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Farmer-fishermen: interior lake fishing and inter-cultural and intra-cultural relations among coastal and interior Sámi communities in northern Sweden AD 1200–1600

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Farmer-fishermen: interior lake fishing and inter-cultural and intra-cultural relations among coastal and interior Sámi communities in northern Sweden AD 1200–1600

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ABSTRACT
Although the productive fishing grounds had long attracted the Crown and the Church to northern Sweden, it was not until the sixteenth century that the judicial and fiscal powers of the Swedish Crown were exercised in full. Records show that the regular fishing in interior lakes formed a prominent enterprise among coastal farmer communities. This paper examines the social and economic context of farmers engaged in interior fishing with respect to the internal organization of village communities, principles of private and collective ownership, land-use strategies and inter-community relations. There are no a-priori assumptions about the coastal population being “Swedish”. Instead of applying ethnonyms, the terms “farmer” and “coastal” are used throughout the paper. The main area of investigation includes the coastal area of northernmost Sweden and the western parts of Finnish Lapland. The study shows that interior lakes fitted into village resource areas, long sanctioned by usage, and that usufruct belonged to village members collectively. A large part of the fishing lakes are situated in interior Sámi territory. Fishermen were internalizing Sámi place names, implying close relations between the groups. Archeological investigations point to subsistence strategies including systemic interior lake fishing being established before AD 1200. The authors propose that coastal and interior communities should be perceived as two economic strategies representing indigenous and pre-colonial land-use schemes.

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Interior lake fishing; medieval; coastal farmers; Sámi; land-use; Northern Sweden

Introduction and background

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the richness in sought-after commodities, like furs and fish, had already begun to draw the attention of both the Catholic Church and the Swedish Crown, fostering initiatives to establish agrarian settlements in coastal northern Sweden (collectively referred to as a colonization enterprise; cf. Sundström 1984; Wallerström 1995, 47–50; and cited literature). Productive fishing grounds by the mouths of major rivers were distributed among the nobility as deeds of gifts (Olofsson 1962, 140–149;
Sundström 1984, 43–44; Berggren 1995). From the perspective of the Swedish central powers, the northern frontier of the “settled” area (Sw. bygd) reached only as far as Bygdeå by the Bothnian coast (Figure 1). Accordingly, the inland and coastal areas further north were considered to be wilderness inhabited by “hunters in forests and waters” (Olofsson 1962, 125–139), following a narrative discourse whereby hunting/herding and cultivation formed oppositional pairs, implicitly equating civilization with cultivation and settled land, and hunting/herding with wilderness and wasteland. It was not until the sixteenth century that the judicial and fiscal powers of the Swedish Crown were exercised in full in northern Sweden (and also in northern Norway and Finland). Fishing stands out as one of the most prominent enterprises among coastal communities, carried out not only within local sea fishing grounds but also in lakes located in the interior, at quite a distance from the villages. From an archeological perspective, the implications of interior lake fishing for prehistoric and early historical subsistence strategies and settlement history have not been recognized (cf. Wallerström 1995). Although mentioned in historical studies (cf. Göthe 1929, 1–17; Enequist 1937, 17–29; Torstensson 1977, 277–278; Berggren 1995; Lundström 2004, 53–66; Tegengren 2015, 160–161), the social, economic and cultural significance of this fishing activity has not been much discussed.

Figure 1. Map of Fennoscandinavia with the counties of northern Sweden marked out. According to fourteenth-century records, the parish of Bygdeå formed the northern frontier of the “settled” area. Areas further north and northwest were regarded as wasteland or inhabited by “hunters in forests and lakes”.
This paper is part of the research programme Recalling the Past: Cultural Heritage, Landscapes and Identity Processes in Northern Fennoscandia (2012–2017). The overall aim of the programme is to explore the multi-cultural history of coastal northern Sweden during the period AD 600–1500. Research specifically focuses on deciphering different economic strategies in relation to landscape affiliation and environmental impact (for further information about the programme see www.recallingthepast.se and www.silvermuseet.se).

In previous publications we have targeted, among other themes, the introduction of cereal cultivation in the coastal as well as the interior areas of northern Sweden, challenging the discursive connotations of cultivation and colonization (cf. Bergman and Hörnberg 2015; Hörnberg et al. 2015) and the role of the birkarlar in relation to inter- and intra-cultural contact between interior Sámi and coastal communities. The latter study shows that birkarlar were acting as community representatives and agents vis-à-vis the wide and international trading networks of the time (Bergman and Edlund 2016). Another theme explores the impact of the agricultural societies of Central Norrland on hunter–fisher communities further north. The establishment of Birka during the eighth century as a trading node catalyzed the increased interaction between sedentary farming and hunting–fishing communities in Central Norrland, in turn promoting specialization and surplus production. In a similar way, an increasing interaction between coastal and interior communities of northernmost Sweden is corroborated by the archeological record dating c. AD 500 and coincides with some of the earliest sedentary agricultural settlements in coastal northern Norrland (Ramqvist 2012, 2014; Ramqvist and Hörnberg 2015).

We suggest the papers be seen as pieces complimenting each other, successively building a full and solid framework. In this context, the present paper contributes to the overall picture by illuminating the close and regular contacts between coastal and interior communities in connection with the so-called fjällträskfisken, i.e. the systematic fishing in interior lakes by coastal farmers. Contrary to the colonization historiographies, there are no a-priori assumptions about the coastal population being “Swedish”. The Iron Age and Medieval coastal communities are examined in relation to prehistoric and historically known Sámi contexts (cf. Mulk 1994; Hedman 2003; Bergman et al. 2008, 2013; Bergman and Hörnberg 2015), however, not as oppositional pairs, but for the purpose of evaluating the coastal settlement history as unbiased as possible. Therefore, instead of applying ethnonyms, the terms “farmer” and “coastal” are consistently used throughout the paper, ending up in a discussion of the socio-economic and cultural context of the coastal population.

