

# Tracing of old settlements and place names in a Sea Sámi region<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The basis for this article is my work with an old land surveying document from Finnmark, in the north of Norway. The document is named *Finnmarken Sorenskriveri Landmaalerprotokol*, which in English would be *The Landsurveying protocol of the County of Finnmark*. The main objective for this presentation is to introduce some preliminary results of my work with the protocol and I will present parts of the process, as well as maps, figures and photos showing how the process turns out.

## About the region

Finnmark is the northernmost county of Norway. Finnmark was the last area that became part of the Norwegian territory. The border between the Norwegian and Swedish area was drawn in 1751 and the border between the Norwegian and Russian area was drawn in 1826. Before the closing of the borders, several nation states were interested in this area, that is for taxation purposes. Because of this, the (mainly Sámi) population of the area had to pay taxes to at least three different nation states in periods (Denmark/Norway, Sweden and Russia). Norway was a dependency (satellite state) of Denmark from 1537 to 1814. From 1814, Norway was in union with Sweden, until Norway was declared an independent nation state in 1905.

## About the Sámi people and the Sámi languages

The Sámi area covers parts of four different nation states, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. There are ten different Sámi languages: South Sámi, Ume Sámi, Pite Sámi, Lule Sámi, North Sámi, Inari Sámi, Skolt Sámi, Akkala Sámi, Kildin Sámi and Ter Sámi. The North Sámi language is the largest of these in number of speakers. The North Sámi language is spoken in the northern parts of Norway (in the counties of Finnmark and Troms) and in parts of northern Finland and Sweden. The Sea Sámi is a dialect of the North Sámi language and the Sea Sámi speakers traditionally lived in the coastal areas from Vesterålen, northwards and eastwards to the Fisher Peninsula. Today, the number of Sea Sámi speakers is low, and in many areas the language is endangered or even extinct. This is a result of the assimilation and norwegianization politics that

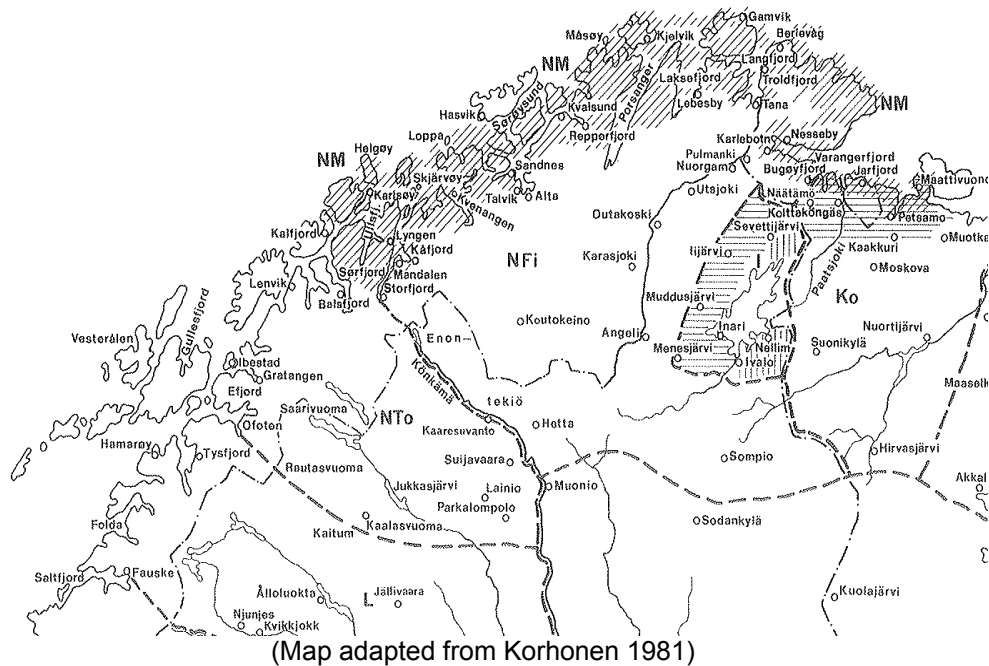
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<sup>1</sup> This short article is a revised version of a presentation given at the "Place names and identities in multicultural contexts"-symposium in Karasjok, Norway 17.-20.08.2006.

were led by different governments towards the Sámi people, in connection with missionary activities and for nation building purposes.

