

## Some traces of Gaelic in Faroese

By W. B. Lockwood

### *Grímr Kamban*

.... 'Sva er sagt at Grímr kamban bygði  
fyrstr manna Færeyiar' (*AM* 61 fol.) ....

There has never been any serious doubt about the Gaelic character of the sobriquet *Kamban*. True, F. Jónsson, *Aarbøger f. nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1926), 239, argued that *Grímr Kamban* flourished around 800, admittedly an early date for an Irish cognomen. But one will prefer a later date, corresponding to the settlement of the Faroes about 825, see *Fróðskaparrit*, x, 47f. In any case, the name could hardly be more obviously Gaelic. It represents a 9th-century derivative noun \**cambán* from *camb* 'crooked, bent, twisted', a formation comparable to, e. g. *becán* 'paululus; pauxillum' — from *bec* 'little', the meanings thus basically 'little fellow' or 'little thing' — cf. R. Thurneysen, *Grammar of Old Irish*, 175. We may note, incidently, that our sample derivative was borrowed into Norse as *Bekan* 'Little Fellow'.

It goes without saying that \**cambán* was no nonce word, but must have been a well established lexical item understood by all — otherwise there would have been little point in the nickname. But what does this name actually mean? As far as we can see, it has hitherto been regarded as sufficient to note the Gaelic connection and then assume an allusion to some infirmity, as lameness. By the analogy of *Bekan* above, *Kamban* could appear to have a meaning something like 'Lame

Fellow', and indeed our word is actually so attested in Middle Ir. *cammán* (<\**cambán*) 'crooked fellow', also as a sobriquet (*Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*). It is, however, not a little surprising to learn that the viking who pioneered the settlement of the Faroes in the rough-and-tumble of the early 9th century should apparently have suffered from a physical handicap severe enough to give rise to a nickname, and one in a foreign language at that.

We therefore take a closer look at the philological side and first of all observe that, in our context, *Kamban* does not appear to be a personal name in its own right, but rather an epithet qualifying *Grímr*. Now if *Kamban* is interpreted as meaning 'Lame Fellow' or the like, the syntactical arrangement is seen to be peculiar; one would expect, not a noun, but an adjective suitably assimilated to the Norse inflexional system, i. e. *Grímr* \**kambi*, like e. g. *Halfdan svartí*. The same consideration equally applies to Gaelic practice, where \**Grím camb* would be the expected version.

The postulated \**cambán*, theoretically either 'crooked fellow' or 'crooked thing', descends regularly via Middle Irish *cammán* to Mod. Irish *camán* with the meanings 'bend; stick with crooked head; hurley for ball-playing' (P. S. Dinneen, *Irish-English Dictionary*); the term similarly appears in Scots Gael. *camán* 'club for playing shinty, hurley, or golf' (E. Dwelly, *Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary*). It may be added that many dialects have replaced this traditional suffix by a more recent (Ir.) -óg or (Sc.) -ag, hence also practically synonymous *camóg*, *camag*. Thus there is plenty of evidence for a basic sense 'crooked thing' in addition to 'crooked fellow' already mentioned.

At this point we may notice that *Grímr Kamban* is structurally comparable to *Óláfr Kváran*, the name of a 10th-century viking. As is well known, the source of the sobriquet is OIr. *cúarán* 'shoe', which will be an allusion to this Dublin viking's preference for Irish-style footwear. The syntax is clearly Norse, however, after such names as *Haraldr Gráfeldr*



'Grey-Cloak'. In the light of such a correspondence the basic meaning of *Kamban* emerges unmistakably. It is the derivative noun not in the sense of 'crooked fellow', but of 'crooked thing', and the 'crooked thing' in question is pretty obviously some sort of club. To this extent, *Grímr Kamban* is a name not so very different from *Eiríkr Blóðøx* 'Blood-Axe'.

Can we define the instrument more exactly? What kind of club could it have been which was so peculiarly Irish? The answer is not hard to find. From time immemorial, the Irish have enjoyed a game played with clubs, often mentioned in ancient literature. K. H. Jacobson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition: A Window on the Iron Age*, 23, writes: 'The youths also played a team-game called *báire*, with clubs and balls, the object being to score by hitting the ball into the opposing team's goal, a hole in the ground. It was thus more or less an early form of hockey or similar games'. As a traditional Irish sport, *báire* was revived on the establishment of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884; it is known (in English) as 'hurling' or 'hurley'. A variety of the same game is found in Scotland, here called (in English) 'shinty', (in Scots Gaelic) *camanachd*, cf. *caman* above. The club with which the player strikes the ball may be called 'hurley' in English, but its Gaelic name is always *camán*, or associated form. We need enquire no further. *Kamban* is the earliest attestation of the Gaelic technical term.

