

Introduction

Sophus Tromholt's photographs are my favourite amongst the pictures that I have coloured. They have a brilliant quality, even after more than 135 years. Tromholt also photographed with a well-rounded sense for composition, which you notice especially well in his portrait work. The importance of these pictures is a unique combination of culture and history in a photograph-documentary that, as a result, was recorded in the UNESCO's register of The World's documentary heritage.

This is the reason why we chose these pictures. Svein Solheim and I collected the old images from Kautokeino and Sami land together, in order to plan and realize an exhibition during the winter of 2017/2018. During the exhibition, it came to mind that more people should be able to see these pictures. At that moment, the beginning of this book was born.

This book has a heavy emphasis on the visual aspect, where the coloured-in pictures are the centrepiece. Nevertheless, I have noted down short descriptions and names of those who have been photographed. At least for those who have been identified. Hopefully, it will give the reader some answers to the questions that occur whilst looking at pictures: "Who are they? What are they doing?" Pictures usually gain a deeper meaning when the stories and background of that image are known. The quotes that have been used in connection to the photographs are from Tromholt's own book: *Under Nordlysets Straaler: Skildringer fra Lappernes Land*, published in Danish in Copenhagen in 1885. I have diligently supplemented a page number to each text, so that the relevant and original quotes



Per Ivar Somby, self-portrait. The background of the picture of a dry-plate camera, which is the type of camera Sophus Tromholt used.

can be found. Luckily, Tromholt was good at writing and he wrote freely. Through his writing, he was without prejudice – and entertaining – about the people he met. However, one must keep the contemporary views towards the Sami in mind. Through these preconceived ideas, Tromholt's view of the Sami was also coloured. Yet, he was amongst those who showed respect and formed friendships with the Sami in Kautokeino.

By giving you a piece of the history that is presented, I hope to stimulate your curiosity to look up more information about who is portrayed. You can, without a doubt, find more information about these people in the public registries and records, as well as at Tromholt's records. I have taken a selection of photographs, that I think represent his best work. Most of the pictures were, of course, from Kautokeino,

where Tromholt spent most of his time when he was in Finnmark. But I also included some of the pictures when he travelled around in the coastal Sami areas.

In this book, most pictures are placed in chronological order, as Tromholt travelled from the late summer of 1882 until the spring the year after. In this way, I was able to place the photos in the same way, in their natural order. All the names are written the same way Tromholt penned them, including the spelling. Many of the family names written today, were not written the same way in Tromholt's time. The female names are - also just like Tromholt notes it down - their maiden names – before they had taken their husband's name after marriage.

The colouring process

Throughout my entire life I have known about old photographs of the Sami. I have seen the pictures in books, postal cards and as a picture on the wall. Eventually, the pictures were also made available on the internet. When I rediscovered the pictures of Tromholt some years ago, I got a better understanding about the quality of his photographs and became very impressed. The pictures are great to look at. When taking into consideration that the pictures were taken a very long time ago, in the early age of photography, then these are exceptional and well-composed portraits with a technical quality that was consistently and amazingly sharp. What was equally remarkable to me, was how the pictures were composed: with well-balanced and graceful compositions of people in groups. The stylish photographs that were taken, almost look like paintings. You get the impression, when seeing these people through the lens of the camera, that these people wanted to be photographed. However, a grey picture with weak contrast can

sometimes be demotivating to look at, as the people behind those grey masks can feel distant. I wished to see the pictures in colour.

Throughout the years, I have seen many black and white pictures that were hand-coloured. Frequently, the colours that were used were harsh and often without knowledge about the local, conventional clothing of that time. This overly-vibrant colour pallet did not compare to how I envisioned Tromholt's photographs. At that time, I found a photograph of the American president Lincoln on the internet. The colouring was done in a very natural and authentic way. The picture looked like it was originally taken with colour photography. It was coloured in digitally, and I realized that digital colouring was the right way to colour in the photographs. It gave me a better way to control the outcome by changing the colour again and again until I was content. I had already used Photoshop to edit pictures, and therefore had some experience that allowed me to start colouring in the black and white images. My first colouring attempt did not have the result I had hoped for, but I was relatively happy with the result, and it gave me the inspiration to continue to try.

