

The Two Landscapes of Northern Norway

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Our concepts of the world come from our common activities in the world. Without coastal fishing, or seafaring, in boats too large for their crews to draw them ashore, there is no place for the concept of a *harbour*. And without reindeer herding, there will be no concept of JASSA. That is one point. The other is this: without some of the coastal fisherman's skill and local knowledge, you will not be able to recognize a natural harbour when you see one. And without the reindeer herder's skill, you will not be able to recognize a JASSA when you see one. To put it all rather bluntly. Though there is more of both work and experience behind the first part of this article, about the world of coastal fishing, most of my academic friends have found the latter part, about the concept JASSA, the better and more readable. Can it be that the better teacher is the one who has just learnt the lesson himself?

Since we have all just arrived and since most of you are strangers to this place and to this region of the world, I shall try to tell you *where we are now*.

There is just the chance that I shall be able to give you a few glimpses of the two worlds of Northern Norway. But talking alone will not alter your gait or give you new eyes to see with. If there is one philosophical message in what I am going to say, then that is the message.

I don't know whether you noticed, walking to this cabin, that the leaves and the stems of the heather have been covered with a thin layer of ice. It may melt away tomorrow, but it may also grow thicker. For the reindeer-herding Saami, that is cause for anxiety. If the heather is covered with ice, so is the lichen. Since the lichen grows clinging to the ground, it will then be locked underneath the ice. There will be a hard winter for the reindeer and therefore also for their herders. Frost before snow bodes ill.

I say this because we are now in Saami country. Farther down the valley, where the river meets the fiord, there is an old market-place where the Saami have traded with the Norwegians ever since there were any Norwegians around to trade with.

The Saami were fishermen and hunters. It is only 300 years ago since the Saami hunters switched from hunting the reindeer to herding them. But the life of the Saami, even that of the Saami fishermen, has always been closely tied to the life of the reindeer. The Saami word for life, *aellin*, and

the Saami word for a flock of reindeer, *ællo*, both derive from the verb *ællit*, which means *to live*.

The Norwegians were fishermen and farmers. That is to say, the men were fishermen and the women farmers. So they settled where there was both land to farm and a short way to the fishing grounds, that is along the coastal brim of the peninsulas and the larger islands. It is only 200 years since some of them moved inland, to farm and to work the forest.

The life of a Norwegian fishing community revolves around the fishing boat and its equipment, and not, in the same sense, around the fish. Catching fish is what you hope, and pray, for. But the fishermen do not swim with the fish, herding the shoals, as the reindeer herders travel with their flocks. And also, it is building a boat, repairing a boat, keeping it in good shape, and handling it in all sorts of weather, that takes skill. It is a matter of debate how much skill and how much luck, or perhaps magic, go into the catching of fish.

Your own boat is an object of love, or shame, and another man's boat is an object of respect, or pity, or ridicule. But the fishing boat is also the place from which the world is seen. So, for the reindeer herder, is his herding. The reindeer, or the herding of them, teach the reindeer herder about the terrain they move in, or about the landscape he has attached his life to. For the fisherman it is his boat, through his own handling of it, that teaches him about the terrain of his working life, the waves and the currents, the shallow and deep waters, the rocks and the skerries, the fjords and the islands, the fishing grounds, the landing places, the harbours, etc. That is the landscape he has wedded his life to.

Those are the two landscapes of Northern Norway. There are others, but not as illustrious. And then, since the Soviet Union is our neighbour, there is the Pentagon map of the area. But I shall bracket that.

I want to tell you about the two landscapes, so that you shall know where you are, when you are here, in Mid-Troms and in the Skibotn Valley. The question of where we are is itself a question born of this landscape, that is, of either of the two. If there is one task common to reindeer herders and fishermen, it is taking your bearings. You must always know where you are.

