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Tim Ingold

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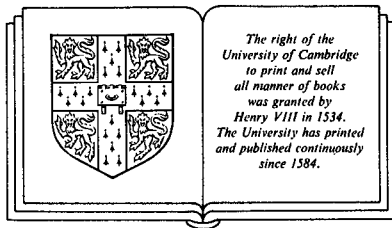
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# Hunters pastoralists and ranchers

*Reindeer economies and their  
transformations*

TIM INGOLD

*Department of Social Anthropology  
University of Manchester*



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## Preface

This book was written at Manchester between March 1977 and July 1978. I am not sure exactly when the idea for it first entered my mind, but it was already firmly rooted by autumn 1975, when I completed my doctoral dissertation and first book on the Skolt Lapps (Ingold 1976). I kicked off with a seminar paper, grandiosely entitled ‘Reindeer economies and the advent of pastoralism’, which I delivered first at Manchester and later, on the day after my thesis viva, at Cambridge. My colleagues at Manchester rightly dismissed the whole enterprise. One should begin, they said, with hard data, not with empty speculations. I had no data, so there was nothing the seminar could do. At Cambridge, the response was more favourable: perhaps I was not alone among the speculators there. At any rate, the next step was to acquire some facts; so I proceeded to immerse myself in what literature I could find on reindeer hunting and pastoral societies, in languages that I could understand (I must here admit to an inability to read Russian, a major handicap that I hope soon to remedy). Before long, most of my original arguments lay in ruins – an encouraging indication that I was, after all, making some progress.

But like it or not, this is an ‘ideas’ book, not a ‘facts’ book. All the data that I adduce, including my own, are from previously published sources. My primary debt of gratitude must therefore be to all those ethnographers, past and present, who have contributed to the record of circumpolar peoples. Had it not been for their scholarship and perseverance, I could never have embarked on the present inquiry. And to each, I owe also an apology; for in a work that aims at generalization and synthesis, it is quite impossible to do justice to the richness and subtlety of the particular account. I can only hope not to have conveyed too many misrepresentations. To any reader naive enough to suppose that grand theoretical speculation is a short cut to true knowledge,

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I must insist that there is absolutely no substitute for primary ethnographic material. It must be borne in mind, too, that ‘facts’ do not appear in real life as they do in published monographs. Every ethnographic fact is really a generalization, prised painfully from the infinitely precious minutiae of direct fieldwork experience. To take published sources as a factual base is therefore to generalize from generalizations, which not only doubles the likelihood of distortion, but also encourages the construction of formulae so wide-ranging in their application as to be all but meaningless in any specific instance. However, so long as we are aware of these risks, there is no reason to be deterred.

It is always difficult, in retrospect, to disentangle the various sources of inspiration that combine to yield a product such as this book. One source, of course, was my own fieldwork in Lapland. Another was my reading of a particular article, which will be cited from time to time in the text, but which should be mentioned separately here. It is Paine’s (1971) paper on ‘Animals as capital’. To my knowledge, this is the first attempt by any anthropologist to explore the contrasts between hunting and pastoralism in the far north. For me, it was seminal. But undoubtedly the major stimulus has come from teaching. When I arrived at Manchester in 1974, I was given the opportunity to take on a third-year course entitled ‘Environment and Technology’. I conceived of this as bearing directly on the interface between the contingent disciplines of anthropology and ecology. Being already an anthropologist, of sorts, I now had to become a thinking, if not a practising, ecologist as well. As I read, and taught, the prospects ahead became ever more exciting. An early interest in problems of social evolution, which had been firmly damped down by my mentors in social anthropology, was rekindled; and I began to look with a renewed interest at the work of contemporary prehistorians. All this has borne fruit in the present book.

For the last three years, students registering for ‘Environment and Technology’ have unwittingly let themselves in for a lot of lectures about reindeer. Some have even written examination answers on the subject. I am deeply grateful to all of them for their patience, their scepticism, and their many enlightened comments in discussion. On the practical side, Cath Cole made a magnificent job of typing the manuscript. Christopher, who was there all along, and Nicholas, who arrived in the middle of chapter 3, have both contributed in their inimitable ways. Thanks go, above

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all, to my wife Anna, who had to cope with it all. Finally, in self-protection, I should just like to add that many of the views presented in this book are at variance with what I have previously published on the subject of reindeer economies. The latter should not therefore be assumed to represent my current position.

*Manchester, July 1978*

T. I.