We would not wish to overtax this identification, but it does seem to be firm evidence for an aspect of Norse-Gaelic contact not noted hitherto. It appears to have relevance for the chronology, too. A game like hurling is only for active young men. *Grímr Kamban* must then have belonged to the first generation to grow up in the Western Colonies. He arrived, let us suppose, about 800, as a small boy. He became a famous sportsman, inseparable from his *\*cambán*, and about 825, when still in his physical prime, he set out to become the first settler in a new land.

*Dunna*

In the *Faroese Bird Names*, 12ff., and in a supplementary note (*Fróð.*, xiii, 44f.) we adduced additional evidence supporting the view, expressed by J. Jakobsen as far back as 1902, that Far. *dunna* 'domestic duck' is indeed a loan word from (Scottish) Gaelic. The Gaelic forms are Sc. *tunnag*, Northern Ir. *tonnóg*, i. e. with secondary diminutive suffix; medieval forms are not attested. We explained the change of Gael. *t* to Norse *d* as the generalisation of a Celtic mutation by which, in certain positions in the sentence, a word beginning with *t* alters this to *d*. We now wish to withdraw this interpretation, because we have come to believe that the mutation in question would never be prominent enough to have become generalised in this way. Here will not be the place to go into the somewhat complex Celtic details; the interested reader may be referred to R. Thurneysen, *Grammar of Old Irish*, 148ff.

We therefore propose to make a new start. We first envisage the Gaelic forms before the addition of the diminutive suffix and find that *\*tonn(a)e* f. > *\*tonna* (Thurneysen, 62, 185) > (Scottish) *\*tunna* would be the expected line of development. Now such a Scottish form, if used in Norse, would fall together with homophonous *tunna* 'tub' which, although itself a loan-word, has for long been present in the language, cf. J. de Vries, *Altnord. etym. Wb.* In these circumstances may we not see in Far. *dunna* a continuation of Old Sc. Gael. *\*tunna*, subsequently modified to avoid homonymity under the influence of some native word beginning with *d*? That native word could well have been ON *dúnn* 'down'.

*Grúkur*

The meanings of *grúkur* are set out in Jacobsen-Matras<sup>2</sup>: 'hoved på sælhund; ualmindelig stort hoved; lille barn med stort hoved; hoved (d. v. s. skal, bold, pære o. lign.)'. Else-



where ('Some Celtic Words in Faroese Place-Names', *Arbók hins íslenzka fornleifafélags*, fylgirit (1958), 61) Chr. Matras notes that the term also occurs in place names; here the meaning is 'small mound'.

Many years ago, Chr. Matras observed that there were traces of special links between the Faroes and the Gaelic-speaking area in connection with seal-hunting and expressed to us his belief that *grúkur*, unique in Scandinavian, must have originally applied to the head of the seal and, in that sense, have been borrowed from Gaelic into Faroese. The word would thus be of viking age. These assumptions, however, remained tantalisingly conjectural, since *grúkur* could not be positively identified with any known Gaelic word. In his statement 'Írsk orð í føroyskum', *Álmanakki* 1966, 29, Chr. Matras had narrowed down the search for a possible source to two items, summing up as follows: *Grúkur* . . . . er neyvan norrønt, men tíverri er ilt at siga við vissu, hvørjum gæliskum orði tað er komið av. Tað kundi verið gæliskt *gruag*, sum merkir 'hárið á høvdi' . . . . ella tað kundi verið *cruach* 'kollur, rund herða ella tíl.'

Looking at matters phonologically, it is apparent that if *cruach* is the source, then the development has not been regular, since initial *c* would normally be kept unchanged in Norse, as Gael. *cró* 'enclosure, fold' > ON *kró*, whence Far. *krógv*. One would thus have to assume a generalised mutation of *c* to *g*, a change parallel to that of *t* to *d* mentioned above (under 'Dunna'), the likelihood of which we have seen reason to doubt. The second word *gruag*, on the other hand, sets no phonological problems (see below) and may therefore claim our close attention.

