

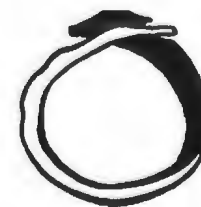
Viking and Norse in the North Atlantic

*Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Fourteenth
Viking Congress, Tórshavn, 19-30 July 2001*

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and

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Annales Societatis Scientiarum Færoensis
Supplementum XLIV

Tórshavn 2005

Published by
Føroya Fróðskaparfelag - The Faroese Academy of Sciences
Debesartrøð, Postrúm 209, FO-110 Tórshavn, FAROE ISLANDS
fff@froedskaparfelag.fo, www.Froedskaparfelag.fo

in collaboration with

Føroya Fornminnisavni
Historical Museum of the Faroe Islands
www.natmus.fo

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ISBN 99918-41-44-X

International distribution:
Bókasølan í SMS
e-mail: bokasolan@bokasolan.fo
www.bokasolan.fo

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Typesetting:
Føroyaprent

Printed in the Faroe Islands at
Føroyaprent

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The 14th Viking Congress

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Foreword

As decided at the 13th Viking Congress in Nottingham, the 14th Viking Congress was held in the Faroes in 2001. Most of the members arrived in Tórshavn on the 19th of July, and the congress could begin the next morning.

On behalf of the Patron of the Congress, Anfinn Kallsberg, Prime Minister of the Faroes, the 14th Viking Congress was opened in Tórshavn on the 20th of July 2001 by Deputy Prime Minister Høgni Hoydal. It was a bright summer's day with a blue sky and sunshine, and the 98 members, associates and companions were lucky to enjoy the same fine weather during the whole congress.

The main theme of the 14th Viking Congress was "Viking and Norse in the North Atlantic", and nearly 70 papers had been announced from all disciplines of study of the Viking Age. The great interest unfortunately made it necessary to read papers in two simultaneous sessions, and 3 full and 3 half days were spent giving lectures followed by fruitful discussions. Most of the papers are printed in this volume, which certainly is going to throw new light on the Viking and later Norse age in the North Atlantic, especially in the Faroes.

The congress lectures were given in The Faroese Commercial School, but one evening a public lecture was arranged in the Nordic House in Tórshavn. Professor Knut Helle had been asked to give a public lecture on the position of the Faroes and the other scat lands in the medieval Norwegian dominion, a topic which has great public interest these days, and the lecture was attended by a large public audience.

All meals were taken at Skúlaheimið of the Technical School, where the members of the congress also had the opportunity to socialise in the evenings. Receptions were given by Óli Holm, Minister of Culture, and by Føroya Fornminnissavn, which offered a taste of a wide range of traditional Faroese specialities. The main social event, however, was the congress dinner at Skúlaheimið, where the members got the opportunity to taste one of the greatest Faroese dishes, puffins stuffed with cake dough and raisins, and nearly all did. Faroese chain dancing was of course part of the evening.

During the main congress, excursions were made to places and sites of cultural historical and archaeological interest. The first half-day excursion was to Northern Streymoy with visits to the Viking farmhouse in Kvívík, the church in Hvalvík, the village of Saksun, and to Tjørnuvík, where the islands' first Viking burial ground was discovered in 1956. Another half-day excursion took us to Kirkjubøur on Streymoy, the episcopal residence and cultural centre of the islands in medieval times. The most famous monument on this site is the re-

mains of the cathedral dedicated to St Magnus - an outstanding Gothic monument in the middle of the North Atlantic.

The main congress ended on the 25th of July and the next day some members left for home, while many stayed on to take part in the post-congress excursions. On July 26 we went to Sandoy and Skúvoy and on July 27 to Eysturoy. On Skúvoy the members paid a visit to Ólansgarður, where Sigmundur Brestisson, who christianized the Faroes, according to Færeyinga saga and local tradition, built the first church of the islands, at which he was buried. On Sandoy we visited the historical villages of Húsavík and Sandur. In Húsavík we were informed about the wealthy and famous Húsfrúgvín í Húsavík and presented to the remains of her large farm buildings. Continuing investigations during the last 35 years and the complexity of the archaeological records have made the village of Sandur one of the island's key archaeological sites, which have shown potential for multi-disciplinary archaeological and environmental research.

The full-day excursion to Eysturoy took us to Eiði, where archaeological excavations in the 1970s revealed Viking and medieval settlement remains and in the 1980s an early shieling site at Argisbrekka by the lake of Eiðisvatn. From there we drove to Leirvík to visit the Viking farm at Toftanes, excavated between 1982-87, and other interesting sites in this village, i.a. the well preserved ruin of a medieval chapel, Bønhústoft, apparently demolished during the Reformation.

It had been arranged that those who wished might stay on for the St. Olaf's Festival, and a lot of the members took this opportunity and did not leave the Faroes until July 30 or 31. The weather stayed very fine all the time, and it was our impression that the members were very satisfied with the whole arrangement. And the organizers want to express their gratitude to those members who afterwards sent us so many positive letters.

