

Fridjof Nansen & the hunters from Kangeq



*by
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Now we turn the clock back to 1889. At that time, large parts of Greenland was still not been mapped out, and many expeditions from different countries were sent to the north to discover what kind of minerals and other values the world's largest island was hidden.

From childhood I was stuffed with books and articles about these so-called heroes who under inhumane conditions forged ahead in snow and ice masses. Here they met the Inuits who might have shrugged their shoulders watching these helpless strangers. The life in this harsh land was the only life they knew. Although the Inuits helped the strangers with their plan, it was not them who were singled out as heroes. They have long been forgotten in history.

Many of the heroes turned out to be villains. They treated the indigenous poor, and several also tried to cheat to fame by claiming that they had reached the North Pole or made other achievements.

One of these heroes was the Norwegian Fridjof Nansen. He is one of the few

who understood the Inuits and positively described the Inuit skills and their adapting to life in the Arctic climate. One of Nansen's legacies was as the first to cross the ice sheet from east to west on skis. Fridjof Nansen succeeded in this venture in 1889.

Prior to this, other in various ways attempted the same trip but without success. Fridjof Nansen could thus also demonstrate that there was not, as some scientists had suspected, was ice-free areas in the interior of the Greenlandic ice sheet.

After crossing the ice sheet Nansen reached to Nuuk. Nansen could not live without outdoor life, and to "breathe fresh sea air" he went out to Kangeq. Nansen stayed three weeks in the settlement, and here he got insight into the daily life of the Inuits and especially their hunting and fishing practices.

Fridtjof Nansen participated in the hunting in kayak, and here he learned how the hunters in these small flimsy kayaks mastered an effective hunting,

for example eiders.

At the beginning Nansen did not

understand that the hunters did not shoot birds that were within firing range. This happened several times until the hunter raised his gun and got two birds with one shot. Initially Nansen thought that it was a stroke of good luck, but the method was used again, and the result was the same: One shot, two birds.

Fridjof Nansen called the hunters of Kangeq as the best kayakers in Greenland.

The Danish-Norwegian missionary Hans Egede allowed himself more than a century before in 1724 to send two Inuits by ship to Denmark for the Danish king. The Inuits came just from the area around Kangeq.

In Copenhagen, the king led the two Inuits perform their kayaks in the canals of the city. They rolled around with kayaks and their bird spears killed the birds that were put out along their route in the canals. The two Inuits skills were watched from the land of a lot of people from the city.





































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