**Aim of the study**

The focus of this study is on interior lake fishing during the late medieval period from the perspective of land-use strategies in relation to fiscal and administrative structures. The study aims at analyzing the social and economic context among coastal communities from the perspective of post-colonial theory, combining archeological and cultural-geographical methods. We have scrutinized primary sources, mainly sixteenth-century fiscal accounts, to extract new information and unveil underlying socio-economic patterns that may originate from prehistoric times. Analyses specifically address the internal organization of sixteenth-century coastal village communities, principles of private and
collective ownership, family structures and social hierarchies, and not least, structures of inter- and intra-cultural contact.

Areas of investigation include the coastal and interior regions of the Norr- and Västerbotten counties in northernmost Sweden, and the western parts of Finnish Lapland, stretching from the valley of the river Torneälven in the north to the river Umeälven in the south (Figure 2). The study draws on archeological records dating back to c. AD 1200 and on historical records from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Data are compiled and analyzed from a landscape perspective, including subsistence strategies, logistics and territorial structures. In addition, the social and economic relationships between interior and coastal communities are examined with regard to cultural landscape affiliation, specifically considering Sámi place names, in particular the names of lakes (Lundström 2004, 53–66; Korhonen 2009; Bergman 2010). Finally, we hope the data presented in this paper may be useful to other scholars engaged in the study of the cultural history of northern Fennoscandia.

Figure 2. Map of the study area with the parishes marked out: (1) Umeå parish, (2) Bygdeå parish, (3) Lövånger parish, (4) Skellefteå parish, (5) Piteå parish, (6) Luleå parish, (7) Kalix parish and (8) Torneå parish. Localities mentioned in the text are marked as filled triangle.
Coastal villages, subsistence and interior lake fishing

Written records and archeological and palynological data show that Medieval coastal communities were characterized by highly diversified subsistence including cereal cultivation and cattle breeding, hunting, fishing and trading (Bergman 2007; Bergman, Zackrisson, and Östlund 2014; Hörnberg, Josefsson, and Liedgren 2014; Josefsson, Ramqvist, and Hörnberg 2014; Hörnberg et al. 2015; Liedgren and Bergman 2015). The strong seasonal fluctuations defined the working year and suggest well-adapted subsistence strategies. Hunting and fishing grounds covered extensive areas, necessitating the division of labour, with some members of each household staying at the farm managing the cattle, and other members leaving for hunting–fishing expeditions on a seasonal basis. Seal hunting was carried out during late winter and early spring, far away on the ice sheet covering the Bay of Bothnia. In late autumn, seals were caught with nets in open water (generally referred to as “seal fishing”) (Gustafsson 1971, 66–105; Berggren 1995, 83–86; Broadbent 2010; Storå 2010, 113–121). Hunting for other wild game was carried out in the outlying lands of the historical coastal villages at different times of the year: elk and reindeer were hunted in late autumn and winter, beaver was mainly hunted in spring, and sea birds were hunted in spring and autumn. Sought-after species like lynx, squirrel, ermine, marten and fox were hunted during winter, when the furs were of prime quality (Ekman [1910] 1983, 67).

Sea fishing mainly focused on Baltic herring (Clupea harengus) throughout the year and on salmon (Salmo salar) in spring and early summer (fish nomenclature in Latin according to Nilsson 1991, unless otherwise stated). In addition, extensive salmon fishing was carried out in rivers and river mouths (Magnus [1555] 1982, 940–941). Fishing for other species was carried out in lakes and rivers close to the villages more or less year-round. In addition, regular trips to interior lakes situated quite far from the villages were made by teams of coastal fishermen during spring and early summer (Göthe 1929, 1–17; Lundholm 1991, 277–278; Berggren 1995, 64–71; Lundström 2004, 53–66).

The Archbishop of Uppsala, Olaus Magnus, who travelled along the Bothnian coast to Torneå in 1519, concluded that fishing actually formed the basis of subsistence among the coastal communities of northern Västerbotten (corresponding to today’s Norrbotten), and that surplus production was traded for wine, salt, wheat, barley and various vegetables, household utensils, ornaments, and precious cloth (Magnus [1555] 1982, 937). Obviously, the richness in fish had long attracted external agents. The profitable salmon fishing by the river mouths caught the attention of both the Catholic Church and the Swedish Crown at an early stage, and at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Church and members of the nobility were granted salmon fisheries as deeds of gifts (Olofsson 1962, 140–155). In the sixteenth century, during the reign of King Gustav Vasa, the coastal peasant population and the interior Sámi of northernmost Sweden became subjects of the Swedish fiscal system. Census registers were drawn up listing all adult males able to bend a bow (meaning a crossbow), the so-called bågamantal or bågaskattemantal (Huss 1902, 20–23), in order to gain full control of the production of commodities like cereals, fur, blubber and not least fish. Taxation records from the period 1553–1558 account for the taxable production (given in the weight of dried fish) of interior lake fishing (so-called “fjällträskfiske”) for each of the parishes. The individual lakes are listed with the names of the fishermen and their home villages (Landskapshandlingar, Västerbotten 1553–1558).
However, from 1559 onwards the records are inconsistent in the way interior lake fishing is presented, sometimes mentioning fishermen by their names and sometimes only by the number of them. The lakes are listed in the same way as before, but there is no mention of the peasant villages involved in fishing enterprises. For this reason, our study focuses on the period 1553–1558.

According to the taxation and property records (Sw. Jordaboken) of 1543, there were 342 villages in the Västerbotten province of northernmost Sweden (corresponding to today’s Norr- and Västerbotten counties), altogether supporting 2319 farms (Liedgren and Ramqvist, manuscript). The first record including information on interior lake fishing (1553) lists fishermen from 134 villages (Figure 3). In other words, less than half (39%) of the villages were involved in fishing enterprises (Table 1). These figures are quite consistent over the studied time period and records also show consistency regarding the villages involved in fishing. The 1553 record accounts for 360 interior lakes used by coastal farmers, of which we have identified 308 (85.6%). The number of lakes varies significantly between the parishes (Figure 4), and the number of lakes listed for each of the villages...

