

# A Dane and the Dawning of Faroese Archaeology

Ein Dani og Byrjanin til Føroyska Fornfrøði

*Steffen Stummann Hansen*

Senior researcher, Danish Polar Center, Strandgade 100 H, DK-1401 Copenhagen K  
email: ssh@dpc.dk

## Úrtak

Í október 1932 vitjaðu Gudmund Hatt, professari í búlandafrøði við Københavns Universitet, og kona hansara, Emilie Demant Hatt, listamálarí, í Føroyum í seks dagar á veg heim frá rannsóknum í Grønlandi. Umframt at vera búlandafrøðingur var Hatt eisini ein av fremstu serfrøðingum í fornfrøði viðvíkjandi byggisíðum. Serstakliga hevði Hatt áhuga fyri landbúnaðarskipanum, og meðan hann var staddur í Føroyum, tók hann eisini lut í einum lítlum fornfrøðiligum útgrevstri av eini húsatoft nærindis Tórshavn; hesin grevstur varð fyriskipaður av Føroya forngrípafelag. Fornfrøðiliga umhvørvið, sum Hatt rakti við í Føroyum, gevur á mangan hátt eina mynd av uppruninum at føroyskari fornfrøði.

## Abstract

In October 1932, on his way home from field-work in Greenland, Gudmund Hatt, professor of Human Geography at University of Copenhagen, and his wife Emilie Demant Hatt, an artist painter, visited the Faroe Islands for six days. Besides being a human geographer Hatt was also a leading authority in the field of the archaeology of buildings. Hatt was particularly interested in farming systems but during his stay in the Faroe Islands he also took part in a small archaeological excavation of a house site near Tórshavn, conducted by the Antiquarian Society of the Faroe Islands. The antiquarian and archaeological environment which Hatt encountered in the Faroe Islands in many respects reflected the dawning of Faroese archaeology.

## Introduction

On June 1st 1932 a group of Danish scholars gathered at the pier in Copenhagen Harbour in order to go onboard the vessel 'M/S Disko' of the Royal Greenland Trade Department. They were members of the Danish archaeological expeditions to Greenland that summer. Most attention was probably attached to the expedition led by Poul Nørlund (1888-1951), the historian of the Danish National Museum, who was accompanied by Swedish archaeologist Mårten Stenberger (1898-1973) of the University of Uppsala. They were heading for Qassiarsuk in the core-land of the Eastern Settlement of Norse Greenland to excavate what was supposed to be the *Brattahlíð* of the sagas, the farmstead of the very founder of Norse Greenland, Eric the Red.

Attached to Nørlund's expedition, however, was another important though less spectacular and prestigious project, which was established and conducted by Gudmund Hatt (1884-1960), the professor of Human Geography at University of Copenhagen. Hatt had, among other things, for a number of years extensively recorded and excavated field-systems and house-sites of





*Fig. 1. Gudmund and Emilie Demant Hatt on board the 'M/S Disko' on their way to Greenland on June 1st 1932. The return journey from Greenland approximately four months later brought the couple to Iceland and the Faroe Islands respectively, before they arrived at Copenhagen, via Bergen, on October 28th. Photo: private.*

the Iron Age in the moorlands of Jutland (Hatt, 1931; 1936; 1937; 1949). This year he had obtained a leave from his teaching at university and had been given a grant from the Carlsberg Foundation to conduct a project in Greenland, in which he was assisted by Kjeld Milthers (1907-1960), a geologist recently graduated from University of Copenhagen. The background for Hatt's project was a presumption that the large size of several of the byres found at Norse farmsteads in Greenland, demonstrated that there had been rich vegetation potential for husbandry, especially cattle, during the medieval period. The aim of the project, therefore, was to record the present day vegetation of a wide area around Qassiarsuk to estimate to what extent there still was a potential for husbandry, now especially sheep.

Also accompanying Hatt was his wife Emilie Demant Hatt (1873-1958), an artist painter, who had made herself a name in other fields too. At the beginning of the century she had travelled among and lived with the Sami population of northern Swe-

den, and it was to her credit that a wide number of ancient Sami myths and legends were recorded (Demant 1922; Skive Museum 1983). Over the years she had also been a loyal travelling-companion to her husband (Fig. 1).

In Greenland the Hatt couple and Milthers pitched their camp with Nørlund's expedition in Qassiarsuk, and here they spent the summer. Hatt managed to record the vegetation in a wide area and also, near the icecap, found a hitherto unknown Norse farmstead in a valley, which he named Nordbodalen (English: *Norseman's Valley*) (Stummann Hansen 1999).

The excavations in Qassiarsuk were finished on September 23rd. On this day the Hatt couple, together with a number of the other members of the expeditions, including Nørlund and Stenberger, left Qaqortoq (Julianehaab) onboard the Danish inspection vessel 'Hvidbjørnen' (English: *The Polar Bear*) bound for home (Fig. 2). The vessel, however, would only take the passengers to Iceland and from there they would



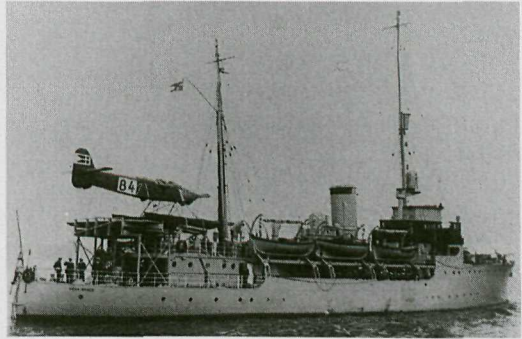
have to make other arrangements to go all the way to Denmark. This opened the opportunity to stay over for a while in Iceland as well as in the Faroe Islands.

'Hvidbjørnen' arrived at Reykjavík on September 27th and after a stay of approximately two and a half weeks the Hatt couple left Reykjavík again on October 15th onboard the ship 'Dronning Alexandrine'. The morning after the departure they passed Vestmannaeyjar off the south coast of Iceland, now bound for the Faroe Islands.