The success of the congress was due to the efforts of many people and institutions. The organizers want to thank Føroya Sparikassi, Letterstedtska Föreningen, and Mentamálaráðið for their generous financial support. We want to thank Atlantic Airways, Fóm Ísur, Føroya Banki, Føroya Bjór, Føroya Handilsskúli, Norðurlandahúsið, Restorffs Bryggjari, Strandferðslan, and Tekniski Skúli for their generosity and cooperation. And at last we especially want to thank the staff of Skúlaheimið for their hospitality, and the friendly readiness all our wishes were met with.

Arne Thorsteinsson and Símun V. Arge, the Organizing Committee

Chapter 1

The position of the Faeroes and other 'tributary lands' in the medieval Norwegian dominion

Knut Helle

I nafne faður oc sonar oc heilags anda eins guðs i heilagre þrinningu skall einn hans þion konungr vera ifir allu Noregs uælldi bæðe innan landz oc sua skatlondum.

(In the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit, one God in holy Trinity, only one shall be His servant king over the whole dominion of Norway, both within the land and likewise in the tax lands.)

Thus reads the introduction to the Norwegian law of royal succession from 1273, included in the codes promulgated by King Magnus Law-mender (NGL, ii:25, cf. 194, 392). This is the earliest documentary mention of the so-called *skattlond* of the medieval Norwegian kingdom. ON *skattlond* literally means 'tax lands', which in my interpretation implies regular, annual taxation, not only payment of tribute on special occasions. In English it has nevertheless been customary to render *skattlond* as 'tributary lands', a term that seems better suited to denote the relations of these lands to the Norwegian kingdom before they came to be taxed more regularly by the Norwegian crown.

In this article my intention is first to discuss the position of the *skattlond* in the thirteenth-century 'Norwegian dominion' – the *Noregs veldi* of the law of succession, and then to work my way back through the main stages of tributary status through which they appear to have passed before becoming *skattlond* proper. This is a procedure that will eventually take us back to the Viking Age.

The term *skattlond* recurs in the legislation of King Magnus and later Norwegian and Danish-Norwegian rulers.¹ The term refers to the islands of the western ocean that had been settled by Norse colonists in the Viking Age, and the *skattland* system in question had been finally established in the reign of King Håkon Håkonsson (1217–63). The territorial divisions and social and political tensions that had fuelled a century of 'civil wars' were now overcome by a national system of government, based on the principle of one king for the whole of Norway. The

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devote more energy and resources than ever before to expand the territories controlled by the Norwegian crown and to generally strengthen the kingdom's Scandinavian and European position. In order to achieve this King Håkon and his counsellors pursued an active and at times aggressive foreign policy.²

The Norwegian expansionism of the period found its outlets in three directions. First, the governing circle sought to exploit the current internal weakness of the Danish kingdom in order to gain a foothold in Halland south of the Göta River, with a further aim to control trade and shipping to and from the Baltic and possibly also the economically important region of Scania. Secondly, the Crown actively supported Norwegian colonisation along the coast of Troms and Finnmark in the northernmost part of the Scandinavian peninsula, where it eventually came in conflict with the principality of Novgorod over the right to tax the Sami and trade with them. Thirdly, the south-east- and north-oriented policies coincided with strengthened efforts to tie the Norse island societies of the Western Ocean more closely to the kingdom. The thirteenth-century *skattland* system was the outcome of this west-oriented expansionism.

In the early 1260s the Norse Greenlanders and the Icelanders agreed to become subjects of the Norwegian king. This was the result of a process that had started earlier in Håkon's reign. In 1247 the newly consecrated bishop of Greenland had been sent from Norway to claim, on behalf of the king, submission and tax from the Greenlanders, and in 1261 Norwegian merchants brought back the news that the claim had been accepted. The Greenlanders' dependence on Norwegian shipping probably dictated their decision to join the Norwegian kingdom.

Control over Iceland had long loomed large in King Håkon's plans. His and his counsellors' tactics were to intervene in the increasingly bitter Icelandic power struggle with a typical divide-and-rule policy, exploiting the Icelanders' dependence on Norwegian trade and shipping and working partly through Norwegian-born bishops appointed from the archiepiscopal see of Nidaros, partly through Icelandic chieftains who became the king's liegemen in order to strengthen their position at home. The final outcome was that in 1262-64 the Icelanders placed themselves under the Norwegian king and promised him obedience and taxes on the condition that the king would let them enjoy peace and Icelandic law and keep up a minimum of annual sailings between Norway and Iceland.