I. Observing the Boat

1. *Drawing It*

I was once a school teacher on one of the outer islands, with the children coming from several of a cluster of such islands. They would be brought

there, by boat, on Monday morning, and fetched home again on Saturday afternoon. When we had drawing lessons, the girls would be drawing many things, such as houses, landscapes, flowers, faces. The boys would draw one thing, boats, boats cutting the waves, boats fishing, boats at anchor, etc. They would criticize each other's drawings and be very knowledgeable about the design of a boat, and of each of its parts. 'The wheelhouse is too far aft', 'Why is there no mizzen mast?', etc.

Why did they never fire of it? I do not know and they would not know. What I do know is that there was no object more celebrated than the good and seaworthy fishing boat. In a fishing community, a man's boat is his livelihood and his love, for better or worse. If there are other ways of making a living, they all derive from the boat. There is no skill or knowledge more respected than the skill or knowledge of a good fisherman, which is the skill to handle a boat safely in most sorts of weather and the knowledge, or the wizardry, to tell when and where to make a good catch. You will acquire neither, and certainly not the wizardry, if you are not well trained in making accurate observations and in the reading of signs.

There is, I am sure, a great deal of celebration in this drawing of boats. But also, I think, of preparation. In drawing boats and criticizing each others' drawings, the boys taught themselves and each other to become better observers of boats. Training their hands to trace the lines of the boat (of the hull, the wheelhouse, the winch, etc.) they trained their eyes to guide their hands better while tracing those lines, but also to a more adequate observation of the design of boats. But the main contribution to the improvement of their observations, and so of their drawings, would come from the improvement of their *understanding* of the design of boats.

Consider the remark about the wheelhouse being too far aft. Most of the work on board a fishing boat is done before the wheelhouse. But there must be working space behind the wheelhouse as well (the net is set from there, or the longline). And when you remember those operations behind the wheelhouse, or learn about them, then that gives you the required distance between the wheelhouse and the stern, and it also explains it.

When you understand *why* the wheelhouse has been given its size and place, then that will improve your *observation* of its size and place – as recorded in your drawing of it. A fishing boat, with each of its parts, is an intelligible structure. Its intelligibility lies in the work operations that it is designed to fit or to serve – perhaps in heavy weather. The more you come to learn about what it is to work on board a fishing boat, the more intelligible that structure becomes. And as it gains in intelligibility, it gains in visibility.

2. Working on It

In the experienced fisherman's observation of a fishing boat (for example

from the wheelhouse or from some working place on deck) there is an analysis of its structure. That analysis is not the fisherman's theory of its structure. It is the practical grammar of the arrangement of his own working space. That grammar is built into his working body as much as into his eyes.

To take a simple example. When the fisherman grabs for his knife to gut a codfish, he takes hold of the handle (not the blade) and he holds it so that the edge of the blade points in the working direction. That tells us there is this analysis of the knife in his perception of it: there is the handle (for the hand) and the blade (to cut with) and the blade has an edge (the cutting side) and a back.

And when he grabs the fish to gut it, there is a rough analysis of its body in the way he takes hold of it, with his left hand closing around the fish from its back and his thumb and forefinger pressing into the gills. (The analysis [present in his perception] is rough because he applies his left hand with only a rough articulation of it [as compared to the articulations of the left hand while playing a Bach fugue].) He will gut the fish with a few swift strokes that bear witness to his accurate observation of its anatomy, or its anatomy with respect to gutting it (very much like Count Wen-Hui's kitchen master partitioning an ox, in Chuang-Tzu's story of it).

The fisherman sees what he sees in terms of what he does. His hand closes around the knife's handle and he cuts with the cutting side of the blade.

And so it is with all his other gear and with the overall layout of the boat's working space. For each piece of equipment there is the one analysis of it that fits his operations with it, or on it. But cut away the fisherman's work, and there is no particular order to it. The deck is of no particular layout and the knife is of no particular orientation.

This is how the fisherman at work, and at rest, sees the boat and its gear. His observations are as highly organized as his operations and the one is organized so as to fit the other.