With time I learned to colour through trial and error, but also with a lot of help through instructional films on Youtube and through sporadic contact with other colouring artists around the world who shared their knowledge. The learning process was long. Along the way I tried different techniques that eventually made the pictures look convincing. Simultaneously, I learned about the technical limits of the cameras that were used, which resulted numerous errors on the pictures. I took those into consideration when I was colouring. The images must be treated with the right choice of tone density setting and retouching to eliminate the visual static, lines

and old spots that are on the original photograph, before the colouring process can even begin.

It became imperative for me to read books and old articles, visit museums and look on the internet to get more knowledge about the clothes of this era and to find out which colours were normally used in them. That does not mean that it is my goal to try to document historical facts about the clothing that I coloured in, I believe that to be an impossible project. But I aspired to portray the images with the right colours, or at least get as close as possible to them. I interpret the grey toned pictures to what I assume must have been the right colours. The most important thing for me is that the pictures look as genuine and natural as possible. It is a great idea to go to local sources for the best possible result, and I have also learned a lot about the Sami clothing style throughout history. Good and constructive input from those who have historical insight in the authentic colours of old traditional clothing and patterns also proved to be priceless. I am very grateful for all the input I got from those who have seen my pictures and gave their honest thoughts on my choice of colour.

What is it that drives me to do this? Personally, the biggest drive was to present these pictures in colour because I felt a connection with something of a distant and pale past, of which we don't really know that much. Initially, I really wanted to know and feel a connection to my own ancestors. Many of the photographs in this book are my ancestors. Clemet Gundersen; Nils Andersen Sara, Brita Olsdatter Nango and Johannes Isaksen Hætta. Many of the others that have been portrayed, are also close relatives of them. But afterwards it became a great joy to also present other people. To bring them back to life and to make them appear as heartfelt individuals that we would like to meet today.

These meetings never cease to fascinate me, and it pleases me to hear that others, whom have also seen these pictures, feel the same way. At the same time, I learned more about my family's history and gotten a deeper relationship with my ancestors and their history. I have been fortunate to meet many enthusiasts throughout the making this book. I thank all those who were helpful and eager to help me with everything. A big thank you to:

Svein Solheim, who saw potential in exhibiting the pictures in a big format, so that I could realise that to print them on paper for a wall exhibition and not only on a digital screen, did the pictures justice.

Kira Moss, the author of Tromholt's biography. She shared with me both her deep knowledge about Tromholt, and her extensive knowledge about writing a book. Inga Hermansen Hætta for her knowledge about historical clothing in Kautokeino. Her comments and descriptions were a guideline for me when I was started colouring.

A special thank you goes to the photograph collection of the university library in Bergen and the university librarian Marthe Tolnes Fjellestad. They preserved the original glass plates of Sophus Tromholt's photographs and made these pictures available in such a high resolution, that it truly does the photograph justice. Last but not least, I thank a patient family that let me continue undisturbed for numerous hours. Of course, there are even more people to thank. There were many helping hands and heads that helped me to lift the pictures up and put them on display: Thank you all!

Per Ivar Somby

Sophus Tromholt – Northern lights and his presence in Kautokeino 1882-83

By Kira Moss, Master of Arts in Modern Culture and Cultural Communication.

During Easter in 1883, a Danish school teacher who was also a northern lights researcher, bent underneath a black cloth behind a camera in an improvised studio in the interior county of Finnmark. The northern lights researcher captured portraits of individuals of the Sami population. This northern lights researcher was called Sophus Tromholt. The most remarkable thing about Tromholt's portraits from 1883 is the radiance of the portrayed. They are comfortable with Sophus Tromholt and with the camera. These people express themselves as strong personalities, who look at us from 135 years divide.

A lifelong fascination of the northern lights

Sophus Peter Tromholt was born in Denmark at the border of Germany in 1852. His father was a customs officer, who had an unrelenting interest in the northern lights. He would bring his son with him when he was looking for the phenomena. Unhindered by today's lights pollution, which ruins the dark cover of night, the northern lights were a phenomenon that you could often see over Southern Denmark, though more blurry and white or red than in the Arctic sky. From his early childhood and the rest of his life, Sophus Tromholt would hunt the northern lights. As a school teacher Tromholt moved to Bergen and worked there.



