity of the people and the place where they come from. On some of the portraits, we can see that the style of the clothes is rather simple and plain without ornaments and that the bright colours have been replaced by black or grey. It shows that laestadianism (Vahl, 1866: 61) still was present in some Sami communities, influencing the conception of how the people should be dressed. Roland Bonaparte wrote two small articles referring to his trip to Lapland in the journal of the Institute of Anthropology in Paris *La Nature*. Today, the trip of Roland Bonaparte is totally forgotten in both France and Norway. The reason is that his research in Lapland, which never was recognised by his peers, did not have a great impact in France at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The literature published the last decades about Roland Bonaparte’s trip to Lapland is not voluminous. An article was published by Yves Delaporte in 1988 and another by a Finnish researcher Osmo Pekonen in “*Sápmi I ord och bild I*” (Pekkonen, 2015). The Sámi portraits of Roland Bonaparte are today a part of the Arctic collection at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris.

## **Discussion & Conclusion**

Reflecting on the three French visitors' experiences to the Arctic well before the area was considered as a tourist destination, we highlight an aspect of the centre-periphery notion when applied to the Arctic tourism research. Centre-periphery approach to tourism has drawn many tourism researchers' interests and proven to be useful, albeit debatable at times, in explaining the stakeholder relationships and some conflicts in tourist area developments. The notion of periphery often has negative connotations associated with disadvantaged development and being subjected to uneven power distribution during decision-making processes of development (Keller, 1987; Diagne, 2004; Weaver, 2008).

While peripherality is primarily conceptualised in close relation to spatial distribution, different dimensions in the notion are relevant in tourism context, including urban-rural and wilderness. Indeed, debating on the idea that 'periphery might be vanishing', Hall, Harrison, Weaver, and Wall (2013) propose that the core versus periphery is a matter of interpretation and more of where one stands rather than a rigidly framed concept. One of the authors (Harrison) suggests that the position of being core/ centre or periphery changes with time and socio-political, economic and other environments of a society. Another author of the paper (Weaver) then suggests, remaining philosophically on the same ground yet, a slightly more integrating model. That is to take 'semi-peripheries and semi-cores' conceptualisation, which would provide a mediating ground for the transition of the position from centre to periphery and vice versa. What is clearly upheld in the discussion is the binary division in the core\_ centre-periphery notion, albeit the flexibility in the positions may change either directly as per Harrison or through some transitional steps as per Weaver.

We suggest that it is worth considering that even being in the position of core/ centre or periphery is not entirely dichotomous existence. We offer this consideration from the experiences of the historic visitors to the Arctic, which may have a similar pattern in today's tourists' experiences. For example, investigating the tourist motivations to Svalbard, Viken (1995) names one type of tourists based on their motivation as 'conqueror' (p.79). He explains that Because Svalbard is one of most peripheral places on earth, visiting Svalbard gives the symbolic status of being a great traveller. In other words, the peripherality contributes in *becoming* a centre. In this sense, we cannot completely rule out the possibility of connected continuum between centre and periphery.

The identified today's tourist motivation can also be traced in the historic visitor experiences to the Arctic. The 'periphery' dimension was taken as the symbolic meaning (similar to conqueror described by Viken) in the story from Léonie d'Aunet, who chose to travel to the Arctic against all the social norms at the time. Her choice to be part of the expedition party was similar to the conqueror as witnessed in her correspondence with her brother. From the first story, geographic remoteness (peripherality) of the Arctic was the reason to be in the Arctic, as no one would, virtually that is, notice the presence of the French Prince. Louis Philippe's visit to Arctic had little relevance to leisurely or pleasure-seeking activities, because the visit was not a matter of choice but the result of a situation-forced hideaway seeking. The Arctic was the 'right' (centre in the given situation) choice at the time due to its spatial peripherality. His choice for the periphery though led to his interests in the Arctic, giving rise to the scientific research expedition a few decades later and brought the first French woman tourist to the Arctic. In this sense, the position of the Arctic as centre or periphery was connected.

The third story reminds us of the time of colonial expansion at its height. As narrated in the story of Bonaparte's experiences in the Arctic, anthropologists of the time of expanding colonial powers would capture indigenous people and bring them to their scientific exhibitions on their homelands, which can be marked as a celebration of conquer and heroism on their part. What Bonaparte did, taking photos of the Sami people he met, reflects the fascination on the unknown and undiscovered noble savage (Ellingson, 2000) from the imperial European perspective at that time. This noble savage quality, possibly providing opportunities for experiential centre, is drawn from remote, untouched peripherality. This in turn blurs the divisive boundaries between centre and periphery, hence providing a ground to reconsider the absolute binary existence between centre and periphery. Further research on Arctic tourism on this theoretical enquiry is timely and essential.

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