The following map (MAP 1) shows most of the Sámi area, with the Sea Sámi area shaded and marked with the letters NM.

**MAP 1: NORTHERN NORWAY WITH THE SEA SÁMI DIALECT AREA (NM).**



Traditionally, the Sea Sámi area went as far south as to Vesterålen, which can be seen as a group of islands at the left part of the map.

### **Finnmarken Sorenskriveri Landmaalerprotokol (FSL)**

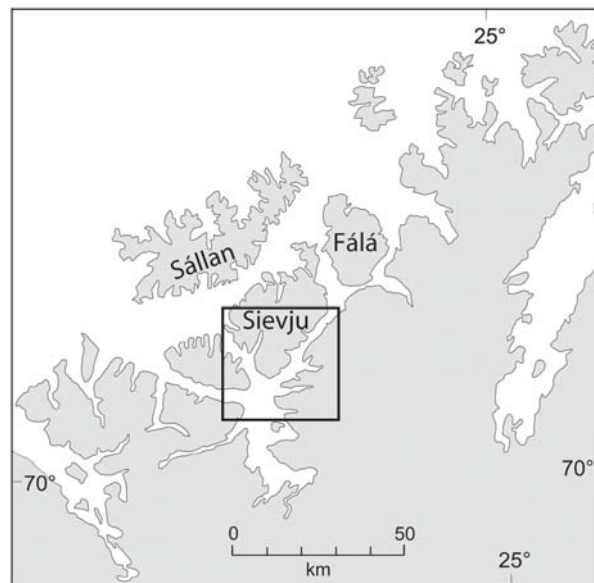
The document Finnmarken Sorenskriveri Landmaalerprotokol (FSL) is the first documentation of land measurement, purchasing and settlements in the county of Finnmark. This kind of land surveying was initiated much later in Finnmark than in other parts of Norway. The introduction page of the protocol is dated August 1778, but the text indicates that the different parts of the protocol are registered in the period from 1776 to 1845. At the time of the first registrations (1776) Norway was still a part of Denmark and the official language was Danish. Accordingly, the registrations of the FSL-document are done in Danish, or in a mix of the Norwegian and Danish languages.

The protocol is an interesting document in many aspects, mainly as a historical account of the settlements and the use of land in the area. The protocol is also a treasure when it comes to place names in general and especially as it is (one of) the oldest documents containing documentation of Sámi place names from this area.

The FSL-document contains data mostly from of the coastal areas of Finnmark, from Loppa<sup>2</sup> parish in the west, to Tana<sup>3</sup> parish in the east (both these names can be seen in MAP 1, above). There are large numbers of place names, especially settlement names and names of remote meadows belonging to each settlement. The registrations in the protocol are written in Norwegian and Danish and the place names are generally given in Norwegian. This concerns macrotoponyms in particular (villages, fjords, landmarks for sailing etc.), but also microtoponyms (“smaller” names, names of settlements).

In certain areas, though, most of the places or settlements are registered with Sámi names. This gives an indication about which areas along the coast may have had a mainly Sea Sámi population and which areas were dominated by a Norwegian-speaking majority in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Alta fjord area is very interesting in this respect. The map below (MAP 2) shows an overview of the Alta fjord area.

**MAP 2: THE ALTA FJORD AREA**



Map by Anja Kaunisjoja, University of Oulu, Finland.

I have concentrated my research on the documentation from this area, more specifically the villages on the eastern side of the Alta fjord and on the islands at the outlet of the Alta fjord. The area is marked with a square on MAP 2. This area also coincides with the main research area for my PhD. project<sup>4</sup>. In my PhD. project, I benefit from the protocol, both concerning historical linguistic information on the Sea Sámi dialect in the area at that time and on sociolinguistic information concerning the Sea Sámi population in the area. In the small villages in this area there are registered large numbers of Sea Sámi place names. So far, I have detected more than 400 Sea Sámi place names in the protocol registrations from this area.

