

RECENT STUDIES OF THE LAPPS

THE LAPPS. By BJÖRN COLLINDER. Princeton: Princeton University Press for the American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1949. 8½ x 5½ inches; 252 pages; maps and illustrations. \$3.75.

THE SKOLT LAPP COMMUNITY SUENJEL SIJD DURING THE YEAR 1938. By KARL NICKUL. Stockholm: Hugo Gebers Förlag for the Nordic Museum, 1948. 12¼ x 9¼ inches; 90 pages, 64 plates, maps and diagrams. Swedish kroner 35.00.

The successful herding of reindeer by the Lapps for many centuries is an example of the effective exploitation of an arctic and subarctic environment. For this reason, and because of the influence of the Lapps on the Alaskan and Canadian reindeer industry, up-to-date information about this highly resourceful and intelligent people will be of interest to readers of *Arctic*. Such information is available in English in 'The Lapps' by Björn Collinder, Professor of Finno-Ugric Languages at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, and 'The Skolt Lapp community' by Karl Nickul, a Finnish geodesist who is Secretary of Lapin Sivistysseura (The Society for the Promotion of Lappish Culture), Helsinki. These two books complement each other and can profitably be read together. Both the American-Scandinavian Foundation and the Nordic Museum, Stockholm, have done a real service to arctic anthropology by making these studies available.

The term "Lapp" covers a number of related peoples living in an area stretching from western Norway to Russia's Kol'ski Poluostrov (Kola Peninsula). Professor Collinder gives both a broad survey of the ways of life of the various Lapp communities and brings out the important differences among them in language, clothing, religion, and reindeer herding methods and other phases of the subsistence pattern. Professor Collinder's most detailed observations are based on the Scandinavian reindeer nomadic Lapps, with whom he has spent considerable time studying their language.

Believing that "an understanding of the geography [of the land of the Lapps] is necessary to an understanding of the history, condition, and future of the Lapp people", Collinder carefully analyses their unusual environment. He contrasts Lapland, "the territory where the Lappish language is spoken," with the rest of the Arctic as to temperature, agricultural possibilities, and topography. Because of the influence of the Gulf Stream System and the absence of cold arctic currents, the Scandinavian Lapps have enjoyed climatic advantages not shared by other circumpolar peoples dwelling at similar latitudes.

Professor Collinder's interest in ethnological reconstruction is evident throughout 'The Lapps', particularly in the chapters devoted to language, clothing, dwellings, reindeer herding, and religion. Diffusion of Scandinavian elements into the Lappish culture is discussed at length. Many Lappish cultural elements are paralleled among other northern peoples. For instance, Lappish folktale motifs, as summarized on pp. 183-4, seem similar to those of the Reindeer Chukchi.¹ Like the Eskimo, the Lapps indulge in wrestling matches and there is a popular tradition that formerly they, too, killed aged tribal members with their own consent when they were no longer able to keep up with nomadic migrations. Shamanism was the Lapps' aboriginal religion and their adaptation of the Christian religion, Laestadian Lutheranism, seems to have preserved such arctic shamanistic characteristics as ecstasy, individual confession, and trance. Collinder states that the bear rituals of the Lapps were similar to those practised by the Voguls and Ostyaks of northwestern Siberia. As would be expected, Lappish reindeer herding methods are in many ways like those used by other reindeer nomads.²

¹See Kardiner, A. 'The individual and his society', Columbia University Press, 1939, p. 125, for a brief discussion of Reindeer Chukchi folk tales; also Bogoras, W. "The Chukchee", *Mem. Amer. Mus. Nat. History*, Vol. 11 (1904-9).

²For a comparison of Lapp herding methods with those of other reindeer nomads, see Hatt, G. "Notes on reindeer nomadism", *Mem. Amer. Anthropological Ass.*, Vol. 6 (1919) pp. 75-133.

Because of the importance of reindeer in the economy of many Lapp groups, three chapters of the book are devoted to this subject: "The reindeer and its domestication", "The dog and the enemies of the reindeer", and "Reindeer breeding". Collinder's "catastrophe theory", which attempts to account for extreme fluctuations in herd size, seems plausible and worthy of further study.

In the chapter, "The history of the Lapps", the author shows how political events in Scandinavia and Russia have influenced Lappish history. While the effects of these events were occasionally detrimental to the Lapps, the humanity and wisdom with which the Scandinavian nations protected (and continue to protect) the hereditary rights of the nomads are impressive. The Swedish government made it clear to its colonists in the early seventeenth century that "the nomads should not be molested or ousted" and that Lapland was big enough for both reindeer breeding and agriculture. Today, the Swedish Lapps are in a strong economic position because Sweden has granted them a legal monopoly of the reindeer breeding industry. This policy, and the fact that it was formulated with the help of nomadic Lapps, is an important Swedish contribution to the solution of world minority problems.

