

REVIEWS

CHANGING LAPPS: A STUDY IN CULTURE RELATIONS IN NORTHERNMOST NORWAY

By GUTORM GJESSING. *London: London School of Economics and Political Science, Dept. of Anthropology, and Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1954.* (*Monographs on Social Anthropology No. 13*). $9\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$ inches; 67 pages. 12s. or 14.21 D. Kr.

Publications in English on the Lapps are so few and of such uneven quality that any serious addition is a significant event for students of the arctic peoples. In this volume Gutorm Gjessing, Professor of Ethnography, University of Oslo, presents much material that has previously been available only to those acquainted with the Scandinavian languages. For the most part the book consists of his own accounts re-worked; four of the seven chapters are revised lectures delivered to audiences outside Norway. Although a definitive ethnographic description of the Norwegian Lapps is greatly needed to complement the work of Manker¹ and Itkonen,² this does not pretend to be it and must, therefore, be judged by other standards.

Gjessing's principal concern is that of "culture contact", and he begins by discussing the role of the Lapps in Scandinavian prehistory. His experience as an archaeologist makes him cautious about accepting the people of the Komsa and neolithic "Arctic" slate cultures as either ethnically or racially Lappish. But it is nonetheless certain that the earliest Nordic colonists found a Lappish population in Finnmark when they arrived in the eighth century. Gjessing's description of the process of settlement is excellent, and he has some stimulating observations on the expansion of reindeer nomadism, which he believes developed in the six-

¹Manker, Ernst. 1947. 'De svenska fjällapparna'. Svenska Turistföreningens Förlag hanbcker om det svenska fjället, 4. Stockholm: 548 pp.

²Itkonen, T. I. 1948. 'Suomen lappalaiset vuoteen 1945'. Porvoo: 2 vols.

teenth century as a product of culture contact.

The chapter on "Culture contact during historic times" is refreshing, especially the remarks on the changing attitude towards the Lapps. The great Norwegian national renaissance was not accompanied by liberal ideas concerning the preservation of Lappish culture, but rather by repressive measures (such as the suppression of Lappish in school tuition) aimed at Norwegianization.

The kernel of the book lies in the three chapters describing three different Lappish communities in Norway: the Sea Lapps of Laksefjord, the settled River Lapps of Karasjok, and the reindeer nomads of Kautokeino. It is unfortunate that the author has had to lean so heavily on other people's accounts, the chapter on Laksefjord being based almost entirely on Falkenberg's fieldwork in 1938,¹ and that on Kautokeino upon Smith's work.² Neither of these men was interested in social structure, and it is hardly satisfactory to make their work the basis of theoretical generalization. There are ample data elsewhere with which Gjessing could test his hypotheses. The third study, that of Karasjok, is based on the author's own fieldwork of two months' duration—again scarcely a satisfactory basis for a study of "culture relations". Certainly his observation that there are elements of a caste structure in present day Karasjok suggests a cursory and naïve examination of the situation, or a very particular use of the term "caste". His tribute to British and American scholars working in Lapland is appreciated, but although such persons may have greater objectivity when studying the process of culture contact, the examination of historical material in

¹Falkenberg, J. 1938. "Bosetningen ved indre laksefiord i Finnmark optegnelser fra 1938" in 'Bidrag til Finnernes bygdehistorie og etnografi'. Oslo: Vol. 2, pp. 51-159.

²Smith, P. L. de F. 1938. 'Kautokeino og Kautokeino-Lappene . . .'. Oslo: xiv + 602 pp.

archives is surely better undertaken by a native of the country.

The book contains many stimulating ideas, and since the reader is warned on the third page that the work does not claim to be "exhaustive", one should not, perhaps, cavil at the absence of adequate substantiation of the author's theories by reference to ethnographic data, when these theories have been formulated before. The misquotation of scholars writing earlier, however, is to be severely condemned. Thus, Gjessing citing one of his own articles writes on page 26 "in Samish [Lappish] social structure also there are traits which are more closely related to the social forms of the Chukchee, Koryaks and Eskimo than to those of the Mongolian and Turkish peoples (Gjessing, 1947)". What he actually wrote in 1947 was "Solem suggests that the *sii'dâ*¹ is socially based directly on the hunting unit: consequently it is of considerable interest to point out that the social unit of village organization among the Chukchee, and among both Siberian and American Eskimos, is apparently the crew of large hunting boats, as stressed by Miss M. A. Czaplicka already in 1914. In other words, both the *sii'dâ* organization, probably occurring in North Scandinavian and North Russian hunters' cultures already early in the Stone Age, and the Chukchee and Eskimo types may represent a more primaevial stratum in arctic society than the common Siberian type. In that case the Eskimo *umialik* would correspond to the Lapp *sii'dâ-ised*, the chief or leader of a village. The Lapp *sii'dâ* has in any case, however, been more closely knit than the Eskimo village: for instance the Eskimos do not have any organization corresponding to the Lapp *sii'dâ* council (Skolt Lapp *norraz*)."²

There is no mention of the Koryaks, the Mongolians or the Turkish peoples, nor are his remarks couched in the same definite terms. This particular reference

¹The *sii'dâ* is the unit of social organization of the reindeer nomads.