The boat is an artifact, and so is each bit of its gear. It has been made to fit the fisherman's work, and so it is not strange that the fisherman should see it in terms of its fit. What is strange is that philosophers so seldom reflect on this fit between seeing and doing when they write about seeing or doing.

II. Observing the World from the Boat

The fisherman's boat, like the fisherman's knife, has two faces. The knife has a blade, facing the fish, and a handle, facing the fisherman's hand. Likewise, the boat's hull has been designed to fit these waters and their

weather, while the boat's deck, with the various structures fastened on to it, has been designed to fit the working bodies of its crew.

As seen from inside the boat's cabin, the deck goes with the hull, facing nature, as a roof does. And if it is a sailing boat, the masts with their sails are facing nature, while the sheets are facing the crew. With a competent handling of the sheets, the sails swim in the wind as the hull swims in the water.

When the boat is fishing, the one agent of that operation is the boat-with-its-complement (where this term, the boat's 'complement', beautifully describes the position of the crew within this one structure). The name of that agent is the name of the boat. So it is *The Wave* that is fishing, or *The Seagull*, or the brand new *Debtor*. When the boat is under way, the agent is the-boat-with-its-skipper-at-the-helm (with the rest of the crew transformed, for the while, into passengers or cargo).

As the boat cuts into the wind and the waves, the skipper at the wheel learns about the character of this weather. Very much as the carpenter learns about the character of the plank while cutting it, saw in hand. He learns how the material of this plank reacts to being cut with a saw like this, and how cutting it affects the saw and his own operations with it. When he has learnt to read off the (probable) cutting characteristics of a plank from the character of its surface, he will sort his planks according to their cutting characteristics. The skipper learns to read off from the surface character of the waves how they will affect the boat's movements and his own manoeuvring of it. And he learns a great many local truths about how this or that rock or mountain will shape the wind and the waves, in this or that weather.

When a man has got his own boat to teach him about this archipelago and its waters, he has already been taught through working as a hand on board his father's boat, or his uncle's, etc. And before that from handling small rowing boats, ever since he could hold an oar. Such is the practice of these fishing communities. There will also be a lore of stories, told and retold at the kitchen table, or at family gatherings in the best room, about wreckages, narrow escapes, sudden gales, strange waves, bonanzas, etc. But whether we speak about the experiences of the individual skipper or about the lore of the community, the basic scheme will be the same. It will be about the world as experienced from the fishing boat. It will be about what your (handling of) your fishing boat and its gear has taught you about nature and what that nature has taught you about your fishing boat and its gear.

This is how the fishermen learn to observe and describe the waters in which they move and their shifting landscapes. If there is one description of it which tells the truth about it, it is the fishermen's. It is the only truth that fits the landscape, as it reveals itself to those who have found their

livelihood there, fishing, say, from a boat of around 30 feet, with net or longline. This is the fishermen's world. If we were to enter it, it is from them that we should have to seek advice before we learn for ourselves what they have already learnt and in the way they learnt it. In fair weather there is room for a great deal of idle (non-fishermen) truths about the landscape. But in foul weather, or when there is a threat of foul weather, the idle truths withdraw to leave the one truth in charge that can guide those who need its guidance.

The mountain that is a gale maker in northerly winds, is that whether there are fishermen or not. But a landing place is no landing place without boats to be drawn ashore. And a harbour is no harbour without boats that need to anchor up for shelter.

III. Example: The Harbour

There are natural harbours and constructed harbours. We all recognize a constructed harbour when we see one, in particular if the ships are in, loading and unloading, and there is a traffic of boats in and out of it. That harbour is self-advertising. But it takes a fisherman's skill to recognize a good natural harbour. And that is what the fisherman will be looking for first, when exploring new fishing grounds.