While staying in Iceland Hatt managed to experience the antiquarian environment of the country and had visited a wide range of archaeological sites and historical monuments. This was due to the hospitality of Matthías Þórðarson, the director of the National Museum of Iceland, who could also prepare Hatt for his visit to the Faroe Islands and likewise was able to pave the road for him into the antiquarian environment there. Hatt, no doubt, was looking forward to becoming acquainted with not only the Faroese landscape and its monuments but also with the leading antiquarians. What was it like, the antiquarian environment which Hatt encountered in the Faroe Islands?

### **The antiquarian environment in the Faroe Islands**

In 1898, at a public meeting held during *Ólavsøku*, the annual celebrations of St. Olaf, an antiquarian initiative was established in the Faroe Islands. It was, primarily, based on a general public desire to preserve and collect material remains of the



*Fig. 2. The Danish inspection vessel 'Hvidbjørnen', which brought the Hatt couple from Greenland to Iceland on their way to the Faroe Islands. It was, incidentally, on this journey, with Nørlund, Stenberger and Hatt onboard, that the vision of a Pan-Scandinavian archaeological project in Iceland was born. The purpose of the project was to excavate house ruins in Iceland in order to produce material comparative to that of Norse Greenland. A few days later Nørlund proposed the idea to Matthías Þórðarson (1877-1961), the director of the National Museum of Iceland, who agreed to the plan (Nørlund, 1943; Stenberger, 1943; Stummann Hansen, 2001; 2002a). The project eventually took place in the summer of 1939. Photo: Danish Naval Material Command.*

Faroese past and its aim was to collect, preserve and display items. Another aspect was, of course, the importance of such a collection in creating of a Faroese cultural and national identity (Thorsteinsson, 1975; Stummann Hansen, 2002b).

At the meeting in 1898 a committee of eighteen men had been elected, and Andrass Sámalsson (1873-1954), a member of the Løgting, the Faroese Parliament, was appointed to acquire, record and store the items. Although the collection of items already had been initiated the same year the progress seemed to be slow. In 1900, the committee, for the first time, was granted a public financial support of 50 Danish kro-



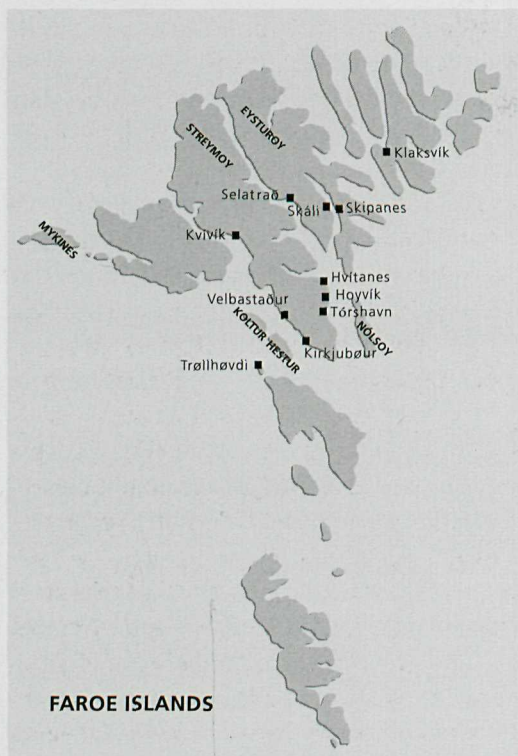


Fig. 3. Map of the Faroe Islands with places mentioned in the text. Map: Irene Seiten.

ner from the Faroese Parliament. But still there was little progress in the acquisition of items and the following year the committee could state that there were more members than items. The money from the Løgting had not been spent.

This deadlock, however, was broken with the appointment as chairman of Rasmus Rasmussen (1871-1962), a highschool teacher. In corporation with Andreas Christian Evensen (1874-1917), a clergyman, he had travelled the islands and acquired a rather high number of items. Unfortunately,

by doing this they had spent so much money that the initiative had become in deep debt. The effort of Rasmussen, however, remained short-lived, but Evensen took over and followed this line.

This private initiative formalised its work in 1916 with the establishing of *Føroya Forngrípafelag*, the 'Antiquarian Society of the Faroe Islands', to which the collection was transferred. The aim of the Society was to acquire and store items as well as to provide support for the preservation of a proper collection of artefacts and antiquities. Evensen served as chairman of the society until his death the following year.

There can only be thrown sparse light on the efforts of the Society over the following years, but in 1928 it was reorganised. During the following years personalities such as Mads Andreas Jacobsen (1891-1944), a librarian, Hans Andreas Djurhuus (1883-1951), a teacher and writer, his wife Petra Djurhuus (1892-1975) and others put a lot of their energy and effort into the Society. The latter was actually educated in conservation during a stay in Copenhagen 1929-1930 (Andreassen 1997, 51; Djurhuus 1944, 116). In 1931 the society acquired space under the roof of *Bókasavnið*, the library in Tórshavn where a permanent display was housed until the late 1980s. The establishing of this small museum formed the initial step to what later became *Føroya Fornminnissavn*, the National Museum of the Faroe Islands.





*Fig. 4. Ejnar Knudsen (1888-1949) was born near Slagelse in Denmark. He graduated in 1909 from the Copenhagen Veterinary College (today The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University). After a couple of other positions he was appointed director of the newly established Research Programme in Faroe and was based at its head office in Hoyvík. He was in Faroe until 1934 when he changed his place of work to a Research Station in Northern Jutland. While in Faroe he edited eleven State reports on agricultural experiments. Photo (1944): The Royal Library. Department of maps, prints and photographs.*

### **Hatt in Faroe**

It was a fine and bright weather as the ship 'Dronning Alexandrine' approached the Faroe Islands. During the day, however, the sight deteriorated and the clouds covered the mountains. But the weather cleared up again. Hatt described their arrival at Faroe on October 17th in his notebook; 'We sailed south of Mykines and Vágur, Koltur and Hestur, as well as Trøllhøvdí. We ar-

rived at Tórshavn at three o'clock in the afternoon'. After the arrival the couple went down to the Hotel Djurhuus, where they took lodgings, enjoyed a meal and 'enjoyed the beauty of the town' (Fig. 3).