Figure 3. Villages in Västerbotten county (corresponding to today’s Norrbotten and Västerbotten counties) according to the tax register of 1543, marked as open circle. The villages involved in interior lake fishing in 1553 are marked as filled triangle and those engaged in seal hunting with filled circle.
varies from 1 to 10 with a mean value of 2.4 lakes per village (Figure 5). There is no obvious correlation between village size (i.e. number of farms) and the number of fishing lakes. In other words, small villages could be linked to a large number of lakes and *vice versa*.

### Fishing produce and taxation

In contrast to the standardized taxation of lakes within village grounds (Sw. *hemträsk*), with fixed rates irrespective of variations in catch and productivity, interior lakes were taxed in relation to the catch, first at the rate of 1/15 of the catch and later at a higher rate (Landskapshandlingar, Västerbotten 1553–1559). The measures used include the *skeppund* (133 kg) corresponding to 20 *lispund* of 6.65 kg each (Morell 1988). Regarding the smallest unit of weight, the *markpund*, it has been suggested that an older system of 24 *markpund* to a *lispund* was used in northern Sweden throughout the sixteenth century, while a *lispund* equated to 20 *markpund* in other parts of Sweden (Jansson 1981). We settled this issue by summing the amount of fish for each of the lakes of the Kalix parish listed in the 1553 record, making a total of 6 *lispund* and 72 *markpund*, corresponding to the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skellefteå</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piteå</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torneå</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luleå</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lövängen</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bygdeå</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalix</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. The share (%) of villages per parish involved in interior lake fishing in 1553.*

*Figure 4. The number of interior fishing lakes per parish in 1553.*
The sum of 9 lispund and 12 markpund that was noted by the scribe at the bottom of the list. Comparing these figures confirms that 1 lispund equalled 20 markpund. In addition, we examined all fishing records for Västerbotten County in 1553, and it turned out that there was no case where a figure of 20–23 markpund was mentioned, which would, at least occasionally, have been the case if there had been 24 markpund to a lispund. Thus, the same units of measurements were applied in Västerbotten County as in other parts of Sweden, so one markpund equalled 0.333 kg. The figures listed in the records refer to dry weight estimated to represent 25% of the fresh weight (Berggren 1995, 65). We present figures in fresh weight in order to make the produce comprehensible as far as possible.

In 1553, the total catch from Västerbotten County amounted to slightly more than 100,700 kg including six species: pike (Esox lucius), perch (Perca fluviatilis), roach (Rutilus rutilus), whitefish (Coregonus lavaretus), ide (Leuciscus idus) and bream (Abramis brama). Pike made up 67% of the catch followed by perch (14%) and roach (12%) (Figure 6). Although there are regional differences in the distribution of various species, reflecting local productivity, pike dominates the total in all parishes except for Skellefteå, followed by perch (Table 2). Ide was recorded only in the Torneå and Piteå parishes, and bream in the parishes of Kalix and Luleå. Whitefish was taxed only in Torneå. Altogether, the parish of Torneå stands out as the most productive of all parishes, producing 44% of the total catch (Table 2).

Naturally, fish records reflect the demand for dried fish by the Swedish Crown, however, as tax rates amounted to 1/15 (6.7%) of the catch, the majority (93.3%) remained for local consumption or sale. In other words, almost 94,000 kg of the produce of interior lake fishing in 1553 was turned over within the local economy, either for consumption or for trade.
Interior lake fishing, usufruct and land-use strategies

Taxation records show that only a limited number of farmers per village were paying taxes for their fishing in interior lakes, and that the number was quite consistent over time. In general, there were two or three individuals per village involved in interior lake fishing and in a few cases there were eight or more. Torneå parish stands out as having more fishers per bågaskattemantal and also more fishers per village (Landskapshandlingar Västerbotten 1553).

Although there was little variation between villages in the actual number of fishermen, the share in relation to the total number of taxed farmers (i.e. household managers according to the bågaskattemantal) in each of the villages varied significantly (Table 3). For instance, in the Piteå parish, large villages like Öjebyn, Pitholm and Svensbyn, with 20 taxed farmers, would include just as many fishers as the small villages, with two or three people participating in interior lake fishing enterprises. The actual fishing teams were typically composed of individuals from different villages joining in teams of 2–5 people. However, team size and composition could vary from one year to another. In some years, the teams included fishers from one village and at other times there were people from different villages teaming up (Figure 7).

The spatial distribution of interior fishing lakes in relation to the home villages of the fishermen exhibits distinctive traits (Figure 8). Lakes are located at distances ranging from five to nearly 300 km from the villages, with the Torne and Ume parishes standing out, having their fishing grounds at the greatest distance from the villages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. The amount of fish (fresh weight) per species and parish in 1553.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Species (kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whitefish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
westernmost lakes used by coastal farmers are situated by the so-called Lapland border (Sw. *Lappmarksgränsen*), constituted by the state in the mid-eighteenth century and separating the coastal and interior areas into different administrative districts (André 1998, 55–59). However, the Torne and Ume parishes differ from the others by including fishing lakes far into the Lapland areas (Sw. *lappmarker*).

By connecting villages and their associated lakes with a line, a very distinctive picture emerges (Figure 8). Each village, or set of joined villages, was linked to a specific cluster of lakes. The correspondence between villages and lakes was consistent over time, implying the collective ownership of fishing rights among the villagers. When a person moved from one village to another, he or she could no longer claim the right to fish in lakes belonging to their respective home village, and thus the overall spatial structure remained distinct and persistent over time. If instead fishing rights had been linked to individual fishermen, there would have been a much less distinctive picture with lines criss-crossing each other in every direction. This is in line with village community regulations dating to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stipulating that a farmer owning land in another village had no fishing rights in that village, but only in his home village where he (or she) was taxed (Isaksson 1967, 356).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>No/parish</th>
<th>Mean/village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torneå</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalix</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luleå</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piteå</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skellefteå</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lövånger</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bygdeå</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.** The index number of fishers per parish and the mean number per village and parish, based on the 1553 record.