European travellers and scientists have been interested in the Lapps for centuries and Collinder has analysed "ancient and modern opinions of the Lapps". Some of these observations seem remarkably penetrating in the light of recent anthropological research. For example, both Tacitus and Procopios, writing in the first and sixth centuries, state that the Lapp women take part in the hunting together with the men. In 1949 the reviewer witnessed the relatively slight division of labour between men and women among the Karesuando and Kautokeino reindeer nomads.

Anthropologists will feel 'The Lapps' suffers from its lack of a systematic presentation of the Lappish social structure and will find Collinder's description of the Lappish life cycle defective because it concentrates on the formal education given to Lapps in Swedish schools rather than on native child rearing practices.

One of the Lapp groups mentioned in Collinder's general summary, the Suenjel Skolt Lapps of northeastern Finland, is described in detail by Karl Nickul in 'The Skolt Lapp community Suenjel Sijd during the year 1938', the fifth volume in the Nordic Museum's *Acta Lapponica* series. The handsome format of this publication continues the high standard of the whole series.

The author had originally planned to study the normal adjustment of the isolated Skolt Lapps to western influence, which had been increased in the 1930's as Finland intensified the economic development of her northern territory. Nickul was forced to abandon this project because of the radical disruption of Suenjel Skolt Lapp culture brought about by the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-40, when Skolt territory came within the sphere of military operations, and by the fact that Suenjel has been administered by the U.S.S.R. since the Second World War.³ This book, based on material collected between 1929 and 1940, records a way of life conservative even for its time and now shattered beyond repair.

Nickul's interest in the Skolts is primarily sociological rather than historical. His purpose is to give a "cross-section of the community in 1938 . . . the last normal year. . ." Accordingly, the book contains minute details as to family area, composition of the households, camping places, extent of nomadism, winter villages, economic life, and demographic and anthropometric information.

The Skolt Lapp culture was unique in several respects. It differed considerably from that of other Lapp groups, especially the Swedish and Norwegian reindeer nomads. Fishing, not reindeer raising, was the Suenjel Skolts' principal means of livelihood. Reindeer herding, hunting, and sheep and cattle rearing were subsidiary occupations. Foreign elements in the culture came from Russian, rather than Scandinavian, sources. While the Scandinavian reindeer nomads have a loosely-knit

³Nickul has summarized the effects of these events on the Skolt Lapps in "The Finnish Lapps in wartime and after", *Man*, Vol. 50 (1950) pp. 57-60.

social structure and make decisions by informal methods, the Suenjel Skolts governed themselves by a formal council. Nickul illustrates the operation of this council in a valuable sociological document, the minutes of a meeting at which the Skolts described to Finnish officials their traditional rights and asked that these rights might legally be confirmed.

In spite of the conservative nature of Skolt Lapp culture, it had not remained static. The author, who is vitally interested in culture contact and change phenomena, notes certain tendencies. For instance, we learn that Skolt reindeer breeding had changed somewhat under the influence of Finnish reindeer keepers and that in the 1930's it was a rapidly developing part of the community's economic well-being.

Although Mr. Nickul explicitly abstains from opinions and generalizations, the reader would appreciate them from an astute observer whose long experience with the Suenjel Skolts enables him to speak authoritatively. It would be worthwhile to know, for example, his explanation for such psychological characteristics as the sociability and contented disposition which he found among the Skolts and the reason for the tension which existed between some of the families (see page 52).

Many drawings and 230 superb photographs vividly illustrate the Skolts' mode of living and add considerably to the value of Mr. Nickul's book.

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THE PROBLEM OF PLACE NAMES IN THE SOVIET ARCTIC

PLACE-NAMES IN THE SOVIET ARCTIC. By TERENCE ARMSTRONG. *Polar Record*, Vol. 5, No. 39 (1950) pp. 408-426.

Since the end of the Second World War the rapid growth of Russian studies in the English-speaking world has greatly increased the need for a uniform system for the transliteration of Russian into English. Ideally, it would seem that an efficient system should seek to represent the sound values of the Cyrillic characters by a consistent and conventional use of the Roman. It is desirable not only that the system should be satisfactory for use both in texts and on maps, but should also yield a product which can be pronounced by English readers. In addition it should be possible for the bibliographer to be able to restore a transliterated form correctly to its original.

The problem of devising such a system is complicated, first, by the phonological dissimilarities of Russian and English, and, to an even greater extent, by the vagaries of English phonetics. As a result a very large number of systems are now in use. In more serious literature Mr. Armstrong has counted "at least ten" systems. Since about 1916¹, some effort has been made in England to achieve uniformity in official usage. Mr. Armstrong notes that recent contributions by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use and by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names hold most promise for the ultimate adoption of a uniform system on both sides of the Atlantic.

The second difficulty which complicates the development of a uniform transliteration system is lexical and grammatical, as opposed to phonetic. Proper names, and, among these, geographical place names, are the words which perhaps most frequently require transliteration. The treatment of foreign place names on maps and in texts is a problem with which geographers have long been vexed. On the peculiarities of Soviet place names, however, no previous literature in English is

¹The Committee on the Transliteration of Slavonic was established by the British Academy in July 1916; Mr. Armstrong, however, does not appear to refer to its work. (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 8, published by the Oxford Univ. Press)