Further south Norwegian overlordship had already been established over the Faeroes, Shetland and Orkney. This is demonstrated by the well-documented description, in *Hákonar saga*, of the large assembly of the realm that convened in Bergen in 1223 in order to finally confirm Håkon Håkonsson's right to be sole king of Norway. The assembly was attended by the bishop of the Faeroes, by the archdeacon and the *sýslumaðr* (royal steward) of Shetland, and by the earl and the bishop of Orkney (Kjær and Holm-Olsen 1910-86:376-77; cf. Helle 1972:135-36). The Faeroes were drawn even closer to Norway in the winter of 1270-71 when Håkon's son and successor, Magnus Law-mender, issued an ordinance stating that the Faeroese were to enjoy the Gulathing law of western Norway, and promised that two ships would sail annually between Norway and the islands (NGL. iv.352-53; cf. RN, ii, no. 92). This has been taken to mean that the king made a settlement with the Faeroese along the same lines as his father's settlement with the Icelanders in the early 1260s (Debes 1995:39-41).

Throughout his reign King Håkon also worked to make his overlordship over Orkney-Shetland and the Hebrides and Isle of Man more effective. However, from the 1240's his

sovereignty over the latter islands was seriously threatened by the ambitions of the consolidated Scottish monarchy. It was in reaction to the invasion plans of the Scottish King Alexander 3 that Håkon undertook the large but inconclusive expedition to Scottish waters that in 1263 terminated his reign.

King Magnus Law-mender realised that the islands west of Scotland could not be controlled permanently by the Norwegian crown. By the treaty of Perth in 1266 they were ceded to the Scottish king on the condition that he would acknowledge and respect Norwegian sovereignty over Orkney and Shetland. From Orkney northwards the Norwegian dominion over the Norse island communities continued after 1266. For Orkney and Shetland it lasted until king Christian I pledged the islands to the Scottish crown for his daughter's dowry in her marriage to the later King James III in 1468-69. For the Faeroes, Iceland and Greenland it was seriously weakened during the union of Norway and Denmark from 1380. It formally ended when the Danish-Norwegian union was dissolved in 1814 and the remaining *skattlond* stayed under Danish sovereignty.

How should we define the position of the thirteenth-century *skattlond* in relation to the Norwegian crown?

We have seen that King Magnus Law-mender's law of succession decreed that there should be only one king over the whole dominion of Norway, both within the land and likewise in the tax lands – *bæðe innan landz oc sua skatlondum*. This would seem to mean that the *skattlond* were considered lands of their own in relation to Norway and not a part of that land. Both this and other legal provisions indicate that the total Norwegian dominion or realm was officially, from the Norwegian side, regarded as consisting of two main parts: Norway and the *skattlond*.

As for the factual relations of these lands with the Norwegian crown it has already been emphasised that the term *skattlond* implies regular taxation. In their settlement with King Håkon Håkonsson the Icelanders committed themselves to just that: each taxable farmer was annually to pay twenty ells of *vaðmál* (homespun) (NGL, i:461; cf. Jóhannesson 1969: 236-37), half of which went to the king, the other half to his Icelandic officials. According to a tax roll from 1311 more than 3,800 Icelanders paid this tax, and the king's share would amount to the considerable sum of 317_ cow values (Stefánsson 1993:312; Helle 1974: 198-99).

It appears that the same type of tax was paid by the Faeroese.³ The Norse Greenlanders also promised to pay tax on submitting to the Norwegian crown in the early 1260s, but particulars of the type and size of their payment are lacking (Mundt 1977:189). About the royal taxation of Shetland and Orkney we know even less.

The *skattland* status of the Faeroes appears to go further back than that of the other Norse colonies of the Western Ocean. In the early thirteenth century the author of *Færeyinga saga* professed to know that the Faeroese started to pay tax to the Norwegian rulers already in the tenth century and continued to do so at intervals. The historicity of the saga on this point is indeed doubtful, but the author may have projected back into the past a system of annual Norwegian taxation that he knew from his own time.

This is supported by the near-contemporary mention in *Sverris saga* of a certain Karl *sendimaðr* ('envoy') who had the king's *sýslur* in the Faeroes in the 1170s (Indrebø, 1920:2, cf. 51-52). The singular of this term, *sýsla*, literally means 'work, business' and was officially used to denote both the office and district of the *sýslumaðr*, the most important local official of the king from the second half of the twelfth century. *Sýslumenn* were in Norway at that time often given the task of representing the king in districts that had been conquered in the civil wars,

and one of their most important functions was to collect tax and other royal revenues (Helle 1974:206-7). Later they functioned in the same way in Iceland (Stefánsson 1993:317). The appearance in the 1170s of a man who had the king's *sýslur* in the Faeroes may then mean that the islands were now in the process of being tied more closely to Norway as a regular source of royal income.

