

The Faroese Whale Names

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The present study considers the philology of the Faroese whale names.

Úrtak

Greinin henda tekur til viðgerðar fýroysk hvalanøvn úr orðsøguligum sjónarhorni. Heimildirnar vórðu fyrst kannaðar og gagnmettar, serstakliga við rættari eyðmerking í huga. Nú er greitt, at fýroyskt eigur ikki færri enn níggju nøvn á hvalinum *Orcinus orca*: tey reint innlendu bókhvítuvalur, kjafthvíti, kobbahvalur, mastrarfiskur og -hvalur, steyrhvalur, æðuhvalur, fornnavnið vogn, sjónnavnið nývil, og til seinast rovhvalur úr donskum. *Nebbfiskur* er eitt misnevni; tað má av røttum sipa til døglingin. *Leiftur* og *nýðingur* hava fyrr verið nøvn á springara og grindahvali. Nøvnini vórðu síðan uppruna-greind. Nøkur eru sjálvlýst, men onnur opinbera ikki loyndarmál síni fyrr enn eftir málfrøðiligar greiningar, t.d. *leiftur*, fn. *leiptr*, bókstavliga 'bjartleiki, birta', ið sipar til hvítu merkini, ella *nýðingur*, fn. *hnýðingr*, runnið av fn. *hnúðr* 'knøttur, bøllur', ið sipar til *kúluna*. Hitt serfýroyska heitið *hvesingur* er leitt av sagnorðinum *hvessa*, smbr. setning sum *hann gongur og hvessir* 'kemur við bráðligum ilskukøstum el. -herðindum', ein rámandi lýsing av atburðinum hjá hesum hvali í eini grind.

AVGUSTUR m. Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*). The name goes back to Svabo (1781:71) »Augustur«, of which the current spelling is the regular normalization. Svabo's orthography makes it certain that here we have the Christian name *August* provided with a Faroese termination. This name was first used in modern times in Germany in 1526. It soon became popular, so that it could have been known in the Faroes as early as the 16th century.

But this can hardly be the ultimate explanation seeing that personal names are not traditionally applied to marine animals. Svabo's form may therefore conceal an older word made up of native elements. In the *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1961) 3, we suggested that the prototype could have been **havgustur* lit. 'ocean gust' (*hav*, **gustur* from ON *gustr*). Unlike the baleen whales, the Sperm Whale has only a single blow-hole and blows forwards rather than upwards, a feature likely to attract attention and lead to the creation of a name. The nature of the prototype envisaged suggests a noa word, reminiscent of OND (q.v.). See »HAF(F)ERRYTTTE«.

BÓGHVÍTUHVALUR Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*), lit. 'Shoulder-White-Whale', since *Dýralæra* 107 the standard term for this species. It goes back to Svabo, *Indb.* 71. Beðkvjútukveðlur, described under *Bovhvidhval* 248 as follows: *er af Størrelse og Skabning, som de største Grindhvale, giøre flokken vild, som er bange for dem. Den dør sjelden eller aldrig med Grinden.*

Although these sketchy remarks could, at a pinch, be held to refer to the Killer Whale, Svabo himself was unable to identi-

fy the species, Dan. *bovhvidhval* being simply an ad hoc adaptation of the Faroese name, which he had used earlier in an article 'Om den færøske Marsviin-Fangst', *Det almindelige Danske Bibliothek* III (1779). Here (pp. 39f.) he explains that 'Marsviin' can be conveniently used as a generic term for various species, including the 'Bovhvidhval' defined as a subspecies of 'Grindhval' and characterised in these words: *den er hvid ved Forfinnerne... Denne finder man ikke i flokken for sig selv, men kun undertiden imellem Grindhvalene, og saa i fald gjør man sig kun lidet Haab om Fangst, da de ere uroelige og vil gjerne dukke, man forsøger da at udjage dem fra den øvrige Flok, som undertiden lykkes. Nu og da kan man fange enkelte Stykker af disse ibland Grinden.* But this is clearly not a description of the Killer Whale, but rather of the Whitesided Dolphin.