What he will be looking for, then, is a place where he can anchor up for shelter in most sorts of weather, with a boat like his. The boat is 40 feet long, say, and 2 metres deep below the water-line. (It is quite common to give the depth of the keel, below the water-line, in metres, the same unit of measure that is used to give the depth of the water. The point, I take it, is to make for a ready comparison.) If the keel reaches 2 metres below the water-line, the harbour should be at least 4 metres deep, at low tide, its bottom should be of a material that will hold an anchor even if the wind is pressing against the boat with the force of a storm, and its surroundings of skerries or islands should be such as to make it possible to approach it in most sorts of weather. If a harbour does not comprise at least one good landing place, it is not a good regular harbour. But it may still be a good haven, and that is what our man needs.

When the fisherman finds a good haven, somewhere in this archipelago, he finds what has been there all the time, only waiting to be found. But it is only the activity of sailing a boat too large for its crew to draw it ashore that will yield the concept of a landscape formation providing an adequate harbour. Without that activity, there are no such formations to be seen, since there are then no eyes to see them.

It is all there. That is, that volume of water, with that bottom and those surroundings of rock, or islands, or skerries, etc., that is all there. But

without the practice of sailing, there is nothing to pick out any particular portion of the water as *that* water, and so there is nothing in particular to count as *its* surroundings either. We can walk on rock but not on water, and that is enough to make a skerry stand out as a figure of its own against a background of water. But there is nothing to draw the figure of this harbour, the very different figure of that harbour, etc., except the concept of *providing adequate anchoring for boats too large for their crews to draw them ashore* (where the concepts of *a boat, a boat's crew, a boat too large for its crew to draw it ashore, adequate anchoring for a boat*, all refer essentially to the practice of sailing, or, in these waters, to the practice of coastal fishing).

The concept of *adequate anchoring* also implies the concept of *adequate shelter*. In a world where no one is seeking shelter, in that world there is no shelter. If there are no fishermen, or other seafaring people, seeking refuge from foul weather, then there are no havens.

If we detach the matter that goes to make an adequate harbour from our concept of an adequate harbour, what we are left with does not make up an intelligible component of a world. The only world that can intelligibly accommodate harbours is the world that is constituted by our practice of fishing, or seafaring, with boats too large for their crews to draw ashore. (Smaller boats will project landing places, not harbours.) It is only within (the world constituted by) this practice that this slice of matter (wherein a slice of liquid stuff has been adjoined to a slice of solid stuff) will present itself as one object, that is, as this harbour. Its manner of presentation derives from this practice.

The method of investigating *the concept* of a harbour, therefore, is this: Situate yourself within the practice that this *object* belongs to, and then investigate *the object* and *its* contribution to that *practice*.

If an object belongs essentially to a practice, as a harbour does, and a hammer, a coin, a cheque, a king's sceptre, etc., then the concept of that object is our understanding of that object's contribution to the practice within which it is that object (where *the accounts* that we give may take care of only the uppermost layers of that understanding).

Of a *word* that refers to such an object, there is not much to say beyond that it refers to *that* object, pointing to it. That is a very small step in the learning of a language, whether it is an early step in the learning of that word or a late one. All the other steps will be steps in learning about that object, that is, about the practice wherein it is that object, about its relations to other objects of that same practice, and about the contribution of this object to it. (Without all this, there will be no clearly perceivable *it* to be pointed to.)

The practice of fishing, or the practice of fishing within or around a coastal archipelago, projects its own description of the landscape within

which it is situated. It also projects its own objects, such as that of a *harbour*. To learn what a harbour is, in this region with its size and make of the fishing boats, we must learn about fishing from such boats, about the landscape of this form of fishing and its weathers, about the situations where it is wise to seek shelter, in a harbour, etc. And I do not think that we shall be able to learn all this, up to the point, say, where we are able to recognize a harbour when we see one, unless we join in so as to learn the fisherman's craft.

