

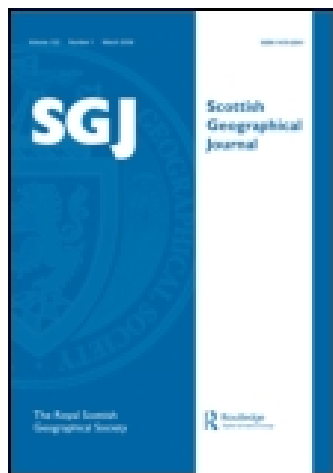
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V. Dingelstedt ^a

^a Royal Scottish Geographical Society

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top of this we found the remains of a monastery completely ruined by the rebels. Upright among the ruins, with placid countenance, sat a cast-iron figure of Buddha, seated on a lotus leaf. Too heavy to take away and too difficult to break up, or too worthless to sell, or perhaps, thanks to a superstitious awe not to be got rid of by men who have been brought up to think there is a spirit in everything, which is ever more ready to show his anger in resenting an injury than to show his love in patiently submitting to insult, it had been left undisturbed. At eleven o'clock the city of Oochang appeared in sight, gay with banners flying from divers points on the battlements and lying on the right side of the river. On the left was the smaller city of Hanyang, of which little seemed to have been left by the rebels except the old city walls and a new wall of a very rickety appearance, which they had erected so as to enclose it and a height overlooking the city and Hankow.

RUSSIAN LAPLANDERS.

By V. DINGELSTEDT.

Hon. Corr. Mem. Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

THE interest that has sprung up in Russia during the present reign in the study of the various nationalities inhabiting the immense empire under the sway of the Tzar is now bearing fruit. We had recently occasion to speak of the Kirghiz, in connection with the important researches undertaken by General Grodekoff, and now the Laplanders are brought before us in a bulky volume written by N. Kharusine, an active member of the I. R. Society of Naturalists and Ethnographers attached to the Moscow University.¹ The author resided amongst the Laplanders on the peninsula of Kola during the summer of 1887, with the special purpose of studying their manners, customs, faith, and occupations. In presenting his report of the information he has obtained, by personal observation and from the statements of others, he has taken pains to look up and compare what has been written about the subject from the middle of the seventeenth century to the present time. The work presents a very interesting, though rather diluted, account of the past and present state of those small Lapland communities which, widely dispersed under the name of *pogosts*, have to struggle for existence with a terribly inclement climate and the ignorance and superstition, yet more baneful, in which they are plunged. The lot of this poor people, cast on the shores of a frozen sea, is sure to awaken wide-spread sympathy, but considerable scientific interest also must be felt in an exact knowledge of the condition, hopes, and beliefs of human beings who have to endure a polar night of two months and 82° of frost.

In the small space we venture to claim for our note in the pages of the *Scot. Geog. Magazine*, we cannot of course enter into minute details con-

¹ *Russkie Lopari. Otcherki prochlago i sovremennago bytu.* 472 pp. 4to. Moscow, 1890.

cerning the life and faith of the Laplanders, but we would gladly select from the interesting work of the Russian ethnographer some characteristic traits, sufficient to give the reader an idea of the subject.

A few introductory remarks are indispensable about the physical features of the country inhabited by the Russian Laplanders, who must be distinguished from their Scandinavian brethren, who, it seems, differ considerably in customs and mental characteristics. This country, forming a large peninsula between 65° and 70° N. lat., and 30°-40° E. long., has an area of 79,200 sq. miles (almost as large as Scotland and England, without Wales, taken together). The greater part (56 per cent.) consists of low marshy plains and swamps, but in the centre there are some mountain ranges, which give birth to many swift rivers and are covered with forests occupying about 37 per cent. of the area of the country. There exist, moreover, as many as 700 small and large lakes,¹ occupying about 7 per cent., or the rest, of the area.² Winter descends on this desolate country as early as the middle of September, when the swift-flowing rivers are frozen over first, then the smaller inlets, and finally the whole coast is bound in ice. From the 25th November to the 15th January reigns dreary polar night. Then the thermometer marks about —50° F. in the interior of the country, and seldom rises above —36° on the sea-shore. At the end of April the snow begins to thaw, but no vestige of green appears before the beginning of June, though, from May 24th to the 21st July, the sun does not descend below the horizon. This continual daylight during almost two months is exceedingly trying to those unaccustomed to it. The heat then increases suddenly to 72° F. in the interior of the land, but it is always cooler on the sea-shore. A veritable scourge comes then in the form of myriads of gnats, gad-flies, midges and other insects, which torment equally man and his companion, the reindeer. Besides the latter and his small, but terrible, tormentors, there are the following representatives of the animal kingdom: salmon and other fish in the river waters: cod, turbot, *saida* in the sea waters; partridge, woodcock, different varieties of ducks in the forests and on marshy grounds, as also a number of wolves, bears, foxes, squirrels, ermine, and other wild animals. The flora is represented by pines, fir-trees, low birches, some small shrubs, as the bilberry and cloudberry, and grass of various kinds, but it is the food of the reindeer—lichen and moss—which covers by far the largest area. In some rivers of Lapland pearls of considerable value are found.

No regular census of the population has ever been taken, but it is very roughly estimated at about 2000 souls. The struggle for existence which the Laplander has to maintain is very hard indeed, so that the population is probably dwindling; at any rate there is terrible mortality among the young and the old. In spite of this the reindeer-breeder remains on the whole a simple, timorous, good-natured, and fairly honest creature. The influence exercised lately by Russian merchants, who come to rob him of the fruit of his labour, has not, however, had

¹ The largest lake is Imandra—1720 square miles.