The following morning Hatt arrived at Hoyvík at the 'Research Station of Agriculture and Farming', where he presumably had organised to meet with Ejnar Knudsen (1888-1949), the director (Fig. 4). Hatt was well received and was immediately put in contact with Mads Winther Lützen (1877-1942), an agricultural adviser (Fig. 5). This visit to the Research Station should clearly be seen in the context of Hatt's project in Greenland and his overall interest in agriculture and farming systems. Therefore it was of big importance to him to meet Lützen who some years earlier had published the book 'Landbruget paa Færøerne' (English: *Farming in the Faroe Islands*) (Lützen, 1924).

After lunch the Hatt couple visited the Museum established the previous year under the roof of the library. Here they met with Mads Andreas Jacobsen, the librarian and chairman of the Museum, who guided them around (Fig. 6). Later in the afternoon Jacobsen took the Hatt couple to Kirkjubøur. The site was of course a great experience to Hatt and he described it quite detailed in his notebook.

The following day, Wednesday October 19th, Jacobsen took Hatt to Eysturoy by motorboat. The weather was brilliant and the scenery spectacular with mountaintops clad in snow, which had fallen the previous night. They sailed up through Tangafjørður and from there up into Sundini between the





**Fig. 5.** Mads Winther Lützen (1877-1942) was born in Klaksvík. He graduated from the agricultural college in Ås, Norway, in 1900. He was an agricultural adviser in Faroe from 1917 until his death in 1942. He published the book '*Landbruget paa Færøerne*' in 1924. Photo: after Føroya Búnaðarfelag 1962.

islands of Streymoy and Eysturoy to the settlement (Faroese: *bygd*) of Selatrað [1] where they were going to visit a special person. Hatt stated in his notebook: 'We visited the tenant (Faroese: *festari*) Weihe, who has donated most of the items stored in the Museum in Tórshavn and who has a strong interest in archaeology' (author's translation).

It was not any tenant farmer who was presented to Hatt by Jacobsen. A few years earlier Andreas Weihe (1867-1946) had do-

nated a large assemblage of items to the Museum, which had enlarged the collections considerably (Djurhuus 1944: 116) (Fig. 7). Weihe, among other things, showed Hatt some Neolithic artefacts, allegedly found in a drainage ditch (may probably have been from Denmark). Weihe was sad that Hatt could not stay longer, but then decided to join them in the motorboat. They went down Skálafjørður to the settlement of Skipanes where Hatt was shown one of the old houses.

From here they went over the mountains to Norðragøta, where Hatt was guided into the house, which was supposed to be standing at the place where Trond of Gøta, one of the great figures of the 'Saga of Faroe Islanders', allegedly had his farm. Here Hatt was shown the stones, which were said to be the foundation stones of Trond's original house.

After the visit to Gøta they went back to Skipanes and took the motorboat across Skálafjørður to the settlement of Skáli. Here they had coffee in a private home. They discussed controversial statements on the ongoing dispute between Denmark and Norway about the sovereignty over Greenland, presented in the Faroese newspaper *Tingakrossir* [2]. In Skáli they departed from Weihe who walked back to Selatrað while Hatt and Jacobsen took the motorboat back to Tórshavn.

A trip to Klaksvík was originally scheduled for Thursday 20th. The evening before, however, Jacobsen and Poul Niclasen (1889-1953), the editor of the biggest Faroese newspaper *Dimmalætting* and a close associate of Jacobsen, had turned up

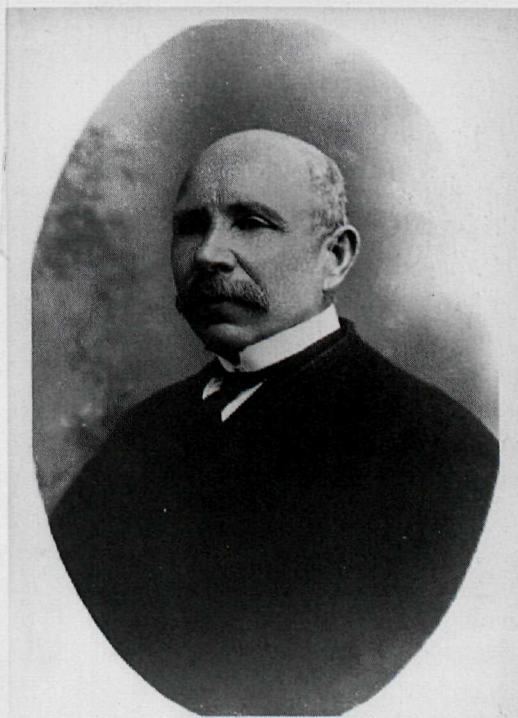




**Fig. 6.** Mads Andreas Jacobsen (1891-1944) was born in Tórshavn. He graduated from high school in Copenhagen in 1910. He started studies on various subjects at University of Copenhagen but never got a degree. For a number of years he taught at secondary school and at the teacher training college in Tórshavn. In 1919 the Faroese Parliament appointed him to organise the Faroese Library services. He was subsequently, in 1921, appointed librarian of the Faroese County Library, a position he kept until his death. During the period 1918-1934 he was the chairman of the Faroese Society of Literature 'Varðin'. He himself also contributed a number of works to this society over the years. He was chairman of the Tórshavn City Council in 1933-1944, a member of the Faroese Parliament in 1936-1940 and chairman of the Museum since 1928 (Davidsen, 1981a). Photo: Føroya Fornminnissavn.

at the hotel where Hatt was staying telling him that according to the weather forecast a hurricane was coming up. They therefore cancelled the trip to Klaksvík (Fig. 8).

It was a wise decision as Thursday turned out to be a rainy day and Hatt instead spent time with Christian Matras (1900-1988), the linguistic, discussing Faroese



**Fig. 7.** Andreas Weihe (1867-1946) was a tenant at Selatrað in Eysturoy. He was elected to the Faroese Parliament in 1906 (until 1910) representing the party Sambandsflokkurin (Unionist Party). This again brought him in contact with consecutive editors of the newspaper Dimmalætting. He had a keen interest in history and travelled widely throughout the islands collecting items and recording folklore. The growth of the collections of the museum was to a large extent due to him (Dimmalætting 20.11.1946). Photo: Føroya Fornminnissavn.



place-names (Fig. 9). Matras was about to finish his Dr. of Philosophy dissertation on this topic. The dissertation, *Stednavne paa de færøske Nordøyar*, was published the same year in the annual *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, published by the Copenhagen based 'Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries' (Matras, 1932). Later on the day Hatt visited Niclasen. In the evening the Hatt couple were invited for dinner at the private home of Knudsen, the director of the Research Station in Hoyvík.