Sophus Tromholt. Picture taken by:
Emil Tromholt Owner:
The Royal Danish Library Copenhagen.

He also spent time looking for the northern lights, every other hour throughout the night - for several years with unwavering persistence. In Bergen, he created an impressive network of northern lights observers. With their help observing the same northern lights at the same time at different locations, he was able to suggest that the northern lights occur approximately 100 km above the earth.

The height of the northern lights led Tromholt to Kautokeino

In the 1880's no one was yet able to explain the nature of the northern lights. However, all agreed that one important question in need of an explanation was to determine how far above the earth the northern lights occurred. Did it go all the way down to the ground? Was it related to the clouds, or was it a phenomenon that happened outside of earth's atmosphere?

During the first international polar year in 1882-1883, the countries around the North Pole set up many observation stations in the arctic. One of the purposes was to observe the northern lights.

The Norwegian polar station was located in Bossekop/Alta. However, Sophus did not participate at this station. Even though he had already made himself known as a northern lights researcher at that time. He did not participate either at the Norwegian or Danish stations. Nevertheless, this didn't prevent him from participating in the big network of observers. He quit his teaching job and established his own station in Kautokeino. He chose Kautokeino due to its position. The station in Kautokeino was about 100 km south from the Norwegian polar station in Bossekop/Alta. The distance and location were perfect for determining the northern lights' altitude when collaborating with the Norwegian station.

Tromholt endured many nights of cold fingers, frozen beard and ice-covered glasses. Initially he observed alone, but he soon got help from people in Kautokeino.

The best photographic equipment

In Tromholt's time, the most reliable method of measuring the altitude of northern lights was to find the position and the angle to the horizon from two different locations simultaneously at the same time. In the early 20th century, photography was in this way used to perform countless measurements and the values confirmed quiet consistently Tromholt's results. Tromholt saw the potential of photography as early as in 1882.

When he arrived in Kautokeino in 1882 he therefore brought with him state-of-the-art photographic equipment, hoping to capture the fleeting northern lights. Tromholt didn't manage to take a picture of the northern lights when he was in Kautokeino. The photographic plates were not yet sensitive enough. Instead, he used the precious equipment to take pictures of the people and the environment. That's why the portraits from Kautokeino are preserved with such an unusual high quality right up to the present day.

Among Sami friends

As a scientist, Tromholt was exceptionally detailed and precise in his observations, and he met the people of Kautokeino with an open mind in the same manner. Amongst others, he brought with him a big kite, fireworks and his big black dog, which in the beginning chased the reindeers. Tromholt's visit to Kautokeino did not go unnoticed, and even until this day, families still reminisce about the orally passed memory of his visit.

The Sami of Kautokeino had previously been photographed by scientific expeditions passing through. A few of these pictures show portraits and names, but they were mainly taken to point out the peculiarities of everyday life of the Sami and last, but not least, the characteristics of their race. People were depicted from both the front and in profile, with the addition of detailed records of the cranium and their anatomical proportions. It was their race and uncivilized way of living that the photographers wanted to display, not the people. Tromholt had also, given the spirit of his time, been given the assignment to provide craniums to the Bergen museum. Therefore, he dug up some skeletons

from the old cemetery. He had considerable qualms about what he had been asked to do. In the original travel letters, that he regularly wrote and sent southwards to the newspaper Morgenbladet, it is clear that Tromholt gradually became more integrated into Kautokeino's society. He had some knowledge of the Sami language and he referred to many of the people there as his friends. Among the first photographs of the autumn in 1882, is a classic motif of for instance a Sami family. As far as we know Sophus Tromholt did not take any pictures with race-research in mind. This might be a result of a combination of his own open-mindedness and positive attitude and that Tromholt resided in Kautokeino for an extended period due to the northern lights, contrary to the travel-through scientific expeditions. He experienced more than the Sami stereotypes and saw the Sami people as unique people with strong personalities. His self-portrait in Sami clothes published not only in Nature but also in other numerous magazines all over Europe, was in this context a strong statement.