At this point we notice that Svabo's article formed the basis for a contribution 'Um Marsvína rekstr', *Rit Pess Islenzka Lærdóms-Lista-Felags* II (1782), where on p.86 we find 'Bovhvidhval' reproduced as Icel. 'Bóghvítuhveli', accompanied by Svabo's description, whence Blöndal's tentative definition 'Hvidskævning' i.e. 'Whitesided Dolphin'. At any rate, the Icelandic is ultimately a reflection of the Faroese and of no further interest here.

Now although Svabo and, of course, writers dependent on him — H. Chr. Lyngbye, *Tidskrift for Naturvidenskaberne* IV (1826) 204, and (presumably) H.B. Melchior, *Den Danske Stats og Norges Pattedyr* (1834) 288 — were not adequately informed, independent evidence eventually

provided the identification. Using notes and sketches supplied by H.C. Müller shortly before, J. Reinhardt in 'An Additional Note' to D.F. Eschricht, 'Northern Species of Orca', *Recent Memoirs on the Cetacea* (Ray Society London 1866) 187f., scientifically identified the 'Bovquitequealur/Bovhvidehval' as the Killer Whale.

We observe that the use here of *bóg-* 'shoulder (of an animal)' is peculiar since whales have no obvious shoulders, and the word plays no part in the relevant idiomatic phraseology. Of course, one can imagine the shoulder as that part of the body immediately above the flipper. But the actual markings on the Killer Whale hardly involve that part of the body in any plausible way, hence the embarrassment of writers endeavouring to account for the name. M. á Ryggi declares: *frá eyganum aftur á bógvín hefur hann ein stóran hvítan lit*, while Reinhardt finds a small triangle of white behind the flipper. The truth lies elsewhere. The epithet *bóghvítur* is properly used only of sheep. Its application to characterise a whale is a fanciful, secondary development, not to be taken literally.

DØGLINGUR m. Bottlenose Whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*). On the strength of the well-documented Old Norse name for this species *andhvalr*, still present locally in Icel. *andhvalur* and Norw. *andehval*, we postulate a lost **andahvalur* for Faroese also. But this ancient term was replaced by names unattested in Old Norse and therefore arguably younger, namely **nebba-hvalur* presupposed by NEBBAFISKUR,

now misapplied to the Fin Whale, and DØGLINGUR. These names would arise in connection with the annual slaughter of Bottlenose Whales when, about Michaelmas, they appeared off Sandvík and in Hvalba Fjord. In the first name we see the evasive change of *-hvalur* to *-fiskur* (q.v.), in the second an originally poetic term ON *døg-*, *døglingr* 'king, prince', a byname of Odin. It is known that stylistically elevated words may be adopted as noa terms, a comparable example being *gestur*, properly *Gestur* i.e. *Norna-Gestur*, a name for the oyster-catcher *tjaldur*, though the motivation has yet to be explained. In the present case, however, the choice of the name is known to be bound up with an age-old belief in a whale which, Odin-like, had only one eye, as explained by Chr. Matras, '*Den enøjede hval*', *Saga och Sed* (1960), 1-7, who further notes that the superstition is also attested for 13th-century Norway.

The name is recorded by Svabo, e.g. *Dict.Fær.* 144: Døglingur 'Næbbehval', but the first mention is Debes 167 'Døgling'. Earlier still, in 1584, a stranded »one-eyed whale« was termed 'throidhual' (Matras, *op.cit.*, 1), but we doubt if this was more than ad hoc usage, see TRØLLHVALUR. The present name occurs in *Fiskakvæði* 19. A name from this text could go back to, say, 1500. But how much older it may be eludes us.

The notion of a one-eyed whale is presumably to be compared with a widespread belief in one-eyed fish. Such are, to the best of our knowledge, first mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis in 1188. We quote from the translation of the original Latin by W.