So, if we were to hire a fishing boat and make a visit to the outer skerries, to acquaint ourselves with the landscape that the fishermen around here move in, for example where they could go for shelter if surprised by a storm, that would be a problematic undertaking. It is not only that we would not *notice* all that the fishermen take note of, as perhaps we did not notice, in walking to this cabin, the layer of thin ice covering the leaves and the stems of the heather. With that layer of thin ice, it was enough to have it pointed out. But that is hardly possible when the *it* to be pointed out has not as yet received a place in our scheme of things.

My next example, from the Saami reindeer-herders' terrain, will sharpen that point.

IV. The Saami Word 'JASSA'

Since I am still a novice in my knowledge and understanding of the Saami world, I shall try to spin only a very thin thread. I shall tell the story of my attempts to learn the meaning of one single word of the Saami language.

That word is JASSA. I had heard it mentioned, or used, a few times in conversations that were otherwise conducted in Norwegian, and I had come to understand that it was one of the many words pertaining to *snow* or *snowy weather* in the Saami language. (A Saami friend of mine had counted 168 such words.)

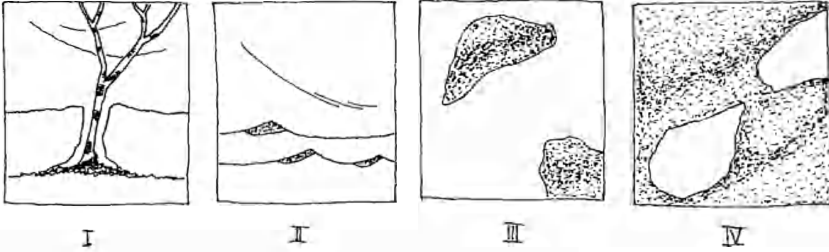
I looked it up in Konrad Nielsen's *Saami-English-Norwegian Dictionary*, where I found:

JASSA (plural JASAT): patch of snow in late spring or summer.

That definition intrigued me a lot: Had I really come across a genuine, Quinean time-slice object? Or why shouldn't that very same patch of snow that was a JASSA in late spring or summer also be a JASSA in early spring or in the autumn?

I then tried to find out about the Saami division of the year. I obtained some mimeographed material on that from NRL (*Norske Reindriftsamers Landsforbund*, i.e. the national association of reindeer owners) with most

of the texts in Norwegian or Swedish. What I found was, I am sorry to say, what I had hoped to find: among the reindeer herding Saami, the year is divided into periods according to those changes in nature that also change the conditions of herding (which fits with its division into eight main seasons).



These are my own diagrams.

- I. The snow first melts in circles around the tree stems.
- II. In the larger terrain, the melting snow is first blown away from the higher points.
- III. This seems to be the diagram of early spring: a few patches of green (bare ground) on a background of white (snow).
- IV. And this seems to be the diagram of late spring: A few patches of white against a background of green. (The green patches in [III] have expanded and connected until they yield a pattern like [IV].)

When there are only a few small and scattered patches of green, the reindeer will continue to dig through the snow to get at the moss and the lichen. A reindeer will make use of a patch of green when it comes across one, but it will not wander to seek them out. After the patches of green have expanded and connected to form large areas of green, the reindeer will begin to wander to find such areas. The large areas of green, with only a few patches of snow, as in (IV), will then be embedded in still larger areas mostly of snow, as in (III). Smaller groups of reindeer from the same flock may wander in different directions, and herding them will be more difficult.

So the difference between (III) and (IV), which I take to be the visual difference between early spring and late spring, is not only a difference in the visual pattern, with a reversal of figure and ground. It also makes for a difference in the conditions of herding.

If the formation of patterns like (IV) is the criterion of its being late spring (no longer early spring and not yet summer) then, of course, there are no patches of snow until late spring.

My text does not give the Saami words that have been translated as 'early spring', 'late spring', etc. But I take it that when Konrad Nielsen writes 'late spring' in his definition of JASSA, it is his translation into English of a Saami word, in a sense of 'translation' which aims to preserve the Saami, or reindeer-herding Saami, criterion for it being late spring. If so, it is a case of an English word being asked to carry a reindeer-herding Saami concept.