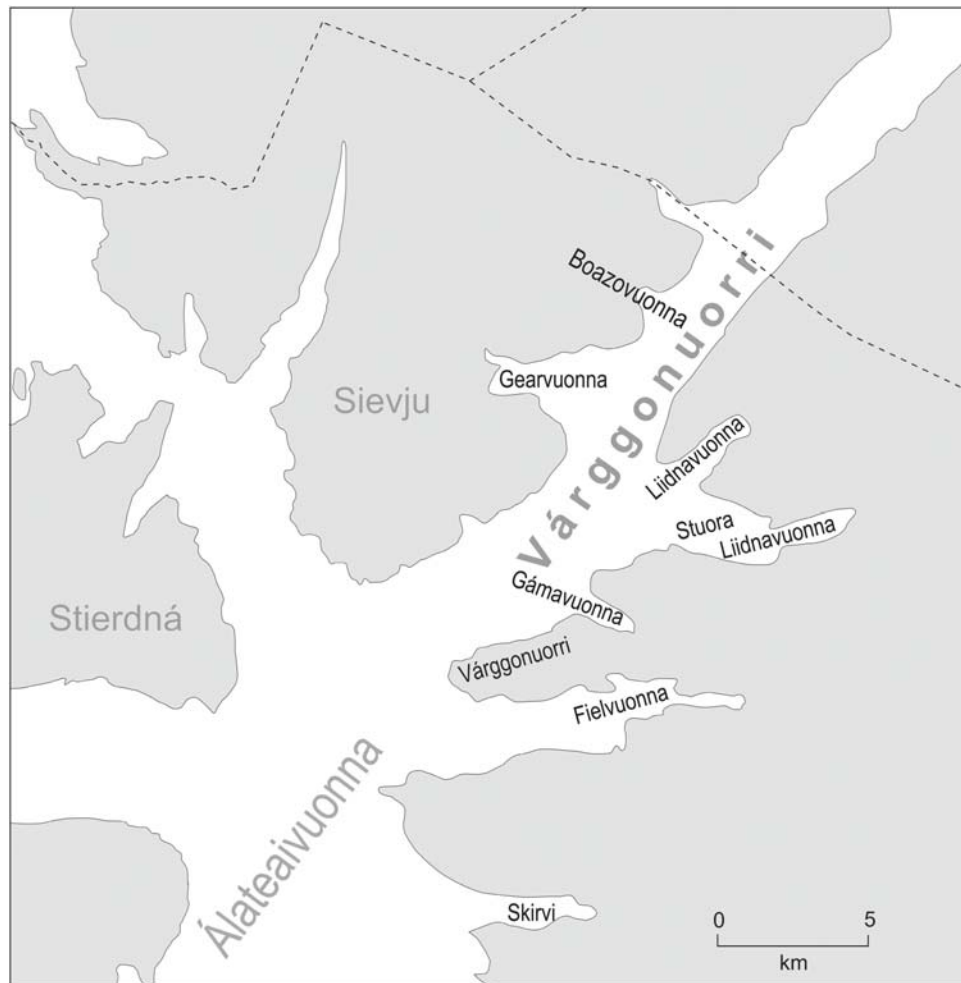
<sup>2</sup> The Sámi name of the parish is *Láhppi*, and the Norwegian name is *Loppa*. In the FSL, the name is registered *Loppens Sogn*.

<sup>3</sup> The Sámi name of the parish is *Deatnu*, and the Norwegian name is *Tana*. In the FSL, the name is registered *Tanens Sogn*

<sup>4</sup> My Ph.D-project is a phonological and dialectological investigation on the Sea Sámi dialect in the Altafjord area.