²Gjessing, G. 1947. "Norwegian contributions to Lapp ethnography". *J. Roy. Anthro. Inst.* (London). Vol. 77, pp. 50-1.

is discussed at length because there is a constant tendency throughout the book to give the work of earlier writers a nuance never intended, but which conveniently fits into Gjessing's argument.

The description of Læstadianism, the Christian revivalist movement, which, accompanied by ecstatic forms, still has widespread support among the northern groups of Lapps, is unfortunately most one-sided. Professor Gjessing repeats remarks published elsewhere that in Læstadian dogma the existence of God becomes of minor importance and that the system of ideas was created by Lapps and Finns. The reviewer, from several years contact with members of this group, believes these assertions to be entirely false. Læstadianism was principally created by Swedish-born Lars Levi Læstadius; his printed sermons are the only literature other than the Bible used by the preachers of this sect, and they contain continued mention of the function of God in Læstadian doctrine. Gjessing's observation that communion assumes a central position in the religious life of Læstadians is in direct contradiction to the reviewer's observations and those of Per Boreman, author of the best study of the movement.¹ Although Gjessing is right in emphasizing the socially cohesive character of the movement, his view that it constitutes some sort of a "covert" revival of the old pre-Christian shamanism is highly equivocal.

It is when he discusses sociological concepts that the author is most open to criticism, for emphatic reiteration is no substitute for scientific analysis. We have no real evidence that the *sii'dâ* has remained unchanged in its social functioning. Any attempt to correlate the incompletely understood titles given in early tax lists with present social positions is largely guesswork. Thus Gjessing's attempt to equate the *finnelensmann* and *chochstarus* of the old records with the contemporary leader of the *sii'dâ* and his assistant entails ignoring the possibility that the earlier positions were

¹Boreman, Per. 1953. 'Læstadianismen'. Stockholm.

officially imposed institutions similar to the Swedish authorities '*byordningsman*' (Lappish, *jerjástás-olmus*). Nor have we any adequate evidence that the *si'dá* was exogamic. The assertion of one informant cannot replace examination of tax lists and their correlation with church registers.

In spite of all these defects this is an important book. It provides information for the non-Scandinavian reader, and gives an interesting stimulus to the whole field of Lappish research. Gjessing's views on historical matters are always interesting and often new, such as his comments on the effects of the development of reindeer husbandry, or the decline of the Pomor trade. He points out what is generally ignored: that our knowledge is defective since not only did the Lapps try to mislead missionaries, but the authors of such accounts as we possess were Lutheran missionaries who utilised Old Norse religious concepts to describe something entirely alien to them. Moreover, what they published was a mixture of information from different parts of Lapland. Professor Gjessing is to be congratulated in introducing fresh ideas to replace the arid study of these seventeenth century texts.

Another great virtue of the book is that it is a sympathetic account lacking the ethnocentricity and romanticism that has marred nearly all previous writings on this people.

IAN WHITAKER

LAND OF THE LONG DAY

By DOUG WILKINSON. *Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1955. 9½ x 6¼ inches; vii + 261 pages; illustrations; maps on end papers. \$5.00.*

This book is the account of the author's year-long stay at an Eskimo camp site in northern Baffin Island. It tells in factual but stirring words of his deliberately-sought life as an *inoongwah*, "one living in the likeness of an Eskimo". He had already an extensive knowledge of the north and its people as a maker of successful short films, (one of which has the same title as this book). In 1953 he went up as the adopted son of his

friend Idlouk. He brought no access of white wealth or equipment to Idlouk's camp, only his rifle, sleeping bag and camera. He was determined to understand the Eskimo's problems from the inside, as a working member of their camp, in order to fit himself for *considering* the post he has now accepted with the Canadian government (Northern Service Officer, Department of Northern Affairs, at Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island).

In this showed the intensely idealistic spirit which flames from this young Canadian. Such a spirit often entangles a writer in a mesh of fancy and philosophising. But one looks in vain for such in Wilkinson's prose—as simple, beautiful, and eminently believable as his photographs. He has the power to convey the feeling of his hunter's life, times unpleasantly harsh as well as times gay and exciting. There are plenty who know the Eskimo well and cannot write descriptively: there are some unfortunately who can pour forth words based on misconception, ignorance, or plain lies. But most readers will agree that here is living, truthful writing, that conjures up this territory where the sun lives above the horizon for three months in summer, and below for as long a time in winter. One can enjoy with him the sights, scents, and sounds of returning spring, and marvel with him at the triumphant *auktok* seal hunt as performed by his foster father one day.

Through the pages his main theme and interest leaps out. How do the Eskimo and white man differ, and how can the already-present intermingling of their cultures be a blessing and not a disaster? He describes the lingering patience of the Eskimo, his apparent lack of gratitude, Idlouk's own reaction to the present days and distaste for returning to the ways of his ancestors. He is careful to point out that physically he had no trouble living in the likeness of the Eskimo—mentally he could not do so. On his last pages he writes thoughtfully about the future of the Eskimo in the Canadian north. He is not sure, but