*Figure 7.* The variable composition of teams fishing in lake Storträsket during the period 1553–1557.
Apparently, fishing enterprises never cut across parish borders and there are, in fact, corridors devoid of fishing lakes separating the parishes. Although landowners could hold land outside their home village and parish (Nordlander 1905), it is evident that fishing enterprises never included lakes situated in neighbouring parishes. In our opinion, this points to indigenous and well-established land-use strategies with interior lakes forming part of a regular resource area used by coastal communities as part of long-established custom. Parish boundaries were simply adjusted to patterns already present on the ground. As usual, there is an exception that proves the rule. An arbitration of 1541 signed by King Gustav Vasa describes a conflict between farmers (referred to as birkarlar) from Luleå and Kalix parishes concerning fishing rights to the Kengis falls in the river Kalixälven and nearby lakes. This conflict had been going on for a long time without being settled (Hederyd 1986, 8–12). Otherwise, disputes between villages or individual farmers over rights to interior fishing were never brought to court, confirming their status as time-honoured customs.

**Figure 8.** Map of villages (grey dots) and their respective interior lakes (dark squares) connected with lines, based on the 1553 taxation record. Villages not engaged in interior lake fishing are marked with black dots.
The social context of interior lake fishing

Following the disposition of the sixteenth-century tax rolls, listing the interior lakes as headlines, it is evident that fishing lakes and produce formed the actual objects of taxation and not the individual fishermen or their home villages. This explains why teams composed of fishers from different villages were jointly taxed while one fisherman using different lakes paid separate taxes for each of them. Therefore, it is logical that from 1559 onwards fishing records include the names of lakes, the number (but not the names) of fishers and the number of nets, without any mention of villages at all. The Swedish Crown’s interest was solely in the actual fish produce and in effectively managing taxation, but for the fishers and village communities, productivity had to be considered from a long-term perspective. Taxation records from the studied period (and later) frequently include notes on some of the taxed lakes not being used that particular year. The fact that some lakes were laid fallow, together with the limited and consistent number of fishers per lake, may be explained in terms of sustainable management of fish resources to prevent over-exploitation and to maintain a productive composition of age classes and fish species. In addition, regular fishing enterprises required an infrastructure with elaborately laid out (and maintained) trails, effective means of transportation and well-equipped fishing camps including dwellings, storage huts, boats, nets and other fishing gear (Figure 9). A record dating to the late seventeenth century mentions fishermen from Gransele (Umeå parish) using large boats designed for the fishing of pike (“gäddbåtar”), sewn with ropes of hemp, coated with tar and so light that they could be carried on the shoulders (Lundius [1674–1679] 1905, 33–34). The boats could take one person and a cargo of up to 255 kg (Schefferus [1673] 1956, 381).

In short, interior lake fishing involved significant costs in material and labour. If the fishers were acting as private entrepreneurs, they themselves would have had to make the necessary investments and it is reasonable to expect private ownership to have promoted conservative structures aimed at protecting and securing investments. If, on the

Figure 9. Woodcut showing a fisherman harvesting a catch of pike. The birds in the upper right of the picture are probably sea birds, indicating that fishing took place in late spring and early summer. The buildings in the upper part of the picture are possibly depictions of huts and storage buildings at a fishing camp (from Magnus [1555] 1982, 947).
other hand, investments were made collectively by members of the village communities, that would allow for a higher degree of flexibility in team composition, quite in line with the information given in taxation records.

During the sixteenth century, the principle of the superiority of the collective in relation to the individual manifested in different ways: outlying land was considered common property and usufruct was distributed among village members (Enequist 1935, 154–156). The village communities still held a collective liability to pay taxes in accordance with the early Medieval Hälsingelagen (Jonsson 1971, 243, 251–252). Following the judicial standing of the village collective, and based on the information extracted from written records, we suggest that interior lake fishing was part of an economic structure based on collective rather than individual ownership and rights. If so, what was the standing of individual fishermen in relation to their respective village community?

By compiling fishing registers from the Piteå and Skellefteå parishes with a number of fiscal records, including census registers and lists of birkarlar and rural tradesmen, land registers (Nordlander 1905), court protocols and church registers, the social context of farmer fishermen (and women) emerges. It turns out that fishers were either farmer landowners in their own right or the sons of peasant proprietors. On occasion, there were sons-in-law engaged in the fishing enterprises. It seems that holding land was a prerequisite of interior lake fishing; however, the whole spectrum of farmers, from small landowners with a few cows to wealthy farmers with a large number of cattle, was engaged in the enterprise. Some of the fishermen served as lay assessors and/or acted as rural tradesmen, and even held the much respected birkarla status. The birkarlar were given a commission of trust by the Sámi and coastal peasants, acting as agents within the framework of an extensive trading network (Bergman and Edlund 2016). In the Torne parish, nearly half of the birkarlar were engaged in interior fishing in 1553. The land register of 1543 includes records of all the farmstead masters, giving the size of their lands (arable and pasture land) and their taxable production of fish. Although figures include all fish produce in general without specifying any share of interior lake fishing, it is clear that there is no obvious relationship between land size and fishing capacity (Enequist 1935, 154–156). Accordingly, it is fair to assume that rights to interior lake fishing were independent of land area.

