On July 6, 1937 Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning (1873-1942) wrote the chairman of the Hunters' Council in Thule, that “the takeover by the State of the trading station at Thule ... does not effect the present legal position of the district, and that in particular the laws of June 7, 1929 with later amendments remain in force”.

Knud Rasmussen (1879-1933), the famous Danish-Greenlandic author and explorer, had founded the private trading station Cape York in 1910. Rasmussen had not been able to persuade the Danish State to extend the colonial area in Greenland to include the northernmost part of the island - primarily due to considerations of foreign policy. When Rigsdagen, the Danish Parliament, during its preparations for a new governance act for Greenland in 1925 expressed its urgent request to include the Cape York district under the Danish colonial activities in Greenland, Knud Rasmussen flatly refused, however, to give up what he had been building up over a period of 15 years. After passage of the governance act it was therefore necessary to seek a different arrangement for the district.

The issue was taken up again after Knud Rasmussen's death in December 1933. On January 23, 1934 a memorial ceremony for Knud Rasmussen took place in the Town Hall of Copenhagen, and on the same day Thorvald Stauning pronounced that the State would take over the Thule station. In a consultation with the parliamentary Committee on Greenland the Prime Minister emphasized that the same conditions should apply in the district as applied in the other colonial districts of Greenland.

At the local level in Thule, however, a somewhat different perception prevailed: the Hunters' Council did not intend to relinquish the special legal position of the district and it made its own terms.

For quite different reasons the negotiations for the transfer were 'difficult and long-winded', as the Director for the Administration of Greenland noted in a memorandum on the 'Thule case' in April 1936. From that time it took a little more than a year before the matter was settled. There was to be no take-over by the state, but a transfer to the state of limited rights on specified conditions. Thus, the only place in Greenland where the presence of the Danish State as a colonial power rests on express, contractual agreement, is in the territory of the Inughuit, the Thule tribe. The transfer is Greenland's parallel to the treaties and agreements between the Indians and the 'White man', and to the settlements which the Danish colonial power entered into with local potentates in East India and Africa.

Comments on the transfer are very rare in literature and are usually limited

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to a single sentence. Take for instance the volume on Greenland of the topography *Trap's Denmark* (1970). "After the death of Knud Rasmussen in 1933 the Danish State took over the station, which was placed under the Administration of Greenland." Contemporary accounts from the district dwell on the romance of dog team travelling, whereas little attention is paid to fundamental sociological realities. Factual knowledge of the transfer has therefore been limited to a rather narrow group of people directly involved and civil service personnel.

Beside the historical interest in the last territorial expansion of Danish State activities which took place only half a century ago there are two special reasons to concern ourselves with the matter today. In general terms the Danish acquisition of Thule in 1937 represents a microcosm of Danish colonialism: it throws light on what rights the State obtained by the acquisition, and what rights the original population had. What rights remained in the indigenous population and what rights were surrendered – if any? Contrary to the situation in the rest of Greenland, the population in Thule had a representative body to safeguard its interests prior to the State gaining access. The picture of colonial acquisition is therefore a little more clear cut.

A more specific reason to concern oneself with the State accession is that it contributes to the understanding of the current law of the land – particularly at the time around 1950. In 1951 the Danish State allowed the USA to encroach upon the rights of the Inughuit by the establishment of the huge Thule Air Base (now called Pituffik) in the center of their territory – without any hearing of or consent from the Hunters' Council.

Today, there is furthermore a reason at the international level to deal with the agreement. On September 2, 1987 the United Nations' Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted a resolution (1987/17) calling for a 'Study on Treaties concluded between indigenous peoples and States'. The Sub-Commission further prepared a draft resolution for its parent body, the Commission on Human Rights, to recommend the authorization of the study by the ECOSOC. The study had been suggested in view of the paramount importance of such treaties and it should include arrangements from all parts of the world with regard to the contemporary significance of these treaties for all parties concerned.

In preparing the study the Special Rapporteur was directed to take account of the points of view of all parties directly involved in such treaties, as well as of the opinions and data from the various sources concerned, primarily the governments and the indigenous peoples themselves. Designated as the Special Rapporteur for the study, Mr. Miguel Alfonso Martínez was also requested to prepare a general outline of such a study and of the juridical, bibliographical and other information sources on which such a study should be based, and to submit that document to the Sub-Commission for its fortieth session in the fall of 1988. Information on the Danish accession to the Thule district can contribute to the comprehensiveness of this study.

The State accession took place after midnight on August 1, 1937. In Denmark the event was celebrated by a radio broadcast festival in the prime sending time on Saturday evening, July 31, assisted by many talents, including a Greenlandic choir and the Danish National Orchestra, conducted by Launy Grøndahl (1886-1960). The Deputy Director for the Administration of Greenland, Knud