The area marked with a square on MAP 2, is shown more closely on the following map (MAP 3). The names of the fjords (*Boazovuonna*, *Gearvuonna*, *Liidnavuonna*, *Stuora Liidnavuonna*, *Gámavuonna*, *Fielvuonna*, *Skirvi*) coincide with the names of the villages, and are given in the Sea Sámi dialect. *Várggonuorri* is the strait between the mainland and the island Sievju.

**MAP 3: CLOSE-UP VIEW OF THE VILLAGES ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE ALTA FJORD**



Map by Anja Kaunisioja, University of Oulu, Finland.

I have found it very interesting to examine FSL from a place name historical perspective. When using the names for dialectal research, I already had to examine them linguistically and word semantically. This has been quite time consuming, as the protocol is written in old gothic handwriting and as the names are spelled “as they were heard” by the Norwegian or Danish ear of the land surveyor and lacking any norm for spelling Sámi words.

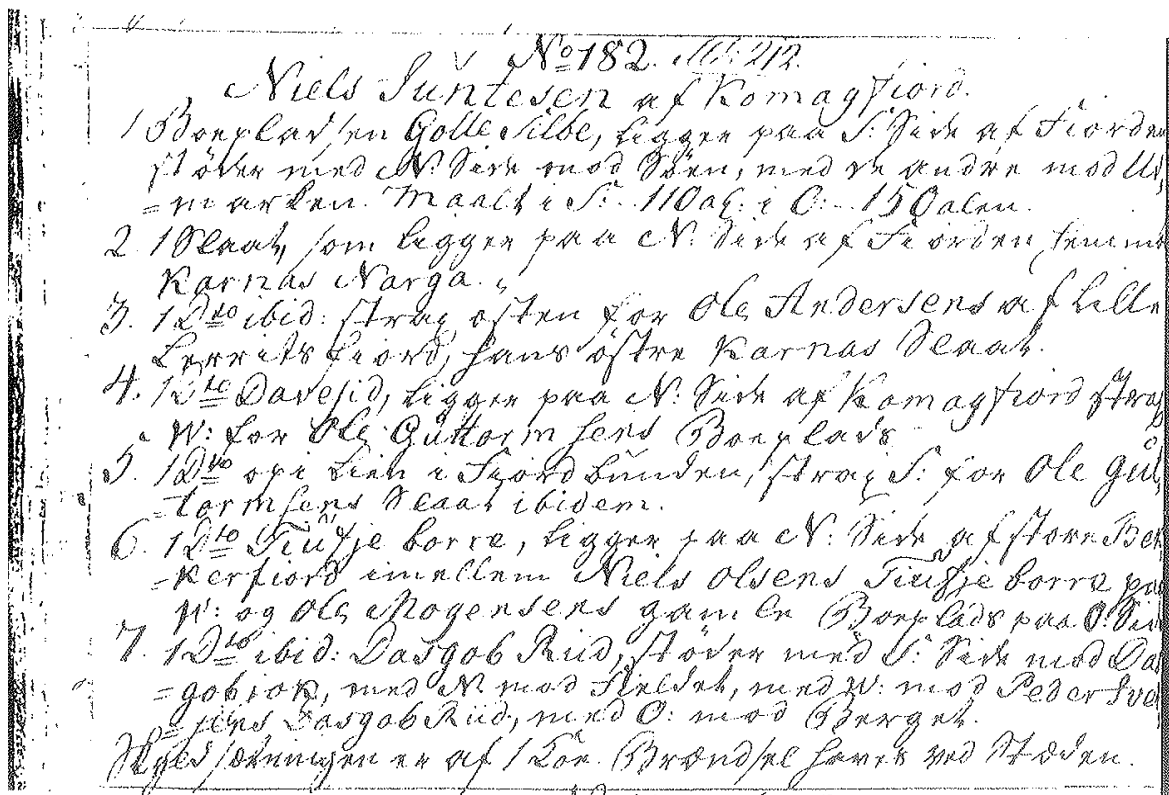
The examination of the FSL indicates a very rich Sea Sámi tradition for place naming, and it is interesting to see how the names give information that is on livelihood and on wildlife in the region at that time. I have also found that many of the Sea Sámi names are still in use in the area by people who no longer speak the Sámi language. I am also familiar with many of the names

myself because I grew up in the area (*Gámavuonna/Komagfjord*). This sparked the interest in trying to trace and identify the places and settlements registered in the protocol.