In the early thirteenth century the author of *Færeyinga saga* knew of two persons, Einar and Skeggi, who had recently been *sýslumenn* in the Faeroes (Halldórsson 1987:). Einar was probably identical with the Faeroese *sýslumaðr* of the same name who visited Norway with his ship some time around 1210 (Magerøy 1988, ii:122). The author of *Færeyinga saga* also purports to know that Brestir, the father of the Faeroese hero Sigmundur Brestisson, was royal *sýslumaðr* in the Faeroes as early as the tenth century, and that the men who from now on at intervals collected the king's tax held all or half of the isles in *lén* (fief).⁴ *Lén* was another term for the office of the *sýslumaðr*, and according to *Færeyinga saga* there was, then, one or two royal *sýslumenn* in the Faeroes from the tenth century onwards. This is an obvious anachronism, as the Norwegian office of *sýslumaðr* hardly dates further back than the latter part of the twelfth century. There is, however, reason to believe that the apparatus needed for the collection of tax and other revenues was in place when *Færeyinga saga* was redorded in the early thirteenth century, and this may already have been the case before 1180 (Debes 1995:41-42). In King Magnus Law-mender's ordinance for the Faeroes in 1270/71 the office of *sýslumaðr* is explicitly mentioned.

In Shetland and Orkney *sýslumenn* are mentioned after Earl Harald Maddadsson had submitted to King Sverre in Bergen in 1195. Shetland was now put directly under the Norwegian crown with regard to tax and other rights that had earlier been enjoyed by the earls of Orkney, and the king reserved half of the judicial fines from Orkney for himself (Indrebø 1920:132; Guðmundsson 1965:297). It was the duty of his *sýslumenn* to collect these revenues.

After King Sverre's death in 1202 Earl Harald had the *sýslumaðr* in Orkney murdered and took back all the rights and authority which he had possessed before 1195, but in 1210 his two sons and successors found it best to come to terms with King Inge Bårdsson. They had to pay a heavy fine, and were given back the earldom of Orkney on conditions that are not specified but are said to have been kept throughout their lifetime (Magerøy, 1988, ii:120-21). Shetland was from now on safely under the Norwegian crown on the terms of 1195. Orkney was for the rest of the thirteenth century ruled by earls who were appointed in Norway and probably held their earldom on the condition that part of their revenues from taxation and judicial fines went to the king. Both Orkney and Shetland may thus be said to have been Norwegian *skattlond* from 1210 onwards, with judicial fines as part of the royal revenue.

Judicial fines must also have been paid to the king from the Faeroes, and are attested as part of the royal revenues from Iceland and Greenland from the latter part of the thirteenth century. This may be seen as a reflection of the fact that Norwegian law now applied in the *skattlond*. It is true that the Icelandic *Alþingi* thoroughly discussed and then passed the new law-codes that were introduced from Norway after the Icelanders had placed themselves under the Norwegian crown: *Járnsíða* in 1271-73 and *Jónsbók* in 1280-81. Thus it can be said that there was no formal breach of the promise given by King Håkon Håkonsson: that the Icelanders would in the future enjoy Icelandic law.

On the other hand, the two law-codes that replaced the former law of the Icelandic Free State corresponded to the two main stages of King Magnus Law-mender's revision of Norwe-

gian law and may to a large extent be said to be adaptations of his Norwegian codes to Icelandic conditions. *Jónsbók* was patterned on the general rural Norwegian Landlaw (*Landslog*) of 1274, and with successive amendments remained Icelandic law for centuries. Following the Norwegian *lawthing* model it made the law council (*lögrétta*) of the Icelandic *Alþingi* into a court of law with thirty-six members, and the Icelandic law-speaker was replaced by one, later two royal lawmen, again after the Norwegian pattern. King Magnus thus went a long way towards making Iceland a Norwegian law province.

This was even more the case with the Faeroes, which did not like Iceland receive a complete law-code of their own. In his ordinance of 1270/71 King Magnus made known to his Faeroese subjects (*þegnar*) that they were to have the law that was in force in the Gulathing law province of western Norway only with a few modifications, which means that the Gulathing law-code revised by him in 1267 would be the main source of law in the islands. In 1274 or shortly afterwards it was replaced by the Norwegian Landlaw which is said to have been approved by the Faeroese *lawthing*, called *alþingi* as in Iceland (NGL, iii:34).

As the section of the Landlaw dealing with agriculture and tenancy was not suited to the special conditions in the Faeroes it was in 1298 amended by the Norwegian Duke Hákon Magnusson in the ordinance which is well known to all Faeroese as *Seyðabrævið* ('sheep document'). Here part of the Landlaw was adapted to Faeroese economic conditions. At the same time Duke Hákon decreed that the Christian law section of the Gulathing Law from the days of King Hákon Hákonsson should still stand (NGL, iii, no. 10). This was because the later Landlaw had no such section, due to the struggle between King Magnus and Archbishop Jon over the right to legislate in these matters.