That was my first attempt at making sense of Konrad Nielsen's definition of JASSA. It is not that a patch of snow is a JASSA only for a stretch of its existence. It is rather that patches of snow exist only through the two periods of late spring and summer. Late spring is said to begin with the first appearance of patches of snow, and summer is said to end with the first fall of snow and the disappearance of those patches of snow, as patches.

Since most of the patches of snow that are formed in late spring also disappear in late spring or early summer (I do not know how that distinction is drawn), it follows that there will be only a few JASAT left on the last day of summer.

Having worked out the meaning of the word JASSA from Konrad Nielsen, together with some mimeographed notes on the reindeer herders' year, I talked to a Saami friend of mine about that word. I was promptly told that a JASSA is a *permanent* patch of snow. It is a hardpacked snow object – uncovered in late spring and covered up again in autumn. But the JASSA is there all the time. Only a little thicker in cold summers and a little thinner in warm summers. And that explanation was confirmed by other Saami.

So the much respected Konrad Nielsen failed me in my first attempt to let myself be taught by him. He should have written, instead, something like this:

JASSA (plural JASAT): a permanent patch of (hardpacked) snow. It is visible as a patch of snow, that is against a background of green, from late spring until early autumn (when it is again covered up).

I had now learnt what a JASSA is. I had lost the intriguing time-slice object. But the picture of an object made of the same material as what it is wrapped up in, most of the year, and with no hard and fast line between what is wrapped up and what wraps it up, is not altogether disappointing.

At about that time I was invited by the NRL to attend a seminar in Jukkasjärvi, near Kiruna, on Saami reindeer herding terminology. Most of the participants at that seminar were reindeer owners (and so also reindeer herders) and the objective of the seminar was to discuss how to teach the Norwegian and the Swedish state authorities the fundamental concepts of reindeer herding. If the state's negotiators did not learn to

think about reindeer herding in terms proper to reindeer herding, and not in terms proper to industrial cattle farming, there would be little point in any further negotiations about land use and land rights.

There was one session on describing the reindeer herders' landscape. And this is what I then learnt about a JASSA (from *Nils Isak Eira*, *Lars Svonni* and *Johan Mathis Turi*):

In Troms and Finnmark, the two northernmost counties of Norway, most of the flocks move between winter-land and summer-land. In winter, the flocks stay in the highlands, towards the Finnish border. In early spring, they begin to move north, towards the coast, perhaps 150 miles away, where the grazing is good, the heat less of a nuisance, and mosquitoes fewer. Their summer-land is on the peninsulas or on the larger islands. (Swimming across to an island, perhaps more than half a mile, is one of the critical points in the year's cycle.) In either place there will be mountains and valleys. The richest grazing will be in the valleys.

In summer, the reindeer lose large patches of hair. That makes them more vulnerable to the heat and to the mosquito. They will then stay in the valley in the evening, through the night and in the early morning. But when the heat begins to make itself felt, they will move up the hills and into the mountains, where there will be less heat, fewer mosquitoes and, if this is really good summer land, a few JASAT.

A reindeer flock, from 30 to 300 animals, say, will go for a JASSA, to stay there and cool themselves. If there are still mosquitoes around, they will stand close together, pressing against each other. Or they will move in a fast, whirling movement, grinding the snow as they do so. If the patch of snow is not large enough to house a small flock, or if it is not hard enough to remain intact after the hardship of many grindings, then it is not a JASSA. And if it is a good JASSA, there will be plenty of good grazing around it, allowing the flock to step off it to feed for a while before they step onto it again to cool. Good JASAT are a blessing to the reindeer, and therefore also to the reindeer herder.

When the heat of the day has passed, the reindeer will move down to the valley again.

What did I learn about a JASSA from the reindeer herders?