As stated, Gael. *gruag* means 'hair of the head'. It is, in general, a dominant word in this sense in the modern dialects, but a synonym *folt* (Sc. *falt*) is also known to a limited extent. Linguistic considerations, however, indicate that this state of affairs is not ancient, and that it is the latter word which is

the primary term. It alone can form compounds, as (Dinneen) *foltleabhar* 'long-haired', *reamharfholt* 'luxuriant hair', types going back to the oldest language, thus in Thurneysen (*Grammar*, 218) *folt-buide* 'yellow-haired', (*Reader*, 39) *find-folt* 'white hair'. Indeed, the term is Common Celtic, cf. synonymous Welsh *gwallt*, etc.

In the light of these facts, *gruag* in the sense 'hair of the head', attested since the Middle Irish period (*Contributions*, s. *grúac*), appears as a secondary development; the word must once have had a different meaning. Let us now see if we can find any indications of what such an earlier meaning would be. Looking in Dinneen, we find *gruagán*, i. e. with traditional diminutive suffix *-án*, defined as 'small pyramidal heap of turf-sods set on end to dry' further *gruaigín*, i. e. with more recent diminutive suffix *-ín*, with the meaning 'small heap, esp. of turf'. (While of no direct concern for our present problem, it will nevertheless be proper to mention that Dinneen also quotes the variants *grógán*, *gróigín*, and briefly explain that the interchange of *ó* and *ua* (Old Ir. *úa*) is widespread in Gaelic, see Dinneen, *passim*, and although *ó* is primary, *úa* also is commonly attested even in the oldest language (Thurneysen, 39f.). For our purpose, therefore, we need only operate with the *ua*-forms).

Comparing now the meanings of *gruag* and *gruagán*, *gruaigín*, we are faced with the remarkable fact that the primary word means 'hair of the head', but its diminutives mean something like 'little stack'. There is no doubt that the words are etymologically identical, witness *gruaigim* 'I set up on end, as sods of turf' (Dinneen), in other words 'I stack', formed directly from *gruag* which must therefore also have had the meaning 'stack' as well as 'hair of the head'. Which meaning will be the earlier? Clearly 'stack', for the semantic evolution must have been 'stack' ~ 'head' > 'head of hair' > 'hair of the head' — we may add that, in Scottish, the sense 'wig' is also known, and by yet another considerable



shift 'woman' (Dwelly). At this point we realise that we have evidence for the semantic stage 'head' in the shape of Far. *grúkur*, which thus represents a viking-age Old Gael. *grúac* 'head'; on the Gaelic spelling, see below.

We can, it would seem, usefully comment further on Old Gael. *grúac*. We shall not forget that, at all periods of its history, Gaelic has had a standard word for 'head' in the widest sense, namely *ceann*, older *cenn*, of Common Celtic age, cf. Welsh *pen*, etc. Such a consideration indicates that *grúac* would only be used in certain circumstances. Now it is well known that hunters often develop special terms in connection with their hunting. Of this there are good examples in Faroese, e. g. the head of a *grind*-whale is referred to as *kúla*, properly 'hump'. It becomes evident that Old Gael. *grúac* was similarly applied to the head of a seal. It is equally well known that name taboo once played a prominent part in hunters' parlance, and in this connection it was nothing unusual for a foreign word to be borrowed to replace the native one — French *renard* 'fox' from German *Reinhard* of the Beast Epic arose in this way — so that it is highly probable that the Gaelic word was taken over into Norse as a convenient noa term. Cf. also *Fróð.*, iii, 75 f., and ON *\*mákr* below.

Only a few words remain to be said: about phonetics and gender. There is no phonological difficulty in regarding Gael. *gruag* as the source of Far. *grúkur*, in ancient orthography *grúac*, *grúkr*. There is apparently only one other instance of the representation of Gael. *úa* — the Gaelic loans in Old Norse are conveniently listed in De Vries, *op. cit.*, Einleitung xxi — it is contained in the sobriquet *Kváran* presupposing Gael. *cúarán* 'shoe' (see *Grímr Kamban* above). Here the exotic diphthong has been modified by an accent shift *úa* to *uá*, in principle not unlike the development seen in Gael. *Níall* > ON *Njáll*, and reminiscent of certain spontaneous Norse vocalic changes, as PrN *\*liugan* > ON *ljúga*, cf. A.