## The process of tracing old settlements

The tracing and identifying process consists of several steps. The first step is the transcription of the FSL-data from the old gothic style handwriting into current writing. At this point, I do not transfer anything into current spelling. You can see the record of farm no. 182 in the figures below, first the original version (FIGURE 1 A), and then in transcribed form (FIGURE 1 B). The title of this registration tells us that the owner of this farm is *Niels Juntesen*, and that he belonged to the village *Komagfjord*. (Cf. the original text: *Niels Juntesen af Komagfjord*).

FIGURE 1 A: RECORD NO. 182, NIELS JUNTESEN AF KOMAGFIORD, ORIGINAL FORM



Each record contains a numbered list of the different parts of the settlement. Number 1 gives us the name of the settlement (in this case: *Golle Silbe*), and a description of where it is located. The following parts, numbers 2-7 are meadows belonging to this settlement, also with a description of where they are located. Usually, the meadows were named, and such names are also given in the registration.

In the transcribed version of record no. 182 (see FIGURE 1 B), the Sámi place names are highlighted.

**FIGURE 1 B: RECORD NO. 182, NIELS JUNTESEN AF KOMAGFIORD, TRANSCRIBED FORM**

No. 182	
Niels Juntesen af Komagfiord	
1.	Boepladsen <b>Golle Silbe</b> , ligger paa S:side af fiorden, støter mod N:side mod Søen, mot W vender mod Udmarken. Maalt i S: 110 al., i O: 150 alen.
2.	1 Slaat som ligger paa N:side af fiorden henimod <b>Karnas Narga</b> .
3.	1 Dto. ibid: Strax Østen for Ole Andersens af Lille Lerritsfiord, hans østre <b>Karnas</b> slaat.
4.	1 Dto. <b>Davesid</b> , ligger paa N:side af Komagfiord strax W: for Ole Guttormsens Boeplads.
5.	1 Dto op i Lien i fiordbunden, strax S:for Ole Guttormsens slaat ibidem.
6.	1 Dto. <b>Tiufje borre</b> , ligger paa N:Side af Store Bekkerfiord imellem Niels Olsens <b>Tiufje borre</b> paa W: og Ole Mogensens gamle Boeplads paa O:Siide
7.	1 Dto. ibid: <b>Dasgob Riid</b> , støder mod S:Side mod <b>Dasgobjok</b> , mod N: mod fieldet, mod W mod Peder Svendsens <b>Dasgob Riid</b> , mod O: mod Berget. Skyldsætningen er af 1 Qoe. Brændsel haves ved ...

The second step is the linguistic and word semantic analysis of the place names. The names are spelled “as they were heard” by the Norwegian land surveyor and even if the land surveyor would have been familiar with the Sámi language, there was no official norm for spelling Sámi words at that time.

We will now take a closer look at the names from protocol records no. 181 and 182. The Sámi place names in these registrations are:

FIGURE 2: WORD SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE NAMES IN RECORD NO. 181 AND 182

Settlements	Meadows/ other names	Current spelling, North Sámi	Word semantic, English
181: Nordmands sete		Nordmanns/sete	The Norwegian's homeplace
	Vodnagedde	Vuotna/gieddi	Fjord/meadow
	Dasgob Riid	Dáža/goh/riidi	Norwegian/bay/grassy mountain side
	Nub Dasgob Riid	Nubbi Dážagohriidi	Second + Norwegian/bay/ grassy mountain side
	Dasgobbi	Dáža/gohppi	Norwegian/(rounded) bay
	Herkje Riid	Hearge/riidi	Reindeer/grassy mountain side
182: Golle Silbe		Golle-silba, "Gullasølvby"	Gold/silver
	Karnas Narga	Garnáš/njárga	Garnáš/cape
	Davesid	Davve/siida	Northern/homeplace
	Tiufje borre	Čukča/borri (Čufčaborri)	Capercaillie/ridge
	Dasgob Riid	Dáža/goh/riidi	Norwegian/bay/grassy mountain side
	Dasgob Jok	Dáža/goh/johka	Norwegian/(rounded) bay/ stream