In Shetland there is documentary evidence that the Norwegian Landlaw was administered in the years around 1300, with a *lawthing* (*logþing*) as the highest court of law, presided over by a royal lawman (DN, i, no. 89 [1299], no. 109 [1307]) There is, however, no direct evidence of adaptations being made along the lines of *Seyðabrævið* in the Faeroes.

There is no information on legal conditions in the Norse colonies of Greenland after their submission to the Norwegian crown, but it is a fair guess that Norwegian law was adopted in one way or another.

Nor is there any contemporary evidence for the legal situation in Orkney in the latter part of the thirteenth century. From later evidence it has, however, been concluded that Orkney, too, had its main judicial assembly in the form of a *lawthing* with a body of judges of the Norwegian *lgrétta* type, presided over by a lawman (Crawford 1987:205). As late as 1425 the Orcadians appealed to the Danish-Norwegian crown against new legal customs and constitutions. They wanted to enjoy the ancient law of St. Olaf, old customs and constitutions, and royal amendments that had been sent them (DN, vi, no. 423). This would seem to indicate that Norwegian law had earlier been adapted to conditions in Orkney as it had been in the Faeroes, though there is no direct information on how this was done in practice.

We may then conclude that *skattland* status under the Norwegian crown in the latter part of the thirteenth century implied that the island communities in question were from the Norwegian side regarded as lands of their own and that they altogether constituted a separate entity within the Norwegian dominion in relation to Norway proper. As it was now used, the term *skattlond* meant that these lands were subject to regular taxation from Norway, though particulars of this taxation are only known from Iceland and the Faeroes. The royal revenue from the *skattlond* also included judicial fines, which draws attention to the fact that Norwe-

gian law now applied in the *skattlond* and was to various degrees adapted to the special conditions there. A royal administrative apparatus had been established, involving lawmen who represented the king in his function as the highest judge of the land and presided over the highest *thing* courts, and *sylsumenn* who collected his revenues and in other ways performed local administrative tasks on his behalf.

What, then, was the prehistory of the thirteenth-century *skattland* system? According to later narratives the system had its roots in the Norse colonisation of the islands of the North Atlantic in the Viking Age. Here it must at once be emphasised that these narratives were probably to a large extent coloured by conditions in the period when most of them were recorded, from the mid-twelfth to the mid-thirteenth centuries. There is reason to suspect that their authors were disposed to project back in time contemporary relations between the Norwegian crown and the western island communities, as in the case of *Færeyinga saga*. Nevertheless, there were obviously tendencies towards Norwegian overlordship over the later *skattlond* well before the thirteenth century.

We have already seen that *skattland* status was reached by the western island communities at different times. Whereas Iceland and the Norse colonies of Greenland did not arrive at this status until they placed themselves under the Norwegian crown in the first part of the 1260s, it appears that the Faeroes, Shetland and Orkney started to pay tax to the Norwegian king at an earlier stage, the Faeroes possibly already before 1180, Shetland and Orkney more lastingly from the submission of the two earls to King Inge Bårdsson in 1210.

The position of the western island communities in relation to the Norwegian kingdom at the stage before they became *skattlond* proper is set out by *Historia Norwegiae*, a short Latin account of Norwegian history from the latter part of the twelfth century, perhaps written already around 1150 with a view to preparing the ground for the establishment of a separate Norwegian church province that followed in 1152 or 1153 (Ekrem 1998). Here is included a section on the 'tributary islands' – *de tributariis insulis* – of the Norwegian kingdom. As such are described Orkney, the Faeroes and Iceland. The author obviously also refers to the Hebrides when mentioning that the southern part of the Orkneys were ruled by petty kings, unlike the northern part which was ruled by earls (Storm 1880:87-97; cf. Ekrem 1998:39).

The inhabitants of the Faeroes are said to pay tribute to the Norwegian kings 'at certain times' – *certis temporibus*, while the Orkneys, including the Hebrides, are reported to pay quite considerable tributes – *non modica ... tributa*. At least in the latter case the payments mentioned were probably not regular taxes but rather tributes in the proper sense of the word, that is payments made periodically in acknowledgement of submission or as price of peace and protection (*Oxford Dictionary of Current English*). This is supported by a chronicle mention, under the year 1166, of a due of ten marks of gold that the king of the Hebrides and the Isle of Man was to pay at the accession of a new Norwegian king (Björkvik 1970, col. 425).

From the later history of the isles it also appears that payments to the Norwegian king tended to be made on occasions of particularly strong Norwegian influence or when Norwegian support was particularly wanted by the local rulers (Helle 1973:9).

This was probably also the type of tribute paid by the earls of Orkney before 1195. On the other hand, we cannot exclude the possibility that payment of tribute from the Faeroes *certis temporibus* alludes to taxation at fixed intervals, in other words that the islands had already reached the status of *skattland* when *Historia Norwegiae* was written.