Heusler, *Altisl. Elementarbuch*, 19. In *grúker*, however, we evidently see an example of sound substitution, possibly under the influence of some native word, in which case *búker* 'body, belly' seems a likely source of contamination. The treatment of the consonants is demonstrably regular. Initial *gr-* occurs again in *gresjárn* 'a sort of iron wire', presupposing *grés iairn* lit. 'art of iron', while the final consonant is otherwise attested three times: in the personal names *Patrekr* < *Pátraic*, *Taðkr* < *Tadc* (C. J. S. Marstrander, *Bidrag til det norske sprogs historie i Irland*, 95) and in *\*mákr* 'seal's flipper' < *\*mác* (postulated from Mod. Icel. *mákur*, Mod. Gael. *mág*).

Now Old Gael. *grúac* is feminine, but the Norse loan is masculine, with the appropriate and obligatory termination. Shifts of gender are seen in other cases, e. g. the comparable Far. *lámur* 'paw, etc.' m. from Old Gael. *lám* f., or vice versa Far. *krógv* f. from Old Gael. *cró* m. (above). When a language distinguishing grammatical gender and employing a declensional system borrows a noun from a foreign source, various analogies play a part in determining what gender the loan shall take and what declension it shall follow. A likely analogy in the present case would again be ON *búker* masc.

### *Gassi*

We again begin from Chr. Matras, *Almanakki*, 29, where the possibility is voiced that *gassi*, i. e. *kópagassi* 'cudgel for killing seals', might derive from (Sc.) Gael. *gas* 'bough'. We aim to show that this derivation can be accepted as certain.

Far. *gassi* is formally identical with ON *gassi*, a Common Scandinavian word, with the basic sense 'gander', cf. de Vries. But the uniquely Faroese meaning 'cudgel' ill accords with such a sense, so that one automatically suspects that the Faroese word is etymologically distinct. We therefore readily pursue the lead given and turn to a closer examination of Gael. *gas*. To begin with, we note that final *s* in such a word represents



earlier *ss* (Thurneysen, 96) and this archaic spelling is occasionally attested in Middle Ir. *gass* (*Contributions*, s. *gas*).

The most usual literal sense of the word in Irish today is 'stem, stalk' (Dinneen), and similarly in medieval texts 'sprig, shoot, twig, stalk' (*Contributions*). In Scotland, however, other meanings are also known, namely 'bough, broom, bush' (Dwelly). It requires no demonstration that the meanings 'bough' and 'broom' (apparently via 'broom-stick') bring us semantically very close to the Faroese sense 'cudgel', and we cannot fail to note that these meanings come from the Scottish dialects, i. e. from that sort of Gaelic most likely to have influenced Faroese. We have thus no hesitation in postulating Old Sc. Gael. *gass* m. 'cudgel' as the ultimate source of Far. *gassi*. On being taken over into Norse, the word was evidently assimilated to the already existing *gassi* 'gander', to all appearances humorously. But in Faroese, the literal sense of the native Norse word was eventually forgotten, leaving only the meaning borrowed from Gaelic.

It is not hard to account for the borrowing as such. We have, in the previous section, attributed the presence of the loan word *grúkur* to the requirements of seal hunters' parlance. Identical considerations apply to *gassi*, and again a parallel from the comparable sphere of the whale hunt is to hand for the asking. The heavy lance with which the *grind*-whale is despatched is called *vákn*, simply a variant of *vápn* 'weapon', a name which by its non-specific character is at once identified as a one-time noa word. And having regard to the milieu, the assimilation of Gael. *gass* 'cudgel' to ON *gassi* 'gander' is at once understandable — it can surely become a stock example of this type of evasion in the service of word taboo.

#### *Feitur sum selur*

For the term 'seal' Faroese today uses *kópur* or *kobbi*, the older name *selur* surviving only in two expressions (Jacobsen-

Matras<sup>2</sup>): *hann svimur sum selur* (er en god svømmer), *feitur sum selur(in)* (lasket og fed). This circumstance proves that the phrases are traditional. The latter recalls ON *selfeitr*, still in Mod. Icel. *selfeitur* 'smækfed' (Bløndal), certainly a very idiomatic word, cf. *selfeitur hestur* (Zoëga). At *Almanakki*, 29, it was noted that *feitur sum selur* agrees exactly with Ir. *chomb ramhar le rón*. We would add that the Irish is as much a set phrase as the Faroese, idiomatically equivalent to Eng. 'fat as a pig', so T. de Bhaldraithe, *English-Irish Dict.*, 245. There can be no doubt then that the Irish is also traditional. And the same will naturally be true of the corresponding Sc. Gael. *cho reamhar ris an ròin* (A. R. Forbes, *Gaelic Names*, 210).