On Friday October 21st Hatt stated in his notebook: 'I left with librarian Jacobsen and three men to investigate a ruin north of Havnardal, which was supposed to be a "Fransatoftr". It turned out, however, that only a corner of this ruin was preserved. We now walked on for another mile (= app. 7.5 kilometres) and arrived at a place south of the Kaldbaksfjørður called "Fransatoftr", which had been mentioned by Daniel Bruun' (author's translation from Danish).

'Fransatoftr' (in English literally: ruins of the French period) is a term used for a number of house ruins scattered around on the islands. The phenomenon is particularly connected with the period 1675-1679, when Denmark and the Netherlands were at war with France. Due to this state of war French pirate vessels now and again arrived at the Faroe Islands. The population was completely exposed to such attacks and therefore, as a counter-measure, built small well-hidden houses for refuge in the mountains (Bruun, 1929: 89). In his book on the Faroe Islands during the period 1600-1709 Niels Andreas Christian Andersen (1849-



**Fig. 8.** Poul Niclasen (1889-1953) was born in Tórshavn. Already in 1903 he was apprenticed at the newspaper *Dimmalætting*. Early on he contributed himself to the newspaper, especially with articles on political topics. He became a member of the Faroese Parliament during the period 1916-1923. In 1918 he took over the position of chief editor of *Dimmalætting*, a position he kept until 1936. He held numerous honorary offices in various organisations. During the period 1930-1938 he, jointly with M. A. Jacobsen, edited and published the Christmas Magazine "*Jól í Føroyum*". In 1936 he was again elected to the Parliament, and subsequently by the *Sambandsflokkurin* (Unionist Party) and the *Javnaðarflokkurin* (Socialdemocratic Party), elected to represent them in the Danish Parliament (re-elected in 1939). He continued his political career after World War II (Davidsen, 1982).

Photo: Føroya Fornminnisavnn.

1919) described the phenomenon as follows (Andersen, 1895: 223):





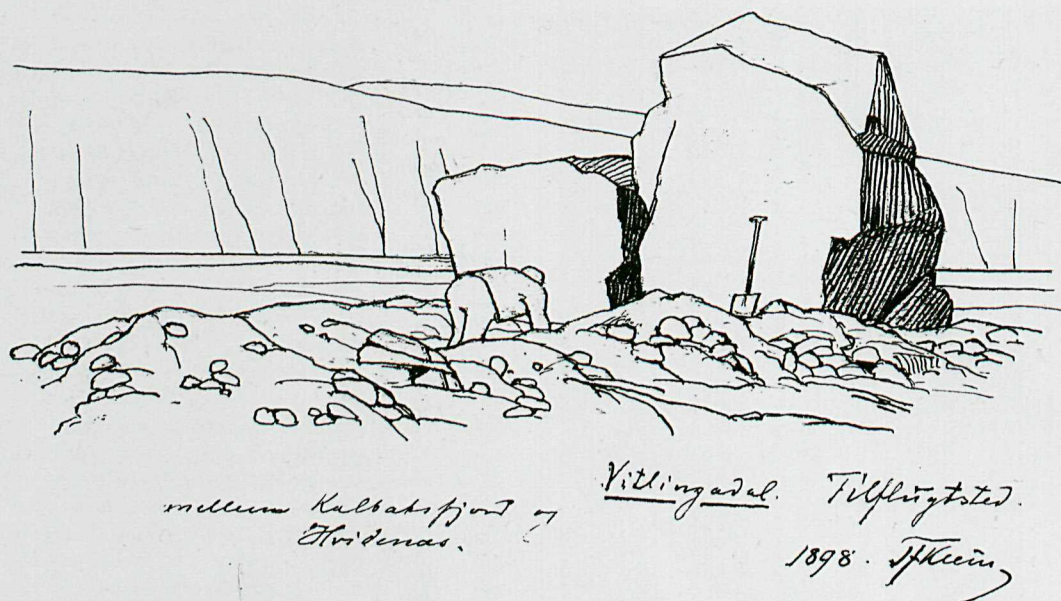
*Fig. 9. Christian Matras (1900-1988) was born at Viðareiði. He became a graduate of the Sorø Academy in 1920, mag.art. (= app. M.A.) in 1928 and, in 1933, Doctor of Philosophy with the dissertation 'Stednavne paa de færøske Nordøyar' (Matras 1932). He became a lecturer in Faroese at University of Copenhagen in 1936, extraordinary reader in 1942, extraordinary professor in 1952 and, except from a leave in 1965-1966, professor of Faroese language and culture at Fróðskaparsetur Føroya (Academy of the Faroe Islands) during the period 1965-1971. He held many honorary offices, including that of editor of the annual Varðin during the period 1931-1936 and again in 1973-1974, and that of chairman of Føroyingafelag (The Faroese Society) in Denmark 1936-1942. He produced numerous academic publications, which included – besides his dissertation – a number of articles in the journal Fróðskaparrit 1954-1958 on Celtic loanwords in Faroese. He also published a number of his own novels, collections of poems as well as translations of foreign literature. He was awarded honorary memberships of a range of academic societies abroad (Davidsen, 1981b). Photo: The Royal Library. Department of maps, prints and photographs.*

'The worst agony, which the population of the Faroe Islands were enduring, was the devastation by free-booters, who constantly made life and welfare unsafe, and this agony continued throughout the century. The property of the inhabitants was stolen, and if they offered resistance, they were cut down, the women were ravished, and if there was a need for men onboard or slaves, where the free-booters came from, people were abducted. The population never knew that one was safe when and where the landings and attacks came. As soon as the vessels of the free-booters were sighted, everybody left their homes and took to well-hidden and faraway refuge places in the mountains. From here they, if

spotted, »with stones could keep such rapscallions and bandits away from them, so that they could not come them any closer and hurt them«. These refuge places are still pointed out in the outfield under the name »Fransahusene« (author's translation from Danish).