Llewelyn Williams, *Itinerary through Wales* (1908) 127f.: On the highest parts (of Snowdonia) are two lakes... the one has a floating island in it. The other... contains three sorts of fish, eels, trout, perch, all of which have only one eye, the left being wanting... it is remarkable also, that in two places in Scotland, one near the eastern, the other near the western sea, the fish called mullets possess the same defect, having no left eye. From Germany, the *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* III (1930-31) 1612, reports a belief in one-eyed giant pike. And not only in Europe. In Japan many tales are told of one-eyed fish, usually carp, found in certain pools and known as *katame no uo* 'one-eyed fish' or *katame no funa* 'one-eyed carp'. Numerous legends account for their condition, the most common being that a god had his left eye put out by a pine needle, whereupon a compassionate carp from a nearby pool offered his own eye in replacement.

Tradition does not tell us which of the eyes of the *døglingur* was missing, but it now rather looks as though it was the left one.

FISKUR m. Fish. An alternative to HVALUR in whale names. Such usage would develop in connection with whale catching and be evasive in the first place, though later generalised. Usually both alternatives are known, e.g. GRINDAFISKUR, -HVALUR, but – doubtless fortuitously – only NEBBAFISKUR.

In connection with the all-important herding of the Pilot Whale, the simplex FISKUR is commonly used to denote a

single whale instead of HVALUR, and may be the only alternative in use, e.g. *odda-fiskur* »leader whale«.

GRINDAFISKUR, -HVALUR Pilot Whale (*Globicephala melas*). Both terms were known to Svabo, e.g. *Dict.fær.* 290, but the latter is found earlier in Debes 156 danicised 'Grindehval' — Dan. *grindehval*, Norw. *grindhval*, together with Icel. *grindhvalur*, are borrowings from Faroese. The names are relatively recent, hardly antedating the 17th cent.; they have replaced NÝÐINGUR (q.v.) used in this sense in 1594.

The element GRIND f. denotes primarily a school of Pilot Whales. It is first encountered in Debes 156, the concept developing from a meaning 'fence', attested in Old Norse, here applied to whales swimming in the lateral formation typical of this species. So spread out, the herd can more efficiently locate and then surround potential prey. That the word in its present sense is an abbreviated form is evident from synonymous Norwegian dialect *hvalgrind*, first recorded in 1698, from Vesterålen; a variant »Hvalsgrind«, quoted by Debes 156, derives from P. Claussøn Friis, *Norriges...Bescriffuelse* (1632), written 1613-14.

GRÖNLANDSSLÆTTIBØKA see under SLÆTTIBØKA

'HAF(F)ERRYTT'. Spellings of a name for the Sperm Whale from Resen 72f. The word, as it stands cannot be reliably compared with any other name in the related languages, see the editors' footnote p. 72.

If, however, we accept one of their suggested solutions and amend to *«Haf(f)errytte», which could be normalised **havurkitti*, we have a correspondence with ON *hafurkitti*, species unknown, but surviving in Icel. *hafurkitti* meaning 'Right Whale' according to Blöndal. No satisfactory etymology has been found, and it is scarcely possible to say which species the term originally denoted.

HVALUR m. Whale. This ancient generic term, ON *hvalr*, remains a living word, though as the second element in compounds it may be replaced by -FISKUR. It occurs as the first element in a small number of traditional compounds, including some purely Faroese examples, as *hvalspýggja* f. 'jellyfish' lit. 'whale spit'. In other such words, the sense is de facto restricted to the Pilot Whale or, less frequently, the Bottlenose Whale, e.g. *hvalvákn* »whaling spear« used to dispatch the whales as they are herded into shallow water. Similarly in a few place names, notably *Hvalvík* 'Whale Bay', a village on Streymoy, where the reference is to the Pilot whale, while *Hvalba* 'Whale Village' on Suðuroy, like the neighbouring *Hvalvík* (Dan. Kvalviig 1650), an earlier name for the present-day village of Sandvík, are primarily associated with the Bottlenose Whale, see DØGLINGUR.

HVESSINGUR m. Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) making its debut in Resen 73 »Qvæsing eller Vaagenhog«. It is hardly to be doubted that these names properly denote different species; on the latter,

the Killer Whale, see under VAGN. At the same time, certain aspects of the behaviour of the Dolphin (cf. quotation below) could suggest the Killer and lead to terminological confusion. The next reports are from Svabo, e.g. *Dict.fær.* 458 Kvessingur 'Springer, en Art Marsviin'.