In his essay, Chr. Matras was reluctant to place too much emphasis on the correspondence to which he had himself drawn attention, since other suspected connections with Gaelic in the sphere of seal-hunting (*grúkeur*, etc.) remained conjectural. We hope, however, that our present contribution has helped to transform inspired conjecture into philological certainty. In these circumstances, and in the light of what can otherwise be deduced about Far. *feitur sum selur* and its Gaelic peers, it is now evident that these expressions are indeed related, and the presumption is — on balance — that the Celt was the giver.

It is not our suggestion that influences were necessarily one-way. Thus Sc. Gael. *brìomal* 'male seal' is from ON *brimill*, certainly native Norse as it is etymologisable in terms of Germanic, the literal sense being 'roarer'; Irish has *tarbh* lit. 'bull'. At the same time, one would need to admit that this may well be a Norse relic absorbed by the advancing Gaelic as Norse speech declined rather than a true borrowing. There may be other linguistic traces of Gaelic-Norse contact in this sphere. It seems noteworthy that the Faroese use of a special term *tvøst* to denote the meat of seals or whales, thus distinct from the general term for meat *kjöt*, is exactly paralleled in



Hebridean Gael. *carr* (Dwelly) which similarly contrasts with the general term *feoil*. There is no such distinction in Irish, where only the latter word is used.

*At sláa kópar*

At *Almanakki*, 29, attention is drawn to the Faroese expression *at sláa kópar* 'to kill seals', where *sláa* lit. 'strike' is an obvious euphemism for *drepa* 'kill'. This usage is, of course, standard in Faroese, thus *kópasláttur* 'seal killing' contrasting, for instance, with synonymous Icel. *seladráp* — or with Far. *grindadráp* 'grind-whale killing'. Chr. Matras reminds us that the traditional Faroese seal hunt was also practised in the Gaelic area, e. g. in the Blasket Islands, so that the expression *at sláa kópar* could conceivably have a parallel in Gaelic. An account of such a seal hunt in the Blasket Islands is to be found in T. Ó Criomhtháin, *An t-Oileánach*, in a chapter entitled *Lá na Róinte* lit. 'Day of the Seals', 108ff., and sundry remarks on the same subject occur in the work of another Blasket Islander, M. Ó Suileabháin, *Fiche Blian ag Fás*, 302f. But in neither case is there any expression comparable to Far. *at sláa kópar*; the Irish Gaelic term in these texts is invariably *marbhú* 'killing, slaughtering'.

The traditional seal hunt is also known from Scotland, and was described in English as early as 1703 by M. Martin, *Western Islands*, 62f. But, as K. D. MacDonald, editor of the projected *Historical Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic*, obligingly informs us, there may be no printed accounts of these matters in Scottish Gaelic. It is doubtful, too, if any are now alive who remember these things. Nevertheless, there is some indication that the Faroese expression *at sláa kópar* was probably paralleled in Hebridean usage. G. Henderson, *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, 261f., quotes from the introduction to A. MacDonald, *Poems and Songs of John MacCodrum*, pp. v-vi, from which one learns that the annual slaughter on the seal rock on

Hasgeir (< ON *Há Sker* 'High Skerry') was known to the Uistmen as *Bualadh na sgeire* 'Battle (lit. Striking) of the skerry'. One further learns that 'on one occasion a hunter aiming at a seal with his gun or bow heard the creature begin to sing, in a voice of supernatural beauty, a song lamenting the loss of her dear ones'. A verse of this song is quoted, as follows:

*Cha robh mise m'ònar an raoir.  
'S mise nighean Aoidh Mhic Eoghain,  
Gur eòlach mi air na sgeirean;  
Gur mairg a dhèanadh mo b h u a l a d h,  
Bean uasal mi a tìr eile.*

'I was not alone last night.  
I am the daughter of Aodh Mac Eoghain,  
I am indeed acquainted with the skerries;  
Woe to him who would strike me,  
A noble lady I am from another land.'