Information on such look-outs and refuges had been recorded over a length of time. For instance in connection with the surveys conducted by the Danish Ordnance Survey in the Faroe Islands in the late 19th century, but also the travels in the islands in 1896 and 1914 respectively of Daniel Bruun (1856-1931), an antiquarian connected





**Fig. 10.** A view of the excavation at the 'Fransatofir' near Hvítanes in 1898. Drawing by Johannes Klein. National Museum of Denmark, Topographical-Antiquarian Archives.

with the National Museum of Denmark (Bruun, 1929: 92). In 1898 Bruun, together with the architect Johannes Klein (1854-1928), excavated in a ruin of this type. Bruun described it as follows:

'A couple of hours walk at a mountain path from Tórshavn past the plantation to the Northwest and towards the settlement of Sund takes one close to Villingadal and the cairn Gellinga-Klettur (343 metres above sea-level). The site is situated between Kaldbaksfjørður and Hvítanes and is by some referred to as „Fransatofir“. Here is an ancient refuge, whereto the inhabitants of the nearby settlements, maybe even from Tórshavn, took in times of unrest. By some large

boulders has been built a rather big hut, which by the excavation by Johs. Klein and myself in 1898 turned out to be a complete „Smoke-room“ (Faroese: *Roykstova*, author's comment) with walls of turf and stones. The internal measurements of the hut were 3.40 metres x 2.53 metres, the thickness of the walls approximately 1 metre. In one corner of the room was found an open fireplace consisting of flat stones brittled by fire. The hut had probably been burnt or taken down. It was well hidden by the large boulders at the top of the mountain, so that even people passing by would not take notice of it. The building is said to derive from the times of Magnus Hejnesen [3]. There is by the way, a reference to a couple of houses at the



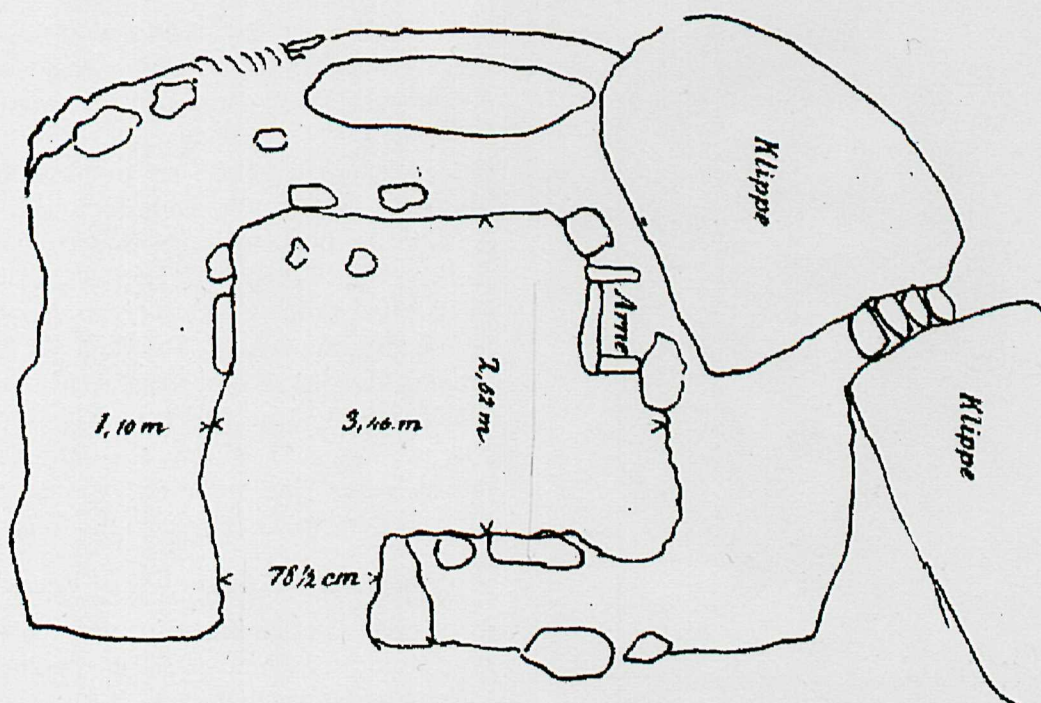


Fig. 11. Bruun's and Klein's plan from 1898 of 'Fransatoftr' near Hvítanes. Drawing by Johannes Klein. National Museum of Denmark, Topographical-Antiquarian Archives.

same place, which we, however, could not observe' (Bruun 1929, 93-94; author's translation from Danish) (Figs. 10-11).

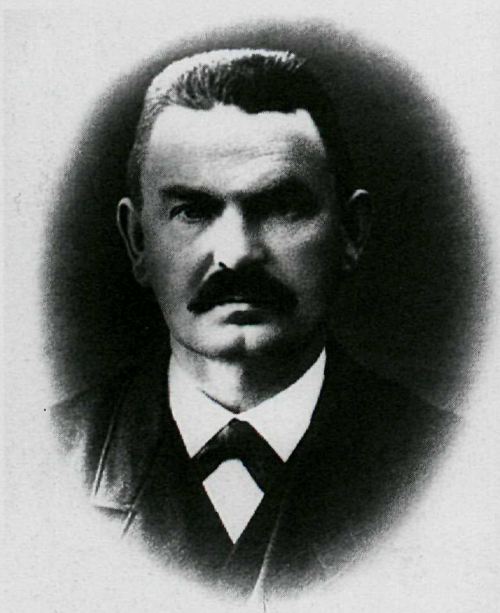
It was the same site as visited by Bruun and Klein in 1898 which Jacobsen and Hatt were heading for that day in October 1932. Hatt stated in his notebook:

'There are two house ruins here. We excavated the biggest of them. Daniel Bruun's excavation cannot have been particularly thorough. We uncovered a paved floor with a centrally placed fire-place where an ash-layer was located and by this big stones had been put on edge which confined the fire-

place to the one side...[4]. On the roof some flat stones must have been lying, which have collapsed down over the centrally placed hearth. Preserved wood (....), some wooden rivets and numerous rusty iron rivets were found in the ruin (....) Presumably this building and a smaller attached structure have served as a refuge for the farmer at Sund when pirates went ashore. Between the two structures runs a small stream' (author's translation from Danish).