At first sight it seems surprising that the *Historia* includes Iceland among the tributary

islands, as there is no evidence of payments of tribute or tax by the Icelanders to the Norwegian king before their submission in the early 1260s.⁵ But then there is no express mention of tribute from the Icelanders in the *Historia*, in contrast with what is told about the Faeroes, Orkney and the Hebrides. The author appears to have known that Iceland was not a tributary island in the proper sense of the term, but he may have taken into consideration that the Norwegian kings had long had ambitions to become overlords of the island and also entertained ideas that this was their right. Already some hundred years before, in the 1070s, the historiographer Adam of Bremen, obviously known by the author of *Historia Norwegiae*, was under the impression that Iceland was in some way subjected to the Norwegian king (Schmeidler 1917:267, 269-72; cf. Storm 1880:XXV).

Regardless of whether the *Historia* was composed in order to strengthen the case for a separate Norwegian church province or not, the establishment of such a province in 1152/53 was in itself a momentous event in the development of the relations between Norway and the island communities of the Western Ocean. Six dioceses from Greenland to the Hebrides and Isle of Man were now put under the authority of the archbishop of Nidaros (Trondheim). Obviously this was also an arrangement in the interest of the royal power because it generally promised to tie the western isles more closely to Norway. In the following period cooperation between the Norwegian kings, the archbishops, and bishops appointed from Norway to the western sees was a decisive factor in strengthening the royal influence over the later *skattland*.

At the time of the establishment of the Norwegian church province the two earls of Orkney and the king of the Hebrides and Isle of Man were liegemen of the Norwegian king. This was a relationship that can be safely traced back at least to the reign of King Magnus Olafsson Bareleg (1093-1103). Magnus was, beside Håkon Håkonsson, the Norwegian medieval ruler who did most to establish a dominion west-over-sea. On the first of his two expeditions to the British Isles, in 1098-99, he captured the two Orkney earls and sent them to Norway, from where they never returned, and put his son Sigurd, the later King Sigurd Crusader, in charge of the islands. He went on to establish himself as overlord over the Hebrides and Isle of Man, with the consent of the Scottish king, and also harried in Wales. On his second expedition in 1102-3 his main goal was to establish himself as a strong political factor in Ireland and he appears to have entertained ideas of unifying the lands around the Irish Sea under his rule. This is supported by the fact that he appointed his son Sigurd king of the Hebrides and Isle of Man (Bjørge 1995:27-29).

Magnus' death in battle in Ireland in 1103 put an end to the dream of a Norwegian empire in these waters, but Norwegian sovereignty had now more lastingly been established over the Orkney earldom, including Shetland, and over the Hebrides and Isle of Man. From now on it was customary for the rulers of these islands to be appointed by the Norwegian king or seek acknowledgement from him. In practice, they respected his overlordship when they needed his support or when he was strong enough to make his influence felt. If a more definite starting point should be chosen for the development of the tributary status of Orkney, Shetland, the Hebrides and Isle of Man, it would be the short reign of King Magnus Bareleg.

On the other hand, there is no evidence that Magnus worked actively to increase Norwegian influence over the Norse island communities north of Shetland. The most important factor in tying these communities more closely to the Norway before they became part of the Norwegian church province appears to have been their official Christianisation one and a half century earlier. Additionally it should be mentioned that throughout the eleventh and the first

part of the twelfth centuries it was common for leading men in the islands to become liegemen of the Norwegian king and serve him for periods. These were also factors at work strengthening the ties between Orkney-Shetland and Norway.

In Orkney the Norse inhabitants had probably to a large extent adopted Christianity already before the mid-tenth century. Nevertheless, the official conversion of the islands may not have taken place until 995 when, according to the saga tradition, Earl Sigurd Lodvesson was baptised at the instigation of Olaf Tryggvason on his way home to take over the Norwegian royal power. It appears that Olaf attempted to impose his authority over Sigurd, who was forced into some kind of submission (Crawford 1987:70). But according to *Orkneyinga saga* Sigurd did not show much obedience to the king after the death of a son who had been brought to Norway as a hostage (Guðmundsson 1965:26-27).

Later King Olaf brought about the official conversion of Iceland in year 1000 (Jóhannesson 1969:105-13) and *Færeyinga saga* is probably right in assuming that he was instrumental in the conversion of the Faeroes as well. According to the saga he also tried to impose his overlordship over the Faeroes, installing Sigmundur Brestisson as his local representative and tax-collector. We have seen that there is every reason to doubt the historicity of the saga with regard to taxation at this time, but it may well be that Olaf attempted to impose his authority on the Faeroes as he had done in Orkney and Shetland. In far-away Iceland there is no evidence of a similar attempt on his part.

King Olaf Haraldsson, the later St. Olaf, was able to reign Norway for a longer period than Olaf Tryggvason (1016-28) and may have been the first Norwegian king that at one time made his power more directly felt over most of mainland Norway and the islands of the Western Ocean. He continued the royal promotion of Christianity in the islands, and to all appearances came a longer way than Olaf Tryggvason towards overlordship over them.