(1) Not any permanent patch of snow is a JASSA. It is not a JASSA if it is not available to the reindeer. (That rules out 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9 from my sketch.) It is only a mock JASSA if it is too small to house a flock of, say, at least five reindeer. And it is not a JASSA if the snow is not packed hard enough to stand the grinding. (If a snow bed is not destroyed by the sun and the wind, it is not destroyed by the grinding of reindeer either. But there is not the same guarantee the other way. It does happen that a JASSA disappears late in [a hot] summer. So it is its hardness rather than

permanence that is the criterion of its being a JASSA. The Saami word for snow that is packed hard enough to stand the daily grinding is CEAVVI [a substantive]. 'If a JASSA does not consist of CEAVVI, it is not a JASSA' [Nils Isak Eira].)

(2) I got a glimpse of the contribution of good JASAT to the thriving of the reindeer, and thus to the thriving of the reindeer herders. (Thriving in the summer is vital to survival in the winter.)

(3) One JASSA may be better than another JASSA. And that is quite natural, in view of (2). The better JASSA is the one that contributes more to the well-being of the reindeer. And that will also depend on the qualities of the terrain surrounding it.

The dictionary definition must be revised once more. What shall we write? Perhaps something like this:

JASSA (plural JASAT): A bed of snow, so placed in the terrain that it is available to the reindeer, large enough to accommodate a flock of them, and hard enough to withstand their daily grinding (see CEAVVI). A good JASSA can accommodate some 100 to 300 reindeer and offers a surrounding of good grazing.

This definition will not teach everyone to find a JASSA, and certainly not to judge whether a JASSA is a good JASSA or not. But then, that would be too much to ask of a mere definition.

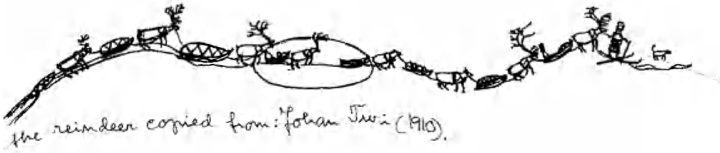
The definition does tell us what we must learn to be able to tell whether something is a JASSA or not, and what more we shall have to learn to be able to judge the quality of a JASSA. We must learn about the behaviour of reindeer and we must learn about reindeer herding (so that, for example, we understand what difference it makes, say for the autumn herding, whether the summer herding has been helped by a good many JASAT or not). I do not think that we can know whether we have learnt all that or not if we have not taken the trouble to learn the craft of reindeer herding.

And that closes the story of my attempts to learn this one, single word of the language of the Saami reindeer herders.

Let me add only this, that the word 'JASSA' is also in use among the Saami fishermen. There it means just a permanent patch of snow, and there is no reference in it to reindeer or reindeer herding. The place a JASSA has, within coastal fishing, is to serve as a landmark. And the JASAT that the fishermen most often take their bearings from are those that attach to mountain peaks, unavailable to reindeer.

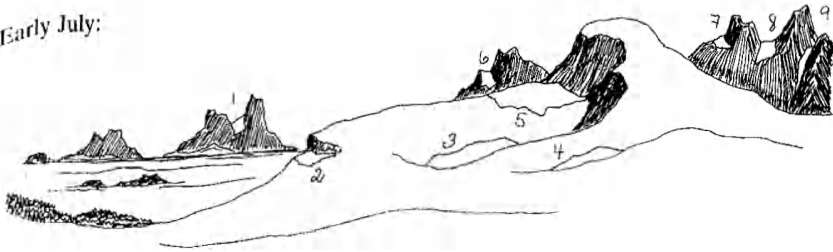
I have also talked to some Saami students who have no recent roots in either fishing or reindeer herding. They did not know that JASSA is a Saami word.

This one word, then, belongs to two quite different Saami forms of life. As it is used among Saami fishermen it has its counterpart in Norwegian,

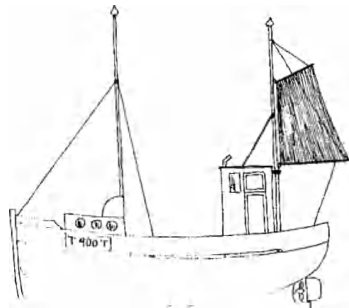


the reindeer copied from: Johan Turi (1910).

