

**Piret Peiker**

**Building a Postcolonial State: The Case of the Law on Cultural Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities, passed in the Estonian Parliament 1925**

The talk deals with the story of the passing and practical functioning of the Law on Cultural Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities in the interwar Estonia, and with its on-going reception in Estonia and beyond.

Historical context: The proto-Estonians were ruled by Germans since the 13th century crusades, becoming the peasant estate of the area. The area was incorporated into Czarist Russia after the Great Northern War (1700-1721) and serfdom was introduced. However, Estonians declared independence 1918 and won the war against Soviet Russian and Baltic Landeswehr troops 1920. The new state had to construct a new relationship with the German and Russian minorities (i.e. the former overlords), as well as with the Jewish and Swedish minorities.

The main disciplinary frameworks of the research are Postcolonial Studies and Studies of Modernity. The talk focuses less on the issues of ethnic rights as such (although we can discuss them as well), and more on the challenges of nation-building in general.