The proportion of fishermen in relation to the number of farmer managers (according to the bågamantal) in each of the fishing villages varied from 35% to 57%, based on the figures in the 1553 records (Table 2). Although numbers varied among villages, the general picture is that interior lake fishing was highly valued as part of the overall subsistence. In fact, in some villages, like for instance Lillpite in the Piteå parish, and Ruskula and Kuivakylä in the parish of Torneå, all, or nearly all, of the listed men in the bågamantalslängd, were engaged in interior lake fishing. Upon cross-checking the register of the bågamantal with the fishing register person by person, it turned out that 24% of the listed fishers were not included in the bågamantalslängd. An obvious explanation would be that these men were either the brothers, sons or sons-in-law of household managers and thus not registered by their names in the bågamantal, or simply not old and strong enough to bend a bow. The term “vone”, meaning adult, refers to persons older than 15 years (Huss 1902, 21–31). By cross-checking the register of tithes (measured in farm produce) and the bågalängd of 1553, it turned out that about 5% of fishermen not listed in the bågamantal nevertheless were paying tithes, meaning they were farmers in their own right.
The inconsistencies of taxation records have been briefly mentioned in previous research, however they have not been analyzed (Hederyd 1988, 10; Huss 1902, 26). In this study, we conclude that the majority of fishermen were landowning farmers, most likely accompanied by (younger) brothers, sons and daughters, sons-in-law and henchmen (Landskapshandlingar Västerbotten 1606, 3; Vahtola 1991, 224–226). Accordingly, the teams may well have included as many as 15–20 people, perhaps even more. It is noteworthy that on occasion women are listed among the taxed fishers. The 1553 record includes Karin enkia (i.e. Karin the widow) from Juoksengi in Torneå parish, Karin from Vistträsk in Piteå parish and Cicilia from Hjucken in the parish of Umeå. They were, for obvious reasons, not included in the bågamantal (see above), but were listed as paying tithes in the form of farming produce and catches of pike and perch from local lakes (Landskapshandlingar Västerbotten 1553). All three of them had replaced their deceased husbands as head of the household, and participated in the regular subsistence activities, including fishing. Most likely they had been joining fishing teams for a long period of time, acquiring the experience and skills necessary to perform fully the tasks involved.

**Administration of fish produce**

The significance of interior lake fishing needs to be considered in relation to other fishing enterprises, including fishing in local lakes (Sw. hemträsk), sea fishing and, not least, the extensive fishing for salmon. However, due to a lack of detailed information in the tax records from the studied period (i.e. 1553–1558), these figures are difficult to estimate. In addition, interior lake fishing most likely included catching species other than those that were taxed and there is reason to believe that fishing “off record” was quite extensive.

A rough calculation based on the 1553 figures shows that if the catch (i.e. the 90% not forming tax revenue) was evenly distributed among the farms/households in each of the villages involved in fishing, then each farm would have received c. 24 kg of dry fish on average (Table 4). There is huge variation between the parishes, with Torneå standing out as having the largest share per farm (67.8 kg in dry weight) and Piteå the smallest (9.7 kg). Schefferus ([1673] 1956, 381) mentions that fishers from the village of Granön, situated by the river Umeälven, were catching between 300 and 500 skål pund of pike, corresponding to 128–213 kg (Schefferus [1673] 1956, 461). However, these figures are not corroborated by the 1553 tax record from Umeå parish. The catch may well have been consumed by the households, but it could just as well have been turned over in trading.

**Table 4.** The number of villages and farms engaged in interior lake fishing in each of the parishes including the total amount of fish (dry weight) per parish and the index value of fish per farm if equally distributed among village farms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Fishing villages</th>
<th>No. of farms</th>
<th>Kg dry fish</th>
<th>Kg dry fish/farm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torneå</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>11,118</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>3841</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalix</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skellefteå</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>4142</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lövånger</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bygdéå</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luleå</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2201</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piteå</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>1685</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum/mean</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>25,191</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
activities. Customs accounts show that huge amounts of dried fish were delivered to Stockholm by birkarlar and rural tradesmen from the county of Västerbotten (Friberg 1983, 196–199, 227–228, 319–323; Berggren 1995, 86–92).

Old customary rights of village communities to fish in interior lakes imply a well-developed system of distribution of both catch and costs among the village members. Written records offer no direct information on how interior lake fishing was administered, but there is a line in a court protocol dating to 1615 that sheds light on the way that fishing (and hunting) rights may have been distributed. The birkarl Staffan Staffansson from Raumo in the Torneå parish was summoned to appear in court for his illegal trade with the Sámi. However, Staffansson claimed that he had only been fishing and hunting squirrel “i lott och lag med en lapp”, i.e. with a Sámi for part shares (Steckzén 1964, 444). In fact, the system of counting and distributing shares of a variety of objects was common practice among coastal and interior communities (Vahtola 1991, 273; Lundström 2004, 174; Bergman 2007, 11; Bergman and Edlund 2016, 62). Early fourteenth-century records show that the Church and nobility held shares in the profitable salmon fishing (Olofsson 1962, 140–150; Berggren 1995, 33). In this context, a system of distributing shares in interior lake fishing is logical. The incentive for those acquiring shares may have been some kind of provision and quite possibly the rights to make use of the infrastructure to fish for their own gain. Based on the fact that fishers from different villages used the same lakes, thus presupposing consent between villages, we suggest that agreements on the distribution of fishing shares were settled at the local thing.

The tradition of settling issues of common concern at joint sessions, thing, was practised among the coastal communities long before the introduction of the Swedish fiscal system. For instance, there is a protocol relating to a court session in Piteå in 1424 (Nordlander 1906, 222), which quite possibly may have occurred at the Tingsholmen site by the mouth of the river Piteälven. Finds of coins dating to the early fifteenth century corroborate the old age of the site (Huggert 1984; Klackenberg 1992, 156).

**Fishing seasons and tax records**

There are only a few notes recording the actual time of the year when interior lake fishing was undertaken. On 11 May 1596, a number of birkarlar from Torneå were summoned to inform the King’s representatives about the border between the Swedish and Russian fiscal domains. In doing so, the birkarlar claimed that their fellow villagers would have corroborated the information had they not been away fishing. A record dated 19 July 1588 mentions peasant fishermen from the parish of Kalix who had lost all of the catch when their boat (“forshåp”) capsized on their way home (Västerbottens handlingar 1588, Hederyd 1986, 103). Interior fishing during spring and early summer (from Easter until mid-summer) is indicated by a seventeenth-century record (Lundius [1674–1679] 1905, 33–34), and by the famous Carl von Linné on his journey to Swedish Lappland in 1732 (Linné [1732] 2003, 57). Although information about fishing seasons is sparse, it is clear that interior lake fishing took place during spring and early summer and that the catch was accounted for at the summer thing in July.