Sophus Tromholt never returned to Finnmark. He died at a lung sanatorium in Germany at age 43. However, in all the years after his stay among the Sami, he praised the Sami way of life and mentality. Today, the photographs of the people of this culture, that Tromholt held in high regard, are as by the flick of a wand, brimming vibrant with colour. We feel the presence of the people in the photographs even stronger. I am sure that Sophus Tromholt would praise this "magic".

Further reading:

Sophus Tromholt. *Under Nordlysets Straaler. Skildringer fra Lappernes Land*. Gyldendalske Boghandels forlag, Copenhagen, 1885.

Kira Moss & Peter Staimomg: *Sophus Tromholt. Skæbnen og Nordlyset er jo lige uransagelige*. Publisher Epsilon, Copenhagen, 2012

Kira Moss and Peter Stauning: "Sophus Peter Tromholt: an outstanding pioneer in auroral research", *History of Geophysics and Space Sciences*, march 2012.

1882 čakča

Tromholt boahdá Finnmárkui

Maŋŋil go oanehaš lei orustan Álaheajus, de vulggii Sophus Tromholt Guovdageainnu guvlui fárrolaga singuin geat fievrridedje su rusttegiid ja Guovdageainnu leansmánniin. Mátkkoštettiin čuovvuledje sin golbma sápmelačča.

Tromholt čálii:

«Soai leaba boastasápmelaččat, geat leigga guodđán Bossogobi beaivvi ovdal min, ja geat guoddi-ba dan lossa boastalávkkka, mii juohke njealljenuppelogát beaivvi buktá oddásiid stuora máilmmis Guovdageainnu oktonasvuhtii» (s. 63).

Okta boastaolbmáin lei **Johannes Abrahamsen Motka**. Su gohčodedje dábaláččat «Josazin». Son lei dávjá oahpisteaddjin Tromholta ollu unna mátkkážiin Guovdageainnu siskkobealde čuovvovaš dálvvi. «Rehálaš ja oskkáldas siellu», lei Tromholta govvidus «Josazis».

Čuovvovaš portreahttagovva Motkas lea govvejuvvon 1883 gidđadálvvi Guovdageainnus.

Høsten 1882

Tromholt kommer til Finnmark

Etter et kortere opphold i Alta, dro Sophus Tromholt mot Kautokeino sammen med de som fraktet utstyret hans, samt lensmannen i Kautokeino. Underveis fikk de reisefølge med tre sameer.

Tromholt skrev:

«De to er Postlapperne, der havde forladt Bossekop en Dag før os, og som bærer den tunge Postsæk, der hver fjortende Dag bringer Nyhederne fra den store Verden til Koutokæinos Ensomhed» (s. 63).

Den ene av postmennene var **Johannes Abrahamsen Motka**. Han ble til daglig bare kalt «Lille Jossa». Han var ofte med som ledsager for Tromholt under hans mange små utflukter i Kautokeino den kommende vinteren. «*En ærlig og trofast sjel*», var Tromholts karakteristikk av «Lille Jossa».

Det følgende portrettbildet av Motka er fotografert på senvinteren i Kautokeino i 1883.

The autumn of 1882

Tromholt comes to Finnmark

After a short stay in Alta, Sophus Tromholt travelled to Kautokeino, together with those who transport his equipment, as well as the Sheriff of Kautokeino. Whilst travelling, the travelling party were joined by three Sami.

Tromholt wrote:

“These two are Post carriers, they left Bossekop a day before us and they are carrying heavy mailsacks. Every fourteen days they bring news from the wide world to the solitude of Kautokeino” (p. 63).

One of the postmen was Johannes Abrahamsen Motka. His everyday nickname was “Little Jossa”. He was often a guide when Tromholt undertook one of his many small expeditions in Kautokeino during the following winter. “*An honest and dependable soul*” was Tromholt’s description of “Little Jossa”.

The following portrait is of Motka. It was taken during the late winter of 1883 in Kautokeino.