In the evening after a hard day's work at the site the Hatt couple visited the private home of Lützen where they also met Matras again.





**Fig. 12.** Anton Degn (1871-1950) was born in Tórshavn. Due to the early death of his father he had to leave school at an early stage in order to provide for the family. During the years 1906-1912 he was director of the public telephone service. The service, due to the recession after World War I, went into liquidation in 1925 and Degn was without work. He was, however, offered the position as archivist, which was going to be established a few years later in connection with the building of combined offices for the national library and archives. He spent the following 5-6 years at the Danish State Archives in Copenhagen in order to make himself acquainted with the archives service. While in Copenhagen he copied early documents on Faroese history. On July 1st 1932 he was appointed archivist of the Faroe Islands and he now started collecting and recording Faroese documents. He had a political career in the Faroese Parliament 1906-1908 and in the Tórshavn City Council during the years 1909-1922 (the last two years as chairman), representing the Sambandsflokkurin (Unionist Party). Degn published a number of books and articles on topics of Faroese history (Davidsen, 1979). Photo: Føroya Fornminnisavni.

The following day, Saturday October 22nd, Lützen took Hatt to the islands of Koltur and Hestur. Also with them was Anton Degn (1871-1950), the archivist of the Faroe Islands (Fig. 12). They arrived at the settlement Velbastaður and from here a small motorboat took them across to Koltur. After a number of coffee-visits at the farms at Koltur they went on to Hestur before they returned to Tórshavn. In the evening librarian Jacobsen paid them a visit and they had a chance to buy some Faroese books. They were also informed that the vessel 'SS Lyra', which was taking them to Bergen, was expected the following day.

Sunday October 23rd, then, it was time to say goodbye. Hatt stated in his notebook: 'We visited the librarian and his mother, Lützen, the agricultural adviser, Niclasen, the editor, Degn, the archivist and they took a last leave of each other.'

'SS Lyra', however, was delayed and the Hatt couple only left the Faroe Islands on Monday October 24th. In Bergen they visited the museum and met with the colleagues Haakon Shetelig (1877-1955), the professor of archaeology at the University of Bergen, and Johannes Bøe (1891-1971), another archaeologist and curator at the Bergen Museum [5]. After a short stay in Bergen the couple arrived at Copenhagen October 28th. By then they had spent almost five months in the North Atlantic.

In his report to the Carlsberg Foundation Hatt summarised his visit to the Faroe Islands as follows: 'October 15th we left Iceland and arrived at the Faroe Islands October 17th. We stayed here for six days and I





*Fig. 13. Oil painting by Emilie Demant Hatt from 1948. The painting was based on her memory of the visit to the Faroe Islands in 1932, and is now in the private ownership of Signe Hatt Åberg in Sweden. Another painting with almost the same motif is called 'Faroese landscape. Mountain and Sea', now stored in the Skive Art Museum in Denmark. The gloomy atmosphere of the painting is no doubt a reflection of her mental state after her husband Gudmund in 1947 was sacked from his professorship at University of Copenhagen on grounds of "unpatriotic conduct" during the German occupation of Denmark.*

had the opportunity to study landscapes (Fig. 13), settlements and farming in parts of Streymoy and Eysturoy and in Koltur and Hestoy. The old Faroese house too has a close relationship with the Iron Age house of Northern Jutland. I conducted an excavation of an ancient house ruin, one of the so-called "Fransatoftrir", jointly with the librarian M. A. Jacobsen of Tórshavn' (author's translation from Danish).

The visit to the Faroe Islands offered a good opportunity for Hatt to get a better insight in landscapes and farming in this part of the North Atlantic. His experience from the Faroe Islands, as well as Greenland and Iceland, probably formed the background for his impressive article *Early Intrusion of Agriculture in the North Atlantic Subarctic Region*, published in Alaska in 1953 (Hatt, 1953).





*Fig. 14. Fransatoftir' before excavation on October 21st 1932. Hatt wrote in his notebook: 'Today I photographed (....) Fransatoftir from the east and the bigger ruin after excavation' (author's translation). Photo: Gudmund Hatt. Private, the author.*

Despite their short stay in the Faroe Islands the Hatt couple managed to make good friends there. Thus they kept in contact with Lützen, the agricultural adviser, and his family, the last Christmas card between them preserved dating to 1956 [6]. The Hatt couple, however, never returned to Faroe (Fig. 14).

### **The first 'professional' Faroese excavation**

It has undoubtedly been a welcome opportunity for Hatt to join an archaeological ex-

cavation with the Antiquarian Society. On October 21st Hatt wrote in his notebook: 'I handed over my notes and measurements to Jacobsen, the librarian, who will finish the excavation, do the levels and (....) publish an article on „Fransatoftir“'.

In a Christmas greeting of December 15th 1932, Mads Andreas Jacobsen wrote to Hatt: 'We have now done the levels at "Fransatoftir". H. J. Jacobsen, a young graduate in agriculture, assisted but we have had no time to plan the houses. Unfortunately the photography was unsuccessful





*Fig. 15. The bigger ruin at 'Fransatoftrir' after excavation on October 21st 1932. Photo: Gudmund Hatt. Private, the author.*

and will now have to wait until spring' [7] (Fig. 15). H. J. Jacobsen, the young graduate of agriculture, who assisted with the levelling, was to become a famous writer, better known by his name as an author Heðin Brú (1901-1987). He provided the technical assistance on this occasion but was not really involved with the Antiquarian Society (pers. comm. Bárður Jákups-son).

Thus it seems that the original plan was to complete the excavation within that same year. Whether the intended planning and photography of the site ever took place is unknown. Nothing is on record in the files

of the National Museum of the Faroe Islands, or of the Antiquarian Society (pers. comm. Mortan Winther Poulsen). Neither has it been possible to trace the notes, which Hatt allegedly left with Jacobsen, and Jacobsen, it seems, never realised his plan to write about the excavation as indicated by him to Hatt.