Turning to the etymology, we first quote from *Dýralæra* 117: *Undir Føroyum síggiast teir* (i.e. Bottlenose Dolphins) *at siga ikki uttan saman við grind...Teir eru kimiligir og bragdligir; grindahvalur sæst sjáldan leypa leyst úr sjónum, hvessingur loypur ofta — og tað høgt uppúr... Í rakstri fara teir ofta langt fram um grindina, men venda so sjálvir aftur til hennara, og harðrendir sum teir eru, leypa teir ofta stökk í hana. Men at teir bíta grindahval, man vera pátrúgv.*

From the foregoing we see two patterns of behaviour, either of which could engender a name. The habit of leaping clear of the water does not seem to be involved, for then a meaning 'leaper' would require the root seen in *leypa* 'to leap'. On the other hand, the practice of leaving the *grind*, but rushing back to it, scaring it with sudden movements, as though biting it (as some imagine), vividly recalls meanings present in *hvessa*, lit. 'to sharpen', but figuratively in such examples as *hann gongur og hvessir 'kommer med pludselige mishagsytringer og udfald' (Orðabók), hvessa í '(om hund) snappe' (Eykabind)*. So, without a doubt, this apparently vicious behaviour led to the creation of the name; we might translate it, literally, as 'Snapper'. The name is evidently a product of the local environment and as such uniquely Faroese.

KJAFTHVÍTI m. Killer Whale = BÓG-HVÍTUHVALUR. A usage known only from Svabo, *Indb.* 73: *Kjafikvujti skal være en Art af Sildreken, og hvid om Kæberne. 1782 vare 3 eller 4 Stykker in Flok, tæt ved landet, ved Bøjdelavet paa Skuøen, hvor man saae dem, efter Beretning, at sluge nogle Ederfugle.* Identification could not be more certain: not a group of rorquals related to the Minke Whale, as Svabo had been informed, but a marauding company of Killer Whales, for which 'White Jaw' is an acceptable designation. Cf. *ÆDUHVALUR*. On 'Sildreken' see *SILDREKI*.

KOBBAHVALUR Killer Whale = BÓG-HVÍTUHVALUR. Formed with *kobbi* »seal«, a purely Faroese name reported, in Danish dress, by Chr. Fr. Lütken, *Vidensk. Selskabs Skrifter*, 6te Række (1887) 370: »Spækhuggere... ofte komme Kysterne og Klipperne forbavsende nær for at snappe Sælerne eller Edderfuglene, hvorfor de hyppigt benævnes »Edderfugleval« (see *ÆDUHVALUR*) eller »Kobberval«.

KÚLUBAKUR m., **KÚLUBØKA** f. Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). The record begins with Svabo who, however, cites only the masculine variant: *Fiskakvæði* 22: *Kúlubeâkar* (pl.), *Indb.* 73: *Kúlubeâkur*, *Dict.fær.* 450: en Hval-Art... verosimile...Isl. *hnúfubakr*. M. á Ryggi, *Varðin* III (1923) 59, introduced the now current form **KÚLUBØKA** matching the traditional whale name **SLÆTTIBØKA**.

The Faroese name is a loan translation of Eng. *humpback*. English whalers were leaders in the 18th century and the name

evidently set a pattern for other languages, including Icel. *hnúfubakr* and related forms (Blöndal 343), none of which are recorded before the rise of the English name.

The motivation is not self-evident. The name *humpback* is the creation of a certain Paul Dudley who, in a contribution to the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* XXXIII (1724-25) 258, used the term *hump* in reference to the peculiar fin of this whale which is mounted on a fleshy platform, in contrast to the usual type of fin found on another large whale which he christened *finback*, and this non-descript term, too, has passed into the standard nomenclature; a variant *fin whale* has been imitated in other languages, as Norw. *finhval*.