The saga tradition is probably right in ascribing to Olaf an attempt to exert more regular control over the Orkney earldom. Here he was provided with an opportunity by the division of the earldom among the sons of Earl Sigurd Lodvesson who are said to have submitted to him and each been given their part of the earldom by him (Crawford 1987:76-77). In a contemporary skaldic stanza the Shetlanders are also called the king's subjects – *þegnar* (*Skjaldedigtning*, A, i:295-96; B, i:272). Recurring divisions of Orkney into two or three parts were in the following period exploited by the Norwegian kings in their efforts to establish a more lasting sovereignty over the islands.

There may be also be some truth in the story, related by *Færeyinga saga*, that Olaf tried to impose tribute or tax on the Faeroes. His envoy, Karl from Møre, was, however, killed by the Faeroese (Halldórsson 1987:) and there is little reason to believe that a lasting tributary status for the islands was established that early.

In Iceland Olaf appears to have been the first Norwegian king who tried to establish a foothold as overlord of the island. According to the saga tradition the Icelanders accepted his gift of timber for a church at Thingvellir, the meeting place of the *Alþingi*, and at his request agreed to remove heathen practices from their laws. They obviously also welcomed the preferential legal status he accorded them in Norway, but they were not willing to comply with any further attempt of his to become their ruler (cf. Jóhannesson 1969:89-93, 11-16). From Olaf's days there may, however, have been a tradition in Norway that its king was overlord over Iceland. This may explain Adam of Bremen's impression, in the 1070s, that Iceland was

in some way subjected to the Norwegian king, and also the later vague inclusion, in *Historia Norwegiae*, of Iceland among the tributary islands of the Norwegian kingdom.

With Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf Haraldsson we are finally back in the Viking Age; they were both Viking kings who went ashore, using their Viking wealth and newly adopted Christianity to become rulers of Norway. A basic condition for their interest in the North Atlantic island communities was of course that they had been colonised by Norse people from the latter part of the eighth century, at the latest, and had preserved strong social and cultural ties to Norway. It remains, then, to discuss whether the western islands had also earlier in the Viking Age been exposed to attempts at political domination from Norway.

According to the saga tradition, recorded in Snorri Sturlusons *Heimskringla* and *Orkneyinga saga*, the first royal ruler of a larger part of Norway, Harald Finehair, established the Orkney earldom after having cleaned Shetland and Orkney of troublesome Vikings, and granted it to members of the family of the earls of Møre. He is also reported to have harried in the Hebrides, Scotland and the Isle of Man (Aðalbjarnarson 1941-51, i:120-22, 128-34; Guðmundsson 1965:7-8, 10-17). If true, this would probably have happened in the early tenth century. However, the saga tradition seems to conflict with *Historia Norwegiae*'s earlier, far more summary account of the establishment of the Orkney earldom. Here Earl Ragnvald of Møre is the conqueror of the islands and his associates went on ruling Orkney (Storm 1880:89-92).

What may be fairly safely concluded from the extant narratives is that the Orkney earldom came into being at the beginning of the tenth century, at the latest, and that the first earls belonged to the Møre family. More recently the prevailing tendency among historians dealing with the origins of the Orkney earldom has been to regard the colourful saga account of Harald Finehair's western expeditions as a later construction. In its details it may well be exaggerated, but I find it difficult to totally disregard the contemporary report of Harald's skald, Torbjørn Hornklove, that the army of the Scots – *allr herr Skota* – fled the land for the king (*Skjaldedigting*, A, i:23-24, B,i:21).

In my view it is not unlikely that Harald Finehair pursued an active west-oriented policy from his directly ruled territory in the southern part of west Norway. This is above all supported by the fact that his son, the later King Håkon the Good, was fostered at the court of the English King Athelstan. There must have been some kind of understanding between the two sovereigns, and it is a tempting guess, put forward by the Norwegian historian Narve Bjørge, that they allied against a common enemy, namely the Norse Viking realm of Dublin-York (Bjørge 1995:23). In the light of such an alliance it seems quite possible that Harald made efforts to control the earldom of Orkney-Shetland.

Generally, it appears to have been Harald's strategy to establish indirect control over parts of Norway outside his core territory by allying himself with local rulers and becoming their overlord. To what extent this policy was carried out also in Orkney cannot be safely determined. Nevertheless, I would hesitate in putting it beyond Harald to have been the Norwegian ruler who started the long series of royal attempts to control the western island communities. If so, his was the very first step towards what was eventually to become the *skattland* system of the thirteenth century.