It is notable that the excavation in 1932 seems to be virtually unknown. Even Sverri Dahl (1910-1987) seems to have been unaware of it. He referred to the site in 1968 but only mentioned the excavation conducted there by Bruun and Klein in 1898 (Trap Danmark, 1968: 254).





*Fig. 16. The bigger ruin at 'Fransatofitir' after excavation on October 21st 1932. Photo: Gudmund Hatt. Private, the author.*

Fortunately, however, there was somebody else who took photographs on the site. A few years ago a number of negatives came into the possession of the author, and they turned out to derive from the Hatt couple's visits to respectively Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands in 1932. According to Hatt's notebook he took two films each of twelve photographs [8]. The photographs represent Hatt's main interests during his stay, i.e. landscape, settlement and farming. But among the preserved photographs are also four from the excavation of the 'Fransatofitir' near Hvítanes. The

photographs demonstrate what seems to be have been a professionally executed excavation (Fig. 14-15). So what was actually going on those October days in 1932?

On October 22nd 1932 the Faroese newspaper *Dimmalætting* brought an article on the Hatt visit with the headline 'Professor Gudmund Hatt and Wife'. The article gave a presentation of Gudmund and Emilie and after having described the excavations in Greenland that summer it stated:

'This year the Parliament has granted 300 kroner to excavations at the site Gerðatofitir



in Klaksvík, where two farmsteads on March 12th 1765 were destroyed by an avalanche, which cost the lives of nineteen people. This has been one of the biggest tragedies ever taking place in these islands, and there can be no doubt that some of the lost persons were burnt to death. It was the plan that Professor Hatt in company with the chairman of the Museum, the librarian M. A. Jacobsen, should have travelled to Klaksvík the day before yesterday to make plans for the excavation with Joensen, the sailmaker, of Klaksvík. Due to the bad weather, however, the trip had to be cancelled.

Yesterday Professor Hatt and librarian M. A. Jacobsen were in Havnedal to excavate the ruins of an ancient Fransahús, which has been used as a refuge in times of unrest, and M. A. Jacobsen was instructed about how such an excavation is planned and conducted. What was conducted here should be described as a trial excavation. The idea then is that librarian Jacobsen shall give directions and support at future excavations in these islands, until a Faroese person has been educated in archaeology.

There can be no doubt that various ancient remains are hidden in the Faroese ground, and it will be of very big importance to the Museum, and of considerable historical and cultural interest, if these remains can be brought into daylight. If excavations are properly organised and conducted by skilled men, we are convinced that it can expect financial support from the Parliament as well as other institutions' (author's translation from Danish).



*Fig. 17. Hans Jacob Jacobsen (1901-1987) – better known by his name as an author Heðin Brú – was born in Skálavík. He graduated from the Copenhagen Veterinary College in 1928. In 1937 he was appointed consultant to the Agricultural Council of the Faroe Islands. He replaced, in 1942, Lützen as agricultural adviser, a position he held until 1968. Over the years he held a number of honorary offices in various organisations. From 1930 and onwards he published a number of highly valued novels and collections of short stories (Heinesen, 1981). Photo (probably from the 1920s): private, Barður Jákupsson.*

Hatt's photographs show what seems to be an excavation well up to the standards of the period. The ranging rods as well as the information in the preserved correspondence and Hatt's notes clearly document that levels were taken at the site, just as planning and photographic documentation were intended. To Jacobsen the opportuni-





*Fig. 18. Gudmund (centre) at an excavation of an Iron Age farm mound in Northwest Jutland in 1933. Photo: C. J. Becker. Private.*



ty to have the opinion and advice of Hatt, probably the leading authority in this field at the time, was a chance not to be missed in order to push archaeology and the Museum into a more prominent position in the Faroe Islands (Fig. 18).

The corporation obviously was a success, which Jacobsen seems to have been keen to follow up on. Thus, in the previously mentioned Christmas letter of December 15th 1932 to Hatt, Jacobsen wrote: 'I do hope that you and your wife will have the opportunity to visit us again next summer. Then we could carry out excavations, for instance at the site *Í Korndali* in Nolsoy, and maybe elsewhere too' (author's translation from Danish) [9].

Hatt, however, as mentioned above, never returned to the Faroe Islands. The site *Í Korndali* on Nolsoy was never excavated but there was a very satisfying solution to Jacobsen. The people of Nolsoy, encouraged by the Museum, decided voluntarily to schedule the site so that only the Museum was allowed to excavate there. In practice this meant that the site was protected and thereby preserved for the future (Djurhuus, 1944: 117).

### The dawning

Nowhere does Jacobsen or Hatt mention other earlier excavations of house structures in the Faroe Islands. The excavation of the 'Fransatoftr' near Hvítanes thus seems to have been the first excavation undertaken by a Faroese institution and it formed the first step in a strategy formulated by Jacobsen the same year.

It appeared in an article titled 'Fornlutir' (English: *Artefacts*), which was published in a Christmas magazine called *Jól í Føroyum* (English: *Christmas in the Faroe Islands*), which at the time was edited by Niclasen and Jacobsen himself. In the article Jacobsen presented a selection of the items in the collections of the Museum. He concluded: 'All these items which have been uncovered, often incidentally, are of course of highly scientific value. They tell us about ancient times, about the people, about living conditions and daily life, and thereby they are of general interest in connection with the overall history of Scandinavia. It is therefore extremely important that they are preserved, and the main task of the Museum is, of course, to take care of the objects and to make sure that archaeological excavations are carried out in this country' (Jacobsen, 1932: 44; author's translation from Faroese). What Jacobsen demonstrated here, in 1932, in theory as well as in practice, was indeed the dawning of Faroese archaeology.

Arne Thorsteinsson, in an article on the early history of antiquarianism in the Faroe Islands, states that even though several of the actors in the antiquarian environment before the outbreak of the World War II had excavated in house ruins, these investigations could hardly be regarded as professional archaeological excavations (Thorsteinsson, 1975: 7). This may be a correct statement but the events in 1932 certainly demonstrate that the visions and the will were there.