We may first notice that the hunter is represented as armed with a gun or bow. In such a case, however, the expression *bualadh* 'striking' in the seal's song is surely inappropriate. The verse must therefore have arisen in connection with the traditional hunt with the cudgel, as described by Martin (above). We next notice that the seal bewails 'the loss of her dear ones'. Clearly these have been killed by the hunters. And this, taken in connection with the term *Bualadh na sgeire*, apparently evasive, makes it probable that *bualadh* in our context really means 'striking dead'. And naturally the presumed parallelism with Far. *at sláa* will not be accidental, but go back to the time when Norse and Gaelic were spoken side by side in the Hebrides.



*Dýr* 'seal'

In the present context it will not be out of place to recall that Far. *dýr* lit. 'beast' was taken down in Borðoy by J. Jakobsen as a seaman's noa term for the seal. There is an exact correspondence in Sc. Gael. *béist* (Dwelly). Though not indicated as such in that dictionary, a term of this nature was certainly evasive, at least in the first place. The word itself is a loan from Lat. *bēstia*, already present in Old Irish, so that a Norse-Gaelic contact is well within the bounds of possibility. It may be added that J. G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands*, 239, expressly states that *béist mhaol* 'bald beast' was used by fishermen instead of the ordinary name *ròn*. The corresponding Ir. *péist* may denote a whale, this in imitation of the native synonym *miol*. Evidently the pattern goes a long way back, witness Welsh *morfil* 'whale' lit. 'sea beast' (-*fil* < *mil*). Given such persistent Celtic tradition, it seems not merely possible, but quite probable, that Far. *dýr* 'seal' arose through contact with Gaelic.

*Fara á soppin*

The affiliations of Far. *soppur* 'handful of hay' and Gael. *sop* 'wisp' have been worked out in detail by Chr. Matras, *Fróð.*, iv, 15—31. The purpose of the present note is simply to draw attention to a piece of new information only recently published. It shows that the idioms *fara á soppin*, *vera búgvín á soppin*, which refer to a woman about to give birth, have indeed been inspired by Gaelic, a possibility envisaged by Chr. Matras, but not at the time confirmed by known evidence from that language.

Meanwhile, in A. Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, vi, (1971), we read in reference to conditions obtaining in the last century, p. 84: "Among the crofters of the Isles a temporary bed of straw is made before the fire for the woman in labour. Hence

a parturient woman is said in euphemism to be *air na snip* 'on the straws' ". One notices that the careful folklorist subtly employs the unusual plural 'straws', here quite unidiomatic, in order to convey something of the special character of the original. The Gaelic term is, of course, not the ordinary word for 'straw', but is rather 'wisp', cf. *sop fodair* 'wisp of straw', which naturally gives all the more point to the explanation that the term was used as a euphemism. This will equally have applied in Faroese at one stage. It is further of some interest that this new evidence comes from the Hebrides ('the Isles' above), i. e. that part of the Gaelic word which has most influenced the Faroese.

### *Fara í gólv*

The temporary bed for the parturient woman in the Gaelic crofter's cabin, mentioned in the previous section, was ordinarily called *leaba làir* lit. 'floor bed' (*làr* 'floor'), Carmichael, 224. We notice for what it may be worth that Faroese idioms of the type *fara í gólv* (= *fara á soppin*), paralleled in Norwegian, become understandable if they presuppose ON \**golf-ból* 'floor bed', conceivably a translation of the Gaelic, subsequent truncation of the compound being explained as a euphemistic device. If this is so, then Icelandic usage, as *fara á gólf* (Chr. Matras, 23) must be due to secondary rationalisation.

### *Sólin fer í kav*

The expression *sólin fer í kav* 'the sun sets (in the sea)' lit. 'the sun sinks' appears entirely appropriate and, at first sight at least, unproblematic, *í kav* being obviously 'down under the surface'. The same, however, will not be true of its opposite *sólin roðar í kav* 'the sun rises' which is only intelligible as a development of synonymous *sólin roðar í hav* lit. 'the sun



shines red in ocean', one of a series of phrases with the same meaning: *sólin roðar í fjøll (líð, lund)* 'mountains (mountain side, grove)'.