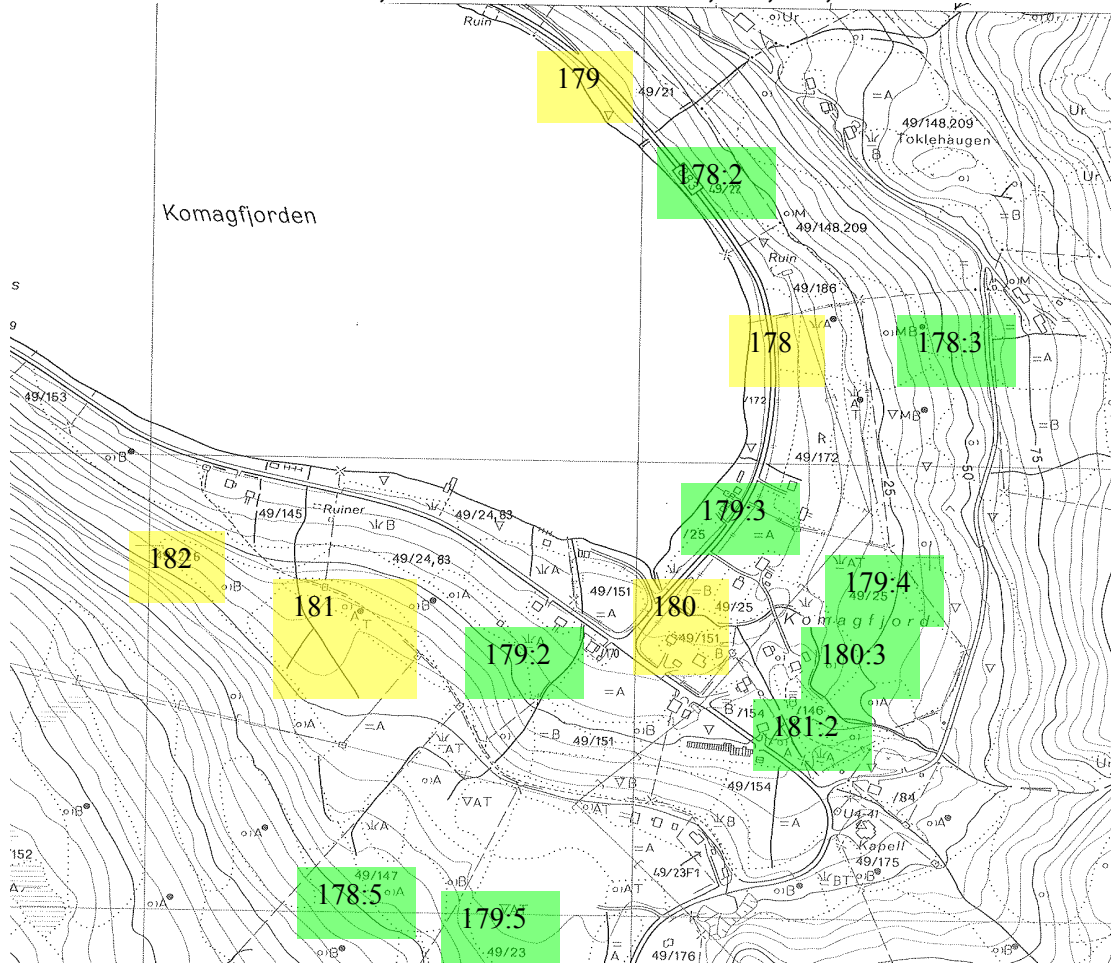
The place name *Nordmands sete* is the only Norwegian place name registered in the village *Gámavuonna/Komagfjord* at this time. Local informants tell that this settlement belonged to the only ethnic Norwegian in the village at this time. It is worth noticing that even though this settlement was registered in Norwegian, the belonging meadows were all registered with Sámi names.