Interior lake fishing was also conducted in late autumn and winter. However, this produce was not accounted for in tax registers and has therefore not been recognized in earlier research. The historian Johannes Bureus, relating conditions during the late
sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, mentions that the fishing of sellak in Lake Gråträsk (Piteå parish) took place in late November (Bureus [1651] 1886, 227). Sellak is a local dialect term for small whitefish (Edlund 2010). Apparently, the fishing of sellak, including the fishing for roe, was carried out in the Torneå parish during spawning in October and November (Portin 1967, 21, 32, 224) and a court protocol from Torneå tells of an incident in connection with fishing expeditions in late autumn (Västerbotten handlingar 1606; see also Vahtola 1991, 224–225). These three records are significant since they give evidence of systematic fishing in interior lakes during two different seasons, one being taxed but not the other. In other words, autumn fishing was for household consumption only and probably included catching species not much sought after by the market, such as sellak. Some of the interior lakes in the Piteå parish are well-known for their richness in sellak (Ossian Olofsson notes, Nordiska Museet archive) and the fishing of sellak formed an integral and very important part of domestic economy until the early twentieth century. Archaeological excavations at a fishing site by Lake Vistträsk dating back to the thirteenth century (see below) in the Piteå parish corroborate the suggestion that there was extensive fishing of sellak (Liedgren 2013; Vretemark 2014a).

The documented fishing of sellak is in sharp contrast to the total lack of notes on small whitefish in the taxation records. This may well have been the case for other fish species as well, for example, other types of whitefish (Coregonus sp.), burbot (Lota lota), grayling (Thymallus thymallus) and salmon trout (Salmo trutta), that are still commonly caught for food.

Considering that interior lake fishing was conducted in addition to the fishing in local lakes, rivers and in the sea, it is clear that fishing formed a prominent part of coastal subsistence, indicating deep historical roots and well-developed exploitation strategies. The regular and very comprehensive fishing in interior lakes presupposed the division of labour with quite a large number of people spending most of the year away from home. The organization of domestic life among sixteenth-century coastal farmer communities is largely unknown. First, women are only occasionally mentioned in taxation records and only as widows taking over responsibility for the farm. Second, children are never mentioned in tax records and neither are servants (Sw. pigor och drängar). Fishing enterprises formed integral parts of the subsistence the whole year-round, either on village ground or away on the sea or in the interior, presupposing that harvesting, haymaking and the taking care of the cattle were managed by part of the families.

**Inter- and intra-cultural relations**

The western range of interior fishing expeditions presents a distinct pattern (Figure 8) and it is clear that the Lapland border of later times formed an area of contact between interior and coastal societies at an early stage. Without doubt, coastal farmers were fishing in lakes situated in Sámi territory, as indicated not only by the geographical position, but also by the fact that Sámi lake-names were used by the fishers. The systematic fishing, extending over centuries and including significant investments at the camps, suggests negotiations and agreements between the groups for mutual benefit. The introduction of cereal cultivation among interior Sámi communities (Bergman and Hörnberg 2015), as well as the many Iron Age and early Medieval objects of foreign provenience found in interior Sámi contexts corroborate the exchange of goods with the coastal population having the role of middlemen (Bergman 2007; Ramqvist 2014; Bergman and Edlund 2016). As
during later periods, furs and reindeer products (e.g. meat, shoes and gloves) may have been exchanged, for example, flour, butter and hemp (cf. Hoppe 1945). Had the interior population opposed the fishing enterprises, they could easily have burned down and destroyed the camps when the fishers left for home.

Fish records include notes on Sámi and coastal farmers fishing in the same lakes. For example, in 1553 there were both Sámi and farmers fishing in Lake Vaihkojärvi situated in the Torneå lappmark. In a similar way, there were a number of lakes used both by Sámi and fishers from the Torneå, Luleå, Piteå and Skellefteå parishes (Landskapshandlingar Västerbotten 1553, 1559, 1579; Vahtola 1991, 255), sometimes even joining the same team. In addition, farmers were fishing by themselves in lakes situated on Sámi ground and obviously with the consent of the local Sámi community. Fishers from the Torneå and Umeå parishes extended their fishing enterprises far west into Sámi territory (Figure 8), indicating relationships and agreements of mutual benefit between the parties. Paradoxically, the character of agreements comes forth in a district court session where farmers were accused of having violated them. In 1549, seven fishermen from the Torneå parish were fined for fishing on Sámi ground without permission from the Sámi “... hafvua hiort förfiiske inna Lappe råå uthann lappanes Låff och mine” (Landskapshandlingar Västerbotten 1549). First, there were obviously Sámi territories with well-defined borders. Second, the Sámi were acknowledged as having supremacy over their domain and fishers needed their approval. Third, rules and regulations were widely accepted, or else the Torneå farmers would not have been fined. In a similar way, fishers from the Luleå parish were extending their enterprises far to the west (Figure 8) and the fishing lakes were included in the tax registers of the Luleå parish.

However, there is an exception to the rule, and the 1559 tax register of Lule lappmark (i.e. the Lule Sámi district) includes farmer henchmen, or young men (“nogra bonda drengia”), fishing in Lake Vájgájávrre and a peasant man (“een almogha gubba”) in Lake Skabram. Neither the lakes nor the fishers are mentioned in any fish register from the Luleå parish during the period 1553–1559. The conclusion must be that they made use of taxed Sámi lakes and were thus subordinated to the Lule lappmark fiscal administration.

The systematic fishing in lakes within Sámi territory and on the border between coastal and interior communities implies indigenous long-established land-use strategies, far beyond the fiscal requisitioning of northern Sweden by the Swedish Crown. What are the archeological remains and how far back in time can interior lake fishing be traced?