In the light of the above, one may consider that the phrase *sólin fer í kav* could likewise be a secondary modification of *sólin fer í \*hav*, cf. *sólin fer í havið* (J. Chr. Poulsen, *Føroysk orðafelli og orðtøk*, 88). Comparative evidence suggests that this is not unlikely. Thus the Icelandic language employs the expression *sólin gengur í ægi* 'the sun sets' (Bløndal, 773) lit. 'the sun goes into ocean', reflecting ON *sól gengr í ægi* (Fritzner, iii, 474). Remarkably enough, the selfsame idiom occurs in Irish: *téann an ghrian i bhfarraige* lit. 'the sun goes into sea' (older spelling *téigheann an ghrian i bhfairrge*, cf. Dinneen, 419: *ó éirgheann an ghrian go dtéigheann sí i bhfairrge* 'from sunrise to sunset').

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Norse and Gaelic have been in contact here. One notes that ON *ægir* (lost in Faroese except in ballad-style *í ægin blá* 'into the blue sea') is essentially a poetic term. Ir. *farraige*, however, is an everyday word. But this has not necessarily always been so; at any rate, the word is prominent in the earliest poetry (cf. Thurneysen, *Reader*, 39, J. Pokorny, *Historical Reader*, 17) and its original meaning 'open sea, ocean', hence the distinct possibility that here, too, was a stylistically elevated term comparable to ON *ægir*.

It is well known that there was in former times a marked antipathy towards any mention of the setting sun in so many words, and accordingly evasive circumlocutions were commonly devised. Faroese instances include ballad-style *sól til viðar gekk* lit. 'sun went to wood', paralleled in Icelandic and going back to Old Norse, and such are known to have been solemn expressions, cf. W. B. L., 'Sonne und Mond in der färöischen Sprache', *Die Sprache*, iii, 74f. It is hardly to be doubted that the comparable Norse and Gaelic idioms discussed above are euphemisms of the same sort.

### Sólarlag

As Chr. Matras has shown (*Oyggjaskeggi*, Feb. 1954, repr. in *Nøkur mentafólk*, 90—92), the term *sólarlag* 'sunset', which first appears in Fr. Petersen's *Eg Oyggjar Veit* (1877), is not native Faroese, but was taken up by the poet from Icelandic. This lofty-sounding term is otherwise confined to that language; it is unattested in the medieval records, but seems nevertheless traditional.

The origin of this word does not appear to have been considered. Admittedly, its formal etymology is transparent; on the other hand, as a formation, it is strangely isolated. It also appears to be secondary, its ancient synonym *sólsetr* (Mod. Icel., Far. *sólsetur*) being clearly associated with primary verbal expressions, as the impersonal *sólu er sett* or the reflexive *sól sezk* 'the sun sets', nowadays Icel. *sólin sezt*, Far. *sólin setir*.

In the previous section we noticed a correspondence between Norse and Gaelic in a phrase for the setting sun. Suffice it here to add that *sólarlag* is at once comprehensible as a loan translation of the standard Gaelic idiom, e. g. Ir. *luí gréine* (older spelling *luighe gréine*, Dinneen, 572) 'sunset' lit. 'lying of sun'.

### ÚRTAK

Greinin tekur til viðgerðar ávísar gæliskar tættir í føroyskum máli.

Fyrst verður víst á, at viðurnevni *Gríms Kambans* er runnið av forn-gæliskum *\*cambán* 'kylva nýtt í leikinum báire, gamal írskur bóltleikur líkur hockey'. Fø. *dunna* er komið av forngæl. *\*tunna*, *t* fremst í orðinum broytt til *d* vegna árin frá onkrum heimaorði, helst fn. *dúnn* 'dún'. Orð úr kópaveiði-umhvøvi eru síðan tikin fyri. Skotið verður upp á endaligar upprunaskýringar av orðunum *grúkeur* og *gassi* (frá forngæl. *grúac*, *gass*) og sýnt á møguligan skyldskap millum orðafellini *feitur sum selur* og *at sláa kópar* og samsvarandi gælisk orðasambond. Somuleiðis *dýr sum navn á kópi* í »sjómáli«. Síðan verður eisini sýnt á, at orðafelli *sum at fara á soppin* hava gæliska fyrimynd, og tað sama man vera um orðafellið *at*



*fara í gólv* við tilbrigdum. At enda er sipað til møguligan gæliskan skyldskap við før. orðafellið *sólin fer í kav* og við før.-ísl *sólarlag*. Í vissum førum er trúligari, at árinini eru úr skotsk-gæliskum heldur enn úr írsk-gæliskum.