There were never any drawn maps to go with the old protocol. Therefore, the third step is the examination of data concerning the location of the settlements. Here I use the explanations as they are given in the FSL and comparing this information to current local knowledge on earlier settlements in the area. Then I try to place the settlements and meadows on current maps. For this presentation, I have examined the records of the settlements five settlements in *Gámavuonna/Komagfjord*. These are settlement records numbered 178, 179, 180, 181 and 182. The settlements are

- 178 Davvesiida (northern/homeplace)
- 179 Áitegieddi (storehouse/meadow)
- 180 Gámavuonbahta (head of the fjord *Gámavuotna/Komagfjord*)
- 181 Nordmannssete (The Norwegian's homeplace)
- 182 Golle-silba (gold-silver, from a small stream with the mineral mica)

The settlements are placed on the following large-scale eco-map.

**MAP 4: KOMAGFJORD, WITH SETTLEMENTS NO. 178, 179, 180, 181 AND 182.**



**Eco-map, Fylkeskartkontoret i Finnmark (1981)**

The yellow squares (182, 181, 180, 178 and 179) mark the settlements and the difference in size of the squares indicates differences in the size of the settlements. The green squares mark some of the meadows belonging to the settlements. The meadows are numbered according to the registration in the protocol (i.e. 178:5 is meadow no. 5 at settlement no. 178). There were more meadows belonging to these settlements, but the other meadows are located elsewhere, outside the boundaries of this map.

In order to visualize the area, I have also added current photos to point out where the farms were at the time of registration in 1778.

**PHOTO 1: SETTLEMENT NO. 178 AND 179, MEADOWS BELONGING TO 178, 179, 180 AND 181**



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The location of settlement no. 179 Áitegieddi can be seen at the lower left corner of the photo (red circle). The location of settlement no. 178 Davvesiida can be seen at the lower edge centre of the photo (yellow circle). Between these and to the right of 178, there were meadows, as well as further up in the hillside.

**PHOTO 2: SETTLEMENTS NO. 180, 181 AND 182**



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In the low edge centre of the photo we can see where the settlement no. 180 Gámavuonbahta was located (red circle). To the right of this, we have no. 181 Nordmannssete (yellow circle), and to the far right edge we have no. 182 Golle-silba (white circle).

As we can see, there are still farms and homes at approximately the same locations as at the time of registration in FSL.

## Conclusion

As mentioned earlier in the article, this place names research is connected to the research that I am doing for my Ph.D thesis. The main subjects for my thesis are Sea Sámi dialects and the phonology of these dialects. Meeting with local informants, talking to them and doing recordings are important parts of the dialectological and phonological research. Of course, this also means sharing their stories and their memories and learning more about local history. My experience is that local people generally are very interested in local history and in place names, and that it is easy to get in touch with people when asking about these matters.

The Sea Sámi culture and language have been very much hidden and silenced for several decades and I think that it is time for the language and the names to be heard and seen again. One way of doing this is sharing the stories and memories by publishing local information in different ways.

The stories and memories of my local informants coincide very much with those of my own family members and my work on Sea Sámi place names is also built on a strong interest in the culture and history of the area and on my personal need for tracing the history of my own family. I am very lucky to share this interest with my father and am very grateful to him for taking part in this research and for sharing his knowledge with me.

As a conclusion, I would like to give compliments to my father Arne Henriksen for sharing his knowledge of place names and earlier settlements in the area and to my brother Ole Henrik Henriksen for the photos used in this presentation. I would also like to give compliments to former place name secretary, Dr. Kaisa Rautio Helander, for bringing the FSL-protocol to my attention and for all the advice she has given me throughout the work with Sea Sámi place names.

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KORHONEN, MIKKO (1981): *Johdatus lapin kielen historiaan*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, Helsinki.  
MAP 2 AND 3: Anja Kaunisoja, University of Oulu, Finland  
PHOTOS: Ole Henrik Henriksen