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Notes

- ¹ NGL, ii, 35, 44 n. 35, 396, 403; iii, 52, 134, 170, 181, 217; iv, 360, 658 n.1; rk. 2, i, 117-18, 230-31, 233, 707

- ² Overviews of the thirteenth-century Norwegian expansionism by Helle 1974 and Bjørge 1995
- ³ Information from Arne Thorsteinsson
- ⁴ On *lén* and taxation in the saga, see Halldórsson 1987
- ⁵ I am not convinced by Ekrem's suggestion (1998:45) that *Historia's* mention of Iceland as one of the tributary islands may refer to the fact that the Icelanders paid a due (*landaurar*) when visiting Norway as traders.

Chapter 2

Cultural Landscapes and Cultural Environmental issues in the Faroes

Simun V. Arge

Introduction

This introduction to the Faroese cultural landscape is intended as a guideline for our congress guests, not least to facilitate a better understanding of what you will experience during our excursions round the islands. I briefly intend to explain the background for the Faroese cultural landscape, and though some selected examples display its characteristic features. Furthermore, I will detail the antiquarian endeavour, and the administrative task of protecting ancient monuments and cultural sites in the Faroes.

The Faroes consist of eighteen islands, separated by narrow fjords and sounds, seventeen of which are inhabited. The islands are approximately 14000km². The longest distance from north to south is 118km, and east to west 79km.

The islands geology is rather simple and straightforward – consisting of a series of three basalt layers interspersed with the volcanic ash, tuff. Together with climatically controlled geomorphologic processes, these basalt series not only represent the basis for the forming of the soil, from where vegetation springs, but is also decisive for the natural formation and character of the landscape: the landscape's form, which is determined by the lowest basalt series, is characterised by its broad step-like terrain form and naked shelves, while the middle basalt series is typical by its convex, rounded, sloping, vegetated hillsides, completely devoid of prominent basalt shelves. In the upper basalt

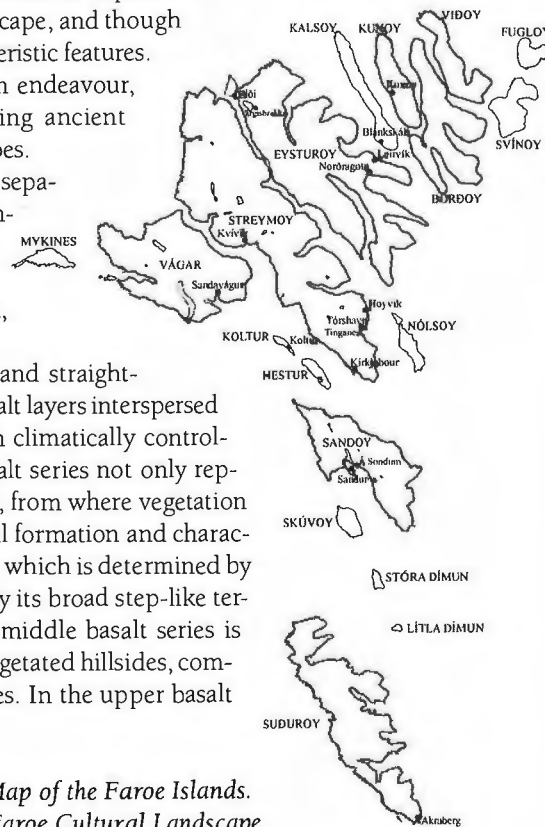


Fig. 1: Map of the Faroe Islands.
Background for the Faroe Cultural Landscape

series we find the reappearance of the step-like landscape, with its regular basalt and tuff layering, figure 1, (Guttesen 1996).

To be able to evaluate, and at best, to understand and interpret the signs of human activities present in the landscape, it is vital to be acquainted with the islands historical background, both sociologically as well as technologically.

Somewhat simplified, we could say the islands history can be divided into an older prolonged period consisting of an agriculture-farming society, and a younger period, where the islands primarily must be characterized as a fishing community.

The Faroes were an agricultural society from very early times, from when Vikings established permanent settlements on the islands – a people who realized the potential of utilizing the natural resources particular to the North Atlantic region. The fish in the sea, whales and seals along the coast, the myriad of birds in the cliffs, have supplied these people with an extra protein rich source. However, what was derived from utilizing the agricultural potential must be regarded as presenting the greatest challenge. The utilisation of arable land established the basis for the plant- and domestic animal production, which came to command such a decisive importance for the Faroese society. This production was performed in a close integrated infield and outfield system.

In this society, the ownership- and utilization rights to arable land, the cultivated infield, what we call the *markatalsjørð*, was decisive for the individual's position and standing in the community in general. Belonging to the *markatalsjørð*, the infield, belonged not only the outfield, but also access to what we may call "extras" that is the pursuit of wildfowl, egg collecting and the rights to all items washed ashore, especially driftwood and beached whales. Agriculture, sheep- and cattle farming, wildfowl-, whale hunting and fishing from rowing boats were therefore integrated as a unity into a common economic system (Thorsteinsson 1981).

The