Early July:



- JASSA: Patch of snow in late spring or summer (Konrad Nielsen). Picks out all of 1 to 9.
- JASSA: Permanent patch of snow (Saami friends from the coast). Rules out 2 and 4, since these two patches melt before the end of July in most summers.
- JASSA: A bed of snow, so placed in the terrain that it is available to the reindeer, large enough to accommodate a flock of them, and hard enough to withstand their daily grinding. A good JASSA can accommodate some 100 to 300 reindeer and offers a surrounding of good grazing (Johan Mathis Turi). Leaves only 3 and 5.



and in many other languages. As it is used among the Saami reindeer herders, it has no counterpart in Norwegian, and probably in no other language.

There is a rich and well-ordered set of words, or concepts, that is proper to reindeer herding. This order, and the intelligibility of each of its concepts, collapses if we cut off the links with the practice of reindeer herding.

I said, at the beginning of this talk, that I wanted to tell you *where we are*. Where, then, are we, when we are here, in the Skibotn valley?

A landscape belongs to those who belong to it. So this landscape belongs to the Saami reindeer herders. The truth about it is what their life with the reindeer has taught them about it. The reindeer herders' description of this landscape is the only description of it that is fit to guide their own activities in it. And there are no other activities in it (with even the semblance of a claim to it). Any description of this landscape that does not fit with the reindeer herders' description of it is foreign to it.

We are foreigners to this landscape. Walking the same tracks as the reindeer herders and looking where they look, we see little of what they see. (There is a sense in which we all see the same when looking in the same direction or at the same lump of matter. But, standing alone, this sense of 'seeing the same' is devoid of practical or moral implications, and so of little use, whether in the moral sciences or in our daily life.) And when we do see what they see, for example the thin layer of ice covering the heather, we do not know their reading of it. That is, we are not able to read off the implications of what we then see for the life of the reindeer and that of their herders. In that sense of *seeing* where what we see guides what we do, we see little of what they see who have attached their life to the Skibotn valley, that is, to IVGOVUOVDI. (You should know, though, that in shifting to the Saami name of the place, we also shift to a different delineation of it.)

If I have been able to say what it is to be a foreigner to a landscape, and what it is that makes us foreigners to this landscape, then I think we have come as close to knowing where we are as we can hope for.

NOTE

This paper is roughly my lecture at the Tromsø seminar. I have scrapped some passages, though, and reworked others, as the first result of talks with friends from various fields of research, among whom are the historian *Lars Inar Hansen*, the anthropologist *Harald Eidheim*, the linguist *Ole Henrik Magga*, the philosopher and reindeer herder *Nils Isak Eira*, the philosopher and boat-builder *Gunnar Eldjarn*, and the four philosophers *Dagfinn Føllesdal*, *Olav Gjølsvik*, *Lars Hertzberg*, and *Viggo Rossvoer*. Other results of those talks will show up in a later expansion of this paper. But one of Ole Henrik Magga's comments must be recorded. He asks me not to forget that what I have explained here is not the meaning of the Saami word JASSA, but rather the meaning of that word among the reindeer herding Saami. Most Saami are neither reindeer herders nor coastal fishermen, and the most

frequent meaning of the word JASSA is just the one that Konrad Nielsen records: *a patch of snow*. Magga also suggests that that be regarded as its *core meaning*, with the other two meanings as specializations of it, to fit the specialized worlds of reindeer herding and coastal fishing. I see that as an invitation to discuss, to begin with, the individuation of words and word uses. But that must wait.

I would have liked my father's father, who fished in these waters, to have commented upon the first part of this paper. When he died, people said: 'Now that Jakob is dead, the halibut are happy.'

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