**The archeological record**

In connection with archeological investigations of hearths situated east of the Lapland border, an excavation was carried out on a site by Lake Vistträsk, Älvsbyn parish (Figure 2). An oval hearth, measuring 1.2 × 0.75 m, turned out to contain more than 10,000 very small fragments of burned bones, mostly from fish. Although it was impossible to determine the species of most, the osteological analysis nevertheless identified perch, sellak, pike, whitefish and ide/bream/roach (unspecified). Vertebrae from perch were almost totally lacking, while skull and jaw bones were present, leading to the conclusion that perch was consumed elsewhere. The heads may either have been consumed at the site or left as waste. In contrast, bones from sellak represented all body parts, suggesting that sellak was eaten at the fishing site (Vretemark 2014a). Radiocarbon dates of bone
and charcoal confirm that the camp site was used during the early medieval period (642 ± 32 BP and 685 ± 30 BP, cal. AD 1280–1400 and 1260–1390, with lab-numbers Ua-48580 and Ua-48589, respectively). Lake Vistträsk is situated among lakes used by fishermen from the coastal villages of Piteå and during the sixteenth century some farmers had settled permanently by Vistträsk.

A second site, situated by Lake Åträsk in the parish of Piteå (Figure 2), proved to be yet another fishing site dating to the early medieval period. The site was excavated in 1966, focusing on what was regarded as a “cairn” – in other words a grave (Hjolman 1966). Charcoal and burned bones were found in a layer underneath the “cairn”, but no analyses were conducted. However, the stones were left in a pile beside the excavated area and upon visiting the site in 2010 we observed that the stones were all fire-cracked. This is totally inconsistent with known prehistoric burial practices in northern Sweden, but typical of hearths and other types of fireplace, like an eldpall (Sw.). Osteological analyses of the bone material revealed no human bones, but bones of fish, goat, reindeer, hare and also birds like black grouse and black-throated diver (Vretemark 2014b). Charcoal was dated to 821 ± 30 BP and 562 ± 30 BP, respectively, (cal. AD 1166–1266 and 1307–1427, with lab-numbers Ua-41110 and Ua-41109, respectively) and radiocarbon dated bone fragments (of sheep and reindeer) to 570 ± 30 BP and 540 ± 30 BP, respectively (cal. AD 1320–1350 and 1400–1420, with lab-numbers Beta-399683 and Beta-399682, respectively). Lake Åträsk was among the interior lakes used by farmers from the Lillpite village during the sixteenth century.

The osteological record from the Vistträsk and Åträsk sites exhibits a distinct pattern with respect to the fish material. In both cases, the heads of perch were (possibly) consumed and left at the sites as waste, while the rest of the fish was taken away. This corresponds to the traditional way of preparing perch by removing the head and the intestines, spreading out the body by putting wooden sticks through the sides, and finally hanging the fish to dry in the open air, sometimes under a simple roof (Olofsson 1937). This could only be done when there were no flies, preferably in late winter and early spring. Dried fish could be stored for long periods of time and was easy to transport. Magnus ([1555] 1982, 970) tells of dried fish being piled like firewood.

There were no remains of dwellings or storage buildings found at the excavated sites. However, the hearth at Vistträsk and the remains of the fireplace (most likely a so-called eldpall in Swedish) at Åträsk suggest either a dwelling of the Sámi goahtte type, or a so-called bastu (Sw.). These are both one-room dwellings, generally c. 4–5 × 3.5–4.5 m, with an opening in the roof to let out the smoke (Sundt 1867; Erixon 1947, 36–86; Talve 1960, 272–303; Liedgren and Bergman 2009; Liedgren, Östlund, and Josefsson 2009). The wooden constructions rot quite rapidly after being abandoned, leaving only the remains of hearths and fireplaces. There are many place names, mostly names of lakes, east of the Lapland border with the prefix bastu-, suggesting that these were common dwellings at fishing camps (see also Göthe 1929, 6). The sites at Vistträsk and Åträsk exhibit features and qualities related to interior lake fishing: the geographical location of the lakes in areas systematically used by farmer fishermen, the location of the sites close to the shore, the fireplaces typical of goahtte- and bastu-type dwellings, the huge amount of fish bones and finally the traditional preparation of perch. Thus, subsistence and land-use strategies including interior lake fishing can be traced back to at least AD 1200.
Conclusion

The acquisition of fishing rights by the Crown, Church and nobility in the early fourteenth century was obviously instigated by their awareness of the profitable northern trade with commodities such as furs and fish. Although salmon fishing initially may have played the most important role, other fish produce, such as dried perch and pike, was certainly much sought-after as well. Most likely, interior lake fishing included the surplus production of fish to be used in trade. Early systematic fishing in interior lakes is indicated by the archeological record, dating back at least to AD 1200. In addition, the establishment of permanent settlements at sites, previously the location of seasonal fishing camps, points to a process of landscape acquisition with deep historical roots.

However, during the course of the late sixteenth century, interior lake fishing ceased due to over-exploitation and increased tax rates (Göthe 1929, 5–8). The successively higher tax rate, changing from 1/15 to 1/9 (1558) and eventually to 1/5 of the catch (1561), suggests that fish productivity had fallen, thereby bringing about the increased rate. Estimations of the catch in relation to the size and productivity of each lake show that catches were close to, or indeed exceeded, the maximum productivity of the individual lakes (Enequist 1937, 26–27). In addition, there was probably a lack of manpower. A huge number of adult men were called up for military service in connection with the wars starting 1563 and continuing throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Finally, there was an increased focus on local production at the farms that may have added to the cessation of interior lake fishing (Göthe 1929, 4–7; Bylund 1956, 61–63).