After having studied theology at University of Copenhagen since 1928, Sverri Dahl



in 1938 travelled to Norway to study archaeology. In Oslo he attended lectures on house structures, given by a leading Norwegian authority in the field, Sigurd Grieg (1894-1973). Dahl also, in 1939, participated in the excavation of 'Raknehaugen', the biggest burial mound in Norway (Grieg, 1941: 28). A couple of months after the outbreak of World War II Dahl decided to abandon his studies and returned to the Faroe Islands. He was employed by the Museum in Tórshavn as an assistant and in 1941 Dahl initiated his groundbreaking investigations at the site *Niðri á toft* in Kvívík (Dahl, 1951; 1971a; 1971b).

In 1944 Petra Djurhuus in her obituary on Mads Andreas Jacobsen described a joint visit to Dahl's excavations in Kvívík the previous year: 'In July last year M. A. Jacobsen, my husband and myself went to Kvívík to see the excavation of the site. This was an unforgettable event, a quiet and sunny day. All three of us were very excited with visiting this ancient settlement, which so unexpectedly had turned up and shown what daily life was like hundreds of years ago' (Djurhuus, 1944: 117; author's translation from Faroese).

Mads Andreas Jacobsen luckily lived to see his vision fulfilled. The dawning of Faroese archaeology was turning into full daylight.

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## Resumé

I oktober 1932 besøgte den danske kulturgeograf og arkæolog Gudmund Hatt (1884-1960) Færøerne. Det skete i forbindelse med hjemrejsen fra sommerens feltarbejder i Grønland. Som rejsefælle havde Hatt sin hustru, kunstmalerinden Emilie Demant Hatt (1873-1958). Ægteparret opholdt sig på Færøerne i perioden 17.-24. oktober.

Hatt var især interesseret i landbrugshistorie og arkæologi og fik under sit ophold lejlighed til at træffe alle de færøske autoriteter på disse områder. Inden for landbrugsområdet var ekspertisen knyttet til Forsøgssstationen i Hoyvík, hvor Hatt traf såvel lederen Ejnar Knudsen (1888-1949) som landbrugskonsulent Mads Winther Lützen (1877-1942).

Hvad det antikvariske angår, var ekspertisen knyttet til Føroya Forngrípafelag, hvis ledende kraft først og fremmest var bibliotekar Mads Andreas Jacobsen (1891-1944). Under sit ophold tilbragte Hatt en stor del af sin tid sammen med Jacobsen samt personer som Christian Matras (1900-1988), redaktør Poul Niclasen (1889-1953) og arkivaren Anton Degn (1871-1950). Ligeledes sørgede Jacobsen for, at Hatt fik lejlighed til at besøge den stærkt antikvarisk interesserede kongsbonde Andreas Weihe (1867-1946) i Selatrað på Eysturøy.

Jacobsen havde ønsket at tage Hatt med til byggelsen Gerðatoftr i Klaksvík, som blev begravet ved et stort sneskred i 1765. Forngrípafelagið havde nemlig fået en bevilling på 300 kroner fra Lagtinget det år til at indlede arkæologiske udgravninger på lokaliteten, og det er tydeligt, at Jacobsen ønskede at benytte sig af Hatts ekspertise i planlægningen af udgravningen.

Dårligt vejr forhindrede imidlertid turen til Klaksvík,



og Jacobsen tog istedet den 21. oktober Hatt med op i fjeldene nær Hvítanes bag Tórshavn for at indlede udgravningen af en af de såkaldte 'Fransatofir'. Danskerne Daniel Bruun (1856-1931), en antikvar tilknyttet Danmarks Nationalmuseum, samt arkitekten Johannes Klein (1854-1928) havde allerede i 1898 foretaget en udgravning i en af tomterne her.

De eneste oplysninger, der foreligger om den udgravning, som Jacobsen og Hatt foretog i 1932, er tilsyneladende Hatts notesbog, der opbevares i Rigsarkivet i København, samt en række fotos, som Hatt tog på stedet. Der var nærmest tale om en prøveudgravning, hvis formål var, at Hatt skulle instruere Jacobsen i generelle udgravningsstandarder, således at denne selv kunne bistå ved fremtidige udgravninger på Færøerne, indtil en færing var blevet rigtigt uddannet som arkæolog.

Indtil Hatts besøg synes folkene i Forngrípafelagið primært at have samlet sine kræfter omkring indsamlingen af genstande samt etableringen af det lille museum, der havde fået til huse under loftet på Bókasavnið. I 1932 var der imidlertid tilsyneladende lagt en klar strategi, formuleret af Jacobsen, for fremover også at gennemføre arkæologiske udgravninger. Hatt besøgte således Færøerne på et tidspunkt, hvor færøsk arkæologi var i sit morgengry. Med Sverri Dahls (1910-1987) udgravninger i Kvívík under krigen var en national færøsk arkæologi for alvor ved at etablere sig. Lykkeligvis nåede bibliotekar Jacobsen at opleve sine visioner realiseret.

## Notes

1. There is no precise translation of the Faroese phenomenon *bygd*, which may consist of from one or several 'settlements' (farms). Although not unproblematic the term *bygd* in this article has been translated with the word 'settlement' in a more general sense.
2. Notebook. Danish National Archives (Gudmund Hatt, Private Archive no. 8256, parcel 38).
3. Magnus Heinesen (1545-1589) was a Faroese freebooter. In 1579 he was provided with a monopoly and permission to arm a warship in order to cleanse the area around the Faroe Islands from pirates. He also built a fortress in Tórshavn as a defence of the stores of commercial trade in the town. He lost his monopoly in 1584. Heinesen was decapitated in Copenhagen in 1589, at the request of Christoffer Valkendorff (1525-1601), but was shortly afterwards rehabilitated.
4. Hatt's handwriting is very difficult to read and it has been impossible for the author to decipher a few lines at this place in his text.
5. After his return Hatt submitted a report, dated May 14th 1934, to the Carlsberg Foundation, which had sponsored his project. Carlsberg Foundation Archives.
6. Danish National Archives (Gudmund Hatt, Private Archive no. 7256, parcel 44).
7. Danish National Archives (Gudmund Hatt, Private Archive no. 7256, parcel 5).
8. The author is in possession of only one of these.
9. Danish National Archives (Gudmund Hatt, Private Archive no. 7256, parcel 5).



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