² The largest rivers are: Ponoy, Pulonga, flowing into the White Sea; Tuloma, Kola, Petchenga, discharging into the Arctic Ocean.

a salutary effect upon his character ; he is becoming distrustful in dealing with strangers and rather inclined to the abuse of alcoholic drinks. The influence of the missionaries, on the other hand, has at present produced no marked effect, though Laplanders are considered nominally to appertain to the orthodox Greek Church. The principal occupations of the Russian Laplanders are reindeer-breeding, hunting, fishing, barter, and the transport of goods. They lead a nomadic life, and at the beginning of the mild season change their abode from the interior to the coast. The most numerous, as also the poorest and the dirtiest, are those Laplanders who gain their living by fishing ; the hunter, on the other hand, seems to be the most civilised, as he has a hut in the forest ; as to the reindeer-breeders, their number is very small in Russian Lapland, most of them living on the Norwegian side of the frontier. The number of reindeer in Russian Lapland was estimated, some four years ago, to be about 12,700 ; it is now on the decrease in consequence of epidemics, the ravages of wild beasts, and frequent bartering for liquors. In the summer the reindeer is left free to search for his food, but in the winter he is required to draw his owner in a light *kereja* (a kind of sleigh) over the endless snow-fields.

The hunter in Lapland complains of the disappearance of some valuable game, as, for instance, the beaver, and of the general decrease in the number of animals hunted for their skins. Though the prices of the different skins have risen, the business on the whole is suffering. These are some of the present prices and those of thirty years ago : bear skin has risen from 3 to 15 roubles, arctic fox from 30 kopecks to 2 or 3½ roubles, martin from 5 to 11 roubles, otter from 4 to 7½ roubles.

As already hinted, the principal resource of Russian Laplanders is fishing, but unfortunately this occupation is on the decline. In 1860 the quantity of salmon caught was estimated at as much as 5219 poods (1682 cwt.), whereas now only about 2500 poods yearly (806 cwt.) are obtained. The price has risen from 2 to 5 roubles a pood, but it is not the fisherman but the Russian merchant who is the gainer. How poor these fishermen are may be judged from the cruel necessity they find themselves in, at a removal of their camp or during the journey, to abandon to their fate their sick and dying, leaving them a little water and some provisions. Their dwellings are most crazy and miserable, and their food unwholesome and insufficient, the consequence being that they are much addicted to the abuse of strong drink, which renders them easy victims of the Russian fish-merchant, who preys upon them and holds them in complete dependence.

Laplanders live now in separate families, but they have preserved traces of their former tribal constitution (patriarchal state). They are liberal in the exercise of hospitality, and it seems that even recently the host felt himself honoured by the guest sharing his conjugal rights. They have preserved the tribal divisions of landed property and of fishing grounds, and retain their totems, or *tamga*, as distinctive family marks. Women are called by the name of their husbands ; thus a woman may be called Ivan-cara (John's wife), Ivan-agki (John's old

wife), or Ivan-niyd (John's girl), according to her age. Relationship of the same degree is considered to be nearer through the male than the female line. Laplanders do not marry within the fourth degree of kinship, nor with strangers, Russians treating them disdainfully, and religious antipathies causing them to regard Scandinavian Laplanders (who are Protestants) as impure. The bride is bought from her parents, but the price takes the form of presents and one year's service in the house of the father-in-law. The marriage festivities are made at the cost of the guests. In the choice of a wife greater value is attached to the qualities of a good housekeeper than to beauty. Our author enters into full details concerning the wedding ritual, which indicates that the practice of ravishment formerly existed. Laplanders do not treat their women cruelly, but they affirm the man's right to behave himself towards his spouse just as he likes. "My wife is mine," says he, "so it is for me to choose how I will treat her, whether I will love or beat her." Laplanders show affection for their children, but they have preserved the barbarous custom of compressing the head of a new-born child with a handkerchief to give it a round shape.¹

A considerable part of the work of M. Kharasine is taken up with an exposition of the ancient creed of the Laplanders, who are now, outwardly, members of the orthodox Greek Church. Their pantheon is very populous, and their mythology resembles that of the Finlanders. All these old creeds have now fallen into a chaotic state, and are intermingled with various notions about the Christian God and His orthodox saints. Laplanders retain a belief in witchcraft, and are greatly in awe of their conjurers; they believe in ghosts and the survival of the spirits of the departed, which can be either beneficent or mischievous, and they offer sacrifices to the *manes* of ancestors. But all these practices seem to be vanishing, and Christian ideas are more and more taking possession of their minds.

In conclusion, I am also bound to mention that Mr. Kharasine has devoted considerable attention to the products of the Laplander's creative powers of imagination. He gives many interesting examples of their epic poems, tales, and even lyrics, the latter of which are really very poor. But with these geography is not directly concerned. On the whole we should be very grateful to the Russian ethnographer for the abundant and authentic information he has brought to light about a forlorn people valiantly struggling against such great odds to maintain a wretched existence amid the snows of a desert peninsula.

¹ See the analogous custom among the Conibos and Sipibos in Peru (*Scot. Geog. Mag.* May 1890, p. 243),—a custom found, indeed, among savages in all parts of the world.