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Johannes Abrahamsen Motka [27]



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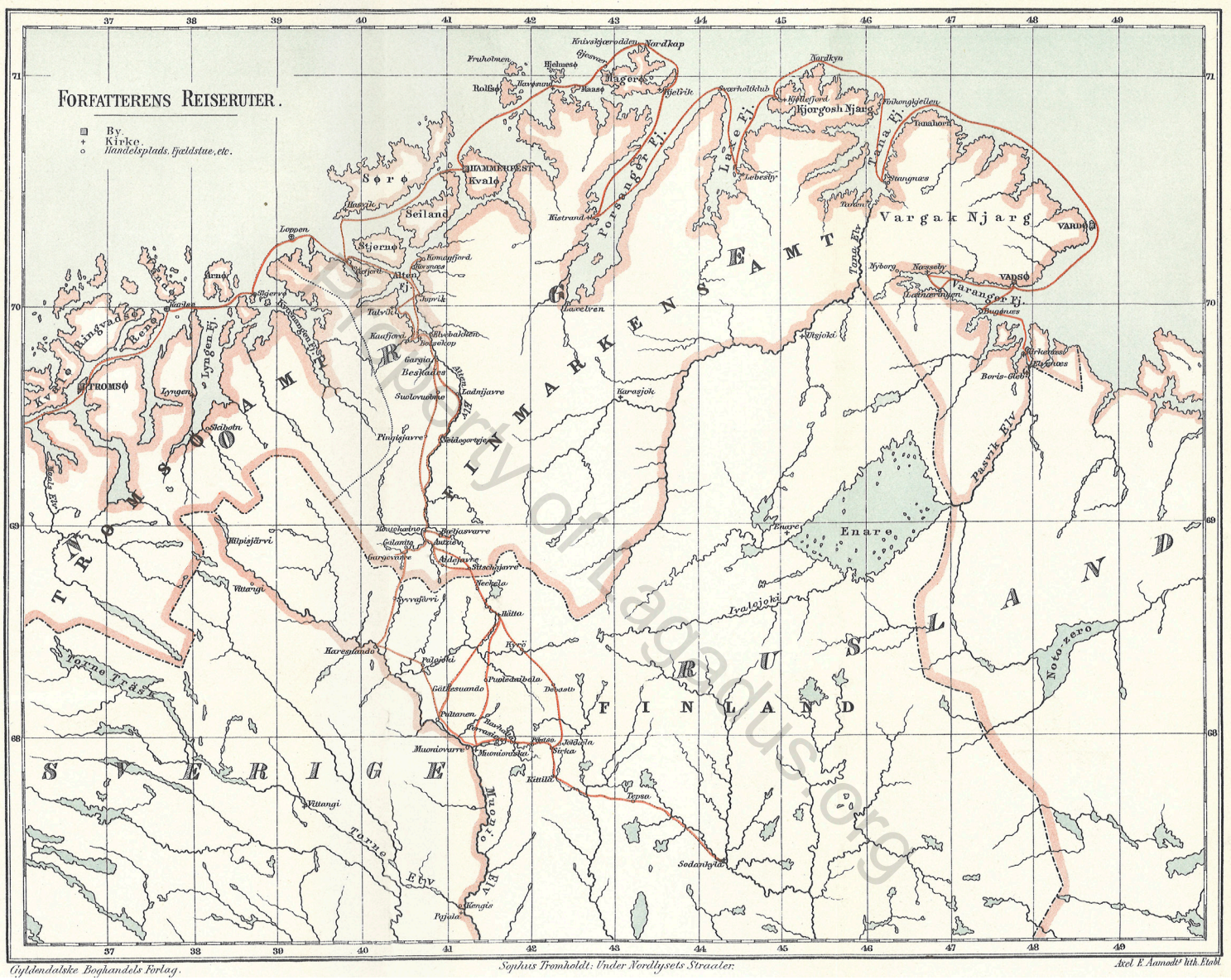
Sophus Tromholt, Kautokeino [31]



Johannes Mathisen Hætta [33]



[35]



Tromholt mátkkošteapmi 1882/1883. • Tromholts reiserute i 1882/1883

• Tromholt's itinerary in 1882/1883.

(Under Nordlysets Straaler: Skildringer fra Lappernes Land, København 1885)