On the basis of sixteenth-century fiscal records, the role and significance of interior lake fishing among coastal communities emerge. Fish produce was immense, including about 100,000 kg in fresh weight recorded each year, of which 90,000–95,000 kg remained part of the local economy. In addition, fishing was carried out in late autumn and early winter. However, the autumn produce was not subjected to taxation and was only for local consumption, possibly including fish species other than those that were taxed. Analyses of interior fishing from a landscape perspective reveal distinct spatial patterns. It is clear that less than half of the villages were engaged in interior lake fishing (Table 1 and Figure 3) and that each village was linked to a limited number of specific lakes, thereby producing a striking picture of land-use strategies (Figure 8).

We suggest this picture mirrors the economic and social organization among coastal communities. First, there was a division among coastal villages with respect to subsistence strategies; some were engaged in sea fishing (and hunting) in addition to farming, while others were involved in interior lake fishing (Figure 3). Second, it is evident that interior lakes fitted into village resource areas, long sanctioned by usage. Third, usufruct was collective and belonged to all village members. Probably, fishing shares and the commission to fish were distributed among all village members by joint decision. In addition, there seems to have been a very strict territorial division between coastal communities, marked by “corridors” totally devoid of (taxed) fishing activities (Figure 8). We argue that the administrative division into parishes during the early fourteenth century adjusted to indigenous land-use strategies and community territories based on well-established custom.

Although the map presented in Figure 8 exhibits a coherent and distinctive pattern, there are nevertheless anomalies with criss-crossing lines deviating from the general...
picture. This is only logical as the map reflects an ongoing process, rather than a static and invariable condition. For instance, the lines connecting the Roknäs village in the parish of Piteå, with the Vistträsk, Manjärvi and Muskus area (Manjärvi and Muskus are most likely Sámi names, however, including Finnish elements, Korhonen 2009, 207–211), and in turn with a number of lakes further north and west, illustrate how fishing camps turn into secondary villages forming the basis of fishing in yet another set of lakes (Figure 10). The Norsjö village in the Skellefteå parish is another example of secondary settlements being established at interior fishing camps, with archeological finds and a palynological record dating back to AD 500 (Josefsson et al. 2017). In addition, there are lines connecting villages with lakes situated outside the regular sphere of fishing lakes, possibly reflecting cases where individual fishermen moved from their home villages but still maintained their fishing rights. This would be in contrast to the postulated collective ownership of fishing rights and may indicate a process of increased privatization over time.

It is evident that interior lakes used by farmer–fishermen to a large part were situated in areas forming vital resource areas for interior communities. In other words, they were situated on Sámi grounds. Records mention lakes used by both Sámi and coastal farmers and that fishermen entered into agreements with the Sámi to obtain permission to fish on Sámi grounds The majority of the lakes used by farmer–fishermen are situated at a distance of c. 60–90 km away from the village settlements; however, there are exceptions to the rule. Fishers from the Torneå parish travelled far into Sámi territory, and the same is true for fishers from the Umeå area. The fishing in lakes Vájgájávrre, Sasskam, Skabrram and Burgávrre (all names are in Sámi) by farmers from the Heden village in Luleå parish represents the most spectacular example of extensive fishing routes, stretching far west of the regular fishing areas (Figure 8). Beyond doubt, these western clusters of fishing lakes could only be used by farmers with the consent of the local Sámi.

In a similar way, coastal fishers regularly made use of resources within Sámi management areas. The 1671 map covering Sámi taxation lands (Sw. lappskatteland) of interior Västerbotten made by the land surveyor Johan Persson Gedda (The National Archives

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**Figure 10.** Schematic outline of the settlement development in connection with interior lake fishing.
Many lakes used by coastal farmers during the sixteenth century were actually situated within the borders of Sámi taxation lands (see also Norstedt 2011). These were cultural landscapes used, managed, and named by Sámi. The huge number of fishing lakes listed by their names in Sámi, or with a first element in Sámi, means that coastal fishers were applying and internalizing the Sámi names (Figure 11). This is a fact with far-reaching implications since it indicates not only an understanding, but indeed the speaking of Sámi language among the coastal farmers, at least to some degree. Otherwise, naming in Swedish would certainly have occurred, making sense not only to the fishermen, but also to their fellow villagers. Considering the long fishing seasons, with fishermen staying at their fishing camps for months, perhaps even most of the year, it is by no means far-fetched to assume that interior Sámi and coastal fishers established social relations and ties of friendship. Iron Age and early Medieval land-use strategies in coastal northern Sweden, including cultivation, trading, hunting, fishing and reindeer herding, are all vital aspects to the understanding of the complex cultural processes, including assimilation and language processes as well as religious encounter, eventually conforming to a Swedish discourse. These issues are far from settled, calling for further analyses.

**Figure 11.** Map showing lakes with Sámi names, or first elements in Sámi, used by coastal fishermen from the Piteä and Skellefteå parishes (Pellijeff 1988, 72, 85–87; Berggren 1995, 67; Lundström 2004, 54–61; Korhonen 2009, 205–234).
Taken together, the geographical range of fishing enterprises within, or close to, Sámi management areas, the approval by interior Sámi of coastal fishermen fishing on Sámi grounds, and the linguistic understanding and internalization of Sámi among fishers point to the coastal and interior communities being tightly intertwined. In this context, an ethnically defined distinction between “us” and “them” may not have been relevant to the parties involved. In opposition to the proposal made by Broadbent (2010; see also a critique of Broadbent by Liedgren and Ramqvist 2012) that a coastal Sámi population was dislocated due to the establishment of Swedish agrarian settlements, we claim there is nothing in the archeological record, or in the earliest historical records, to support that one ethnic population was replaced by another. Spatial analyses have revealed a number of features that raise questions about the origin and socio-economic context of sixteenth-century administrative structures. The range of fishing enterprises marks a zone of close interaction binding together communities rather than reinforcing borders. This was an arena of social and economic exchange with roots far beyond the historical records. On the basis of the social, economic and land-use strategies among coastal communities displayed by the organization of interior lake fishing, we propose that coastal and interior communities should be perceived as two economic strategies representing indigenous Sámi pre-colonial land-use schemes.

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