

Halfway to Cathay

The third book of the Dutch traveller, explorer, merchant, writer and spy, Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563–1611), was published in 1601 under the title: *The voyage of Jan Huygen van Linschoten, or his ship-journey northwards, along the coasts of Norway, the Northern Cape, Lapland, Finland, Russia, the White Sea, the Candenus, Swetenus, Pechora, etc., through the Nassau Strait and beyond the Ob River. In which is very usefully described and illustrated what happened day by day on the said route. With pictures of coasts, points, countries, high places, directions and routes, and many other interesting things: as seen and realistically described by the author with his own eyes. In 1594 and 1595.* Van Linschoten's voyage was not intended to explore the Finno-Ugric peoples of northern Russia or Siberia. He had little or no interest in languages, folk customs, costumes and other ethnographic data. The Dutch trader set out to find the north-eastern gateway to Asia and, by exploring this alternative and hitherto unknown route, also to open the way for maritime trade between the legendary Cathay and the Netherlands. Van Linschoten's encounters with Laplanders, Finns and Samoyeds on the northern coast of Russia were a side story for him, but his description is a welcome addition to 21st century Finno-Ugric studies. In this paper, I present Van Linschoten's description of Samoyeds, Finns and Lapps (Saami people).

Keywords: *Jan Huygen van Linschoten, Dutch explorers in the 16th century, Samoyeds, Finns, Saami people (Lapps)*

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