Now only scholars who had read Dudley's article could have known what was really meant by *humpback*. But when the name was taken into common use, as it quickly was, it could only be understood as a synonym for hunchback in accordance with natural feeling for the language. That being so, some reason had to be found to justify the name. There is nothing in the appearance of the whale that could remind the whalers of a hunchback, so the notion arose that the name would refer to the arched body as it appears before diving. This new sense is illustrated in *Whales* 96: The usual breathing sequence is followed by a deep humpbacked dive... The fin is seldom seen until the high rolling dive which brings the hump into view before sounding. Such usage lies behind *Dýralæra* 100: *Tá ið hon kavar, kreppir hon seg saman og sýnist tá kúlut*. The inherent unsuitability of this

name is further apparent when one considers that another large whale, the Finback, also reveals an equally pronounced 'hump' in the final roll of the diving sequence, cf. *Whales* 93.

The occurrence of this relatively [naturally indicates a later interpolation] recent name in the traditional *Fiskakvæði*.

LEIFTUR, pl. LEIFTRAR, m. Pilot Whale calf. Known since *Dict.fær.* 474 Lajttur »en ung Grindehval«, also *Indb.* 257, with an exact counterpart in Icel. *leiftur* specifically the Whitebeaked Dolphin. The term is securely attested for the Old Norse period, cf. Fritzner *leiptr* m. »et Slags Hval«... Kgs. 29¹¹, SE I 550¹⁰. Information provided by the first of these sources (*Konungsskuggsjá*, first half of 13th cent.) enables us to identify the whale, or rather whales, concerned. One reads that *hnísa* is not longer than five ells, *leiptr* not longer than seven. Such measurements point to the smallest whales likely to be encountered in our area, first the Porpoise (Far. NÍSA), and second the Whitesided Dolphin which, however, in popular use is not distinguished from the marginally larger, but similarly coloured Whitebeaked Dolphin, as explained under SPRING-HVALUR.

Having identified the species, we can proceed to the etymology. ON *leiptr* m. may be closely compared with *leiptr* f. »brightness, lustre«, the words being ultimately identical despite the different genders. Here is an example of an abstract noun used to name a living creature, the motivation being provided by the conspi-

cuous white markings on these dolphins. The name is Common Scandinavian, appearing in Old Dan. *lyft* (Kalkar) though the species is not indicated.

The shift of sense seen in the Faroese word will, we may assume, be due to the adoption of SPRINGHVALUR etc. to name the Dolphins in question, LEIFTUR being then remembered as a small whale, whence its meaning today.

MASTRARFISKUR, -HVALUR Killer Whale = BÓGHVÍTUHVALUR. When seen at some distance from the front on the back, the characteristic dorsal fin, in adult males exceeding six feet in height, can be fancifully likened to a mast, hence the present, purely Faroese terms. Records go back to the beginning of this century. Far. *mastur*, *mastrar*- f. is akin to Norw. dial. *master*, a variant of the standard form *mast*, see Falk-Torp 704.

For similar motivation in other names for this species, cf. STEYRHVALUR, VAGN, also NÝVIL.

NEBBAFISKUR m. Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*). Introduced by M.D. á Ryggi, *Varðin* III (1923) 57. However, the name itself, with *nebb* 'beak', shows that it is here out of place. It presupposes **nebbahvalur*, the substitution of *-fiskur* arising in connection with whale hunting. Such a name can only have properly applied to the Bottlenose Whale *døglungur*, and precisely this is the meaning of the corresponding Norw. *nebbhval*, whence Dan. *næbbhval*. This equation confirms that *nebbafiskur* may well be traditional, as á Ryggi, *Varðin*

VII (1927) asserts, but how it came to be used in its present sense remains a mystery. We may add that identification with the Beaked Whale is excluded, for such a rare species could never acquire a folk name, the neologism *nevhvalur*, first in *Dýralæra* 107, with *nev* the now usual word for beak, being coined after Dan. *næbhval*.

The Fin Whale has been traditionally known as ROYÐUR, properly the Blue Whale, see under this name. The Faroese of old would have no clear idea of the difference. These huge creatures are difficult to catch, indeed so swift is the Fin Whale that it was quite beyond the reach of whalers until the invention of the harpoon gun in 1864.

NEVHVALUR see under NEBBAFISKUR.

NÍSA f. Porpoise (*Phocoena ph.*) The record begins with Resen 73 'Nysse' Svabo has e.g. *Fiskakvæði* 15 'Nujsa'. The word continues ON *hnísa*, an onomatopoeic name inspired by the loud blow. The term also survives in Icel. *hnísa*, Norw. *nisa*, local *isa* by false division of *ei nisa* 'a porpoise', and with productive *k*-suffix in Shetl. *nisek*.

NÝÐINGUR m. A term for a particularly large Pilot Whale (GRINDAFISKUR-HVALUR), locally also a large Bottlenose Whale (DØGLINGUR).

Svabo records the name, firstly *Fiskakvæði* 18 (but omitting it in the glossary) and secondly *Dict. fær.* 596 where it is defined 'Spækhugger *physeter macrocephala*

lus (Isl. *Hnydingr*). It requires no demonstration that this definition is inapposite; it reflects uncertainties of identification on the part of writers who, like Svabo, had themselves never seen a Killer Whale. However, there is an earlier citation from *Regenskabsbogen* for 1584 '*Nyuinger*' (H. Hamre, *Færøymalet i Tiden 1584-1780* (1944) 38 — actually plural, cf. *Dýralæra* 115 '*í 1584 doyðu 4 nýðingar undir Lítlu Dímun*'). These have been identified as Pilot Whales by E.J. Bjørk, see S. Dahl, '*Hvalfangst*', *Kulturleksikon for nordisk middelalder VII* (1962) 166, and this will be the most likely meaning in *Fiskakvæði*, taking the record back to c.1500. The present meaning is thus a narrowing of the original specific sense.

The Faroese name and its Icelandic counterpart *hnýðingur* 'Delfin' (Blöndal) continue ON *hnýðingr*, the meaning of which was certainly Pilot Whale, as confirmed by the etymology. It derives from *hnúðr* 'knob, ball' (Cleasby-Vigfusson, *Icelandic-English Dictionary* (1874), in allusion to the high, almost spherical forehead so characteristic of the Pilot Whale, hence the scientific *Globicephala*. In the light of this the Icelandic sense is seen to be a secondary transference to another species; the same naturally applies to the local Faroese meaning. It remains to be said that the uncertainties of identification, referred to above, have led to mistakes in some dictionaries and a good deal of confusion in etymological literature, as explained in *MM* pp. 31 f.

NÝVIL m. A noa name for a whale, used by men when at sea. Its literal meaning has been forgotten, but is recoverable from the etymology, the word corresponding to Icel. *hnýfill*, Norw. *nyvel* 'small horn', and attested in ON. *hnýfildrykkja* '*drinking bout where each drinks from his own small horn*'. The Faroese usage has been prompted by *horn*, since Old Norse times the usual term for a whale's (dorsal) fin. There are many reports that men at sea were much afraid of whales, in particular the Killer Whale and the larger sorts. In the case of the latter, the fin (if present) is not a prominent feature, but the fin of the Killer is unmistakable, being larger than that of any other species. It is the fin which, above all, announces the presence of this formidable predator and which has often led to name giving, see **MASTRARFISKUR**. We may conclude that the present noa name applied, at least in the first place, to the Killer Whale. This use of the word is confined to Faroese.

Typologically, the present name recalls terms for the Killer Whale based on *horn* seen in Norw. *staurhyrning* (cf. **STEYR-HVALUR**) and Icel. *háhyrningur* (*há* 'high'). The Faroese substitution of *nývil* for *horn* underlines the evasive nature of the expression.

OND f. A noa name for a whale used by men when at sea, lit. 'breath' i.e. 'blast, blow, spout', descending from ON *ond* 'breath'. The name will most likely have referred to the large species which were greatly feared. Such use of the word is uniquely Faroese. See **NÝVIL**.

ROVHVALUR 'Killer Whale' = BÓGHVÍTUHVALUR. Introduced by M.D. á Ryggi, Varðin III (1923) 59: Bóghvíthvalur ella Rovhvalur, from Dan. *rovhval*, itself a neologism, first found in 1899.

ROYÐUR f. Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*). The earliest source is Debes 167 'Røer', Svabo's spelling is 'Rojur' e.g. *Fiskakvæði* 17, but the name is traditional: ON *reyðr*, gen. *reyðar*. Faroese has innovated with gen. *royðrar*-; a parallel development is Shetland Norn is seen in *rodra-stobbi* matching Far. *royðrarstabbi* 'backbone of a whale used as a seat'.

ON *reyðr* is an *i*-stem related to *reyðr* 'red', its literal meaning therefore 'redness', evolution to a whale name being as follows. The original abstract sense first took on the concrete meaning '(red) meat' here specifically the meat of the Blue Whale; this stage is preserved in ON *reyðarhvalr* lit. '(red) meat whale'. Subsequently, by a further shift, it came to designate the whale itself. Such changes doubtless reflect the working of name taboo, cf. *MM*, pp. 33f.

SEIÐHVALUR m. Sei Whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*). A neologism reflecting Norw. *sejhval* (*Dýralæra* 98). This whale appears off the Finmark coast of Norway at the same time as the *sej* (Far. *seiður*) 'coal-fish', both attracted by the abundant plankton.

SILDREKI m. Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*). First in Resen 73 (corrupt) »Sildrekkel«. Svabo has e.g. *Dict.*

fær. 709: *Silrejki* (*silreekji*, *sildrekji*) *Sildhval*, *Nordkaper*. The name is found again in Icel. *sild-sildreki*, according to Blöndal used for either the Fin Whale or for any large whale pursuing herring. The modern forms presuppose ON **sildreki* lit. 'herring driver', doubtless a collective term. In Faroese, however, the sense has been narrowed, the Minke Whale being a species well known in the islands. It was protected by ancient custom, as it was believed to drive the herring into the fjords, cf. *Indb.* 75.

SLÆTTIBØKA f. Right Whale (*Balaena glacialis*). After Resen (below) attestation goes back to Svabo e.g. *Fiskakvæði* 18 Slat-tubøka. The name continues ON *sléttibaka* with generalisation of the umlauted root vowel occurring in oblique cases, acc. -*bøku* etc. The designation 'smooth back' alludes to the absence of a fin: *Pá heitir enn hvalakyn eitt sléttibaka, ok er ikki horn á baki* (Fritzner III, 429). The name likewise survives in Icel. *sléttibaka*. A variant ON *sléttibakr* m. gives Norw. *sletbak*; Resen 75 »Slettebag« may represent this form.

The much larger, but otherwise very similar Bowhead Whale (*B. mysticetus*), an exclusively arctic species once abundant off the coasts of Greenland, is termed GRØN-LANDSSLÆTTIBØKA, an imaginative neologism (*Dýralæra* 101) not matched in Icelandic or Norwegian where the terms are *Grænlandshvalur* and *Grønlandhval* respectively, names arising in connection with whaling in Greenland waters which began in earnest in the early years of the 17th century.

SPRINGHVALUR m. was known to Svabo e.g. *Dict.fær.* 808 *Springarakveâlur* »*Spring-Hval, Springer*«, and his description of prodigious leaps in *Indb.* 76 leaves no doubt that the name primarily denotes the Whitesided Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*). However, this whale so closely resembles the admittedly less active and slightly larger Whitebeaked Dolphin (*L. albirostris*) that the two species commonly go under the same name. Our next source (*Dýralæra* 171f.) uses **SPRINGFISKUR** and **SPRINGARI**, from the latter creating specific terms **SJÓRUTI** and **KJAFTHVÍTI** **SPRINGARIN** »the pied and the white-jaw dolphin« for the Whitesided and Whitebeaked respectively.

SPRINGHVALUR etc. are borrowings from Norw. *springhval*, *-fisk*, *springer*, the dolphins concerned being common off the coast of Norway. Kalkar first notices *springhval* from 1599, *springfisk* from 1661. These terms cannot be very old, if only for the fact that Norw. *springe* in the sense 'leap' is a late development due to the influence of Low German *springen*, see Falk-Torp — the traditional verb here would be ON *hlaupa*, as still in Far. *leypa*.

The dolphins in question will have been familiar before the adoption of these foreign names, and not only to seamen, for they could sometimes be driven ashore and there dispatched. The older, native term was **LEIFTUR**.

STEYRHVALUR Killer Whale = **BÓGHVÍTUHVALUR**. For the first element compare *steyrur* (ON *staurr*) 'pole, stake',

motivation as in **MASTRARFISKUR**. The name was known to Svabo, our earliest witness: *Indb.* 76 *Sterkveâlur*, though he was unable to assign the name to a definite species. The name is confined to Faroese, but the Norwegian synonyms, *staurhyrning* and *staurvagn*, suggest that the two languages have been in contact. See NÝVIL, VAGN.

TRÖLLHVALUR. Recorded by Svabo, *Indb.* 76 *Trølkveâlur*: *Saaledes kalder man enhver, især ukjent Hvalfisk, som man former, at ville gjøre Skade eller er bange for*, but doubtless older and lying behind Debes 167 '*Trold-Hvale*', described as a term for species of whales, which can, however, be scared off by castoreum. His contemporary Resen 71 equates '*TrodHval*' with '*Sottebak*', manifestly a corruption of '*Slettebag*' in the same text (i.e. Right Whale, see **SLÆTTIBØKA**), and also refers to cast oreum. A still earlier attestation takes the record back to 1584 in a report on a marine animal stranded near the village of Funningur and named '*throidhval*', see under **DØGLINGUR**. In modern times the name has been given as denoting a whale which emerges from the depths covered with barnacles and seaweed like a troll (*Orðabók*²).

Such changing usage, with the nonsense about castoreum, would indicate an essentially non-specific term playing no part in the workaday world, in which connection we note that there is no trace of a variant **trøllfiskur*, see under **FISKUR**.

The name is paralleled elsewhere, cf. Icel. *trøllhvalur* 'Troidhval, stor Hval'

(Blöndal) and synonymous Norw. *trollhval*. There are no medieval records.

***VAGN** or ***VOGN** f. Killer Whale = **BÓGHVÍTUHVALUR**

The one-time presence of this term is presupposed by *vagn-* or *vognhøgg*, a compound found twice in the Faroese record. The first occurrence takes us back to the *Seyðabræv* of 1298, ed. J.H.W. Poulsen and U. Zachariasen (1971) 51: *hvalflystri þa er ver kollum vagn hogg*. A later addition (p.5) offers a commentary: *hvalflyster; stycke af hvalen som flyter i vågen, vagnhog, det man får hugga fritt i uti vågen*. On the basis of this Fritzner defines *vagnhøgg* n 'Stykke som en forfølgende vagnhvalr har hugget ud af en Hvals Legeme', where *vagnhvalr* is, of course, the Killer Whale; it survives in Icel. *vagnhvalur*. The name is further present in Norw. *staurvagn* see **STEYRHVALUR**.

In the second occurrence, however, the compound *vagn-* or *vognhøgg* has itself become a whale name: Resen 73: *Quæsing eller Vaagenhog; er en liden SpringHval med hvide Plætter i, har Tænder, som ligne Hunde-Tænder*. The latter equation with the Bottlenose Dolphin **HVESSINGUR** is clearly mistaken, the description is that of the Killer Whale, a sense also seen in Norw. *vagnhogg*, quoted as a Helgeland term by Aasen, *Norsk Ordbog* (1873).

ON vagn-, as attested above, is the same word as Swedish dial. *vagn* 'distaff'; it refers to the distinctive fin of this whale, taller than that of any other cetacean, cf.

MM p. 33. For similarly motivated names see under **MASTRARFISKUR**.

ÆDUHVALUR Killer Whale = **BÓGHVÍTUHVALUR**. A name, formed with *æða* 'eider', inspired by sightings of the whale taking eiders. These diving ducks, common in the Faroes, feed in full view close to the shore where they are in danger from the whale in question, see further under **KJAFTHVÍTI**. The present name is uniquely Faroese, the record going back to the beginning of this century, but implied a little earlier (1887) by a Danish translation 'Edderfuglehval', see under **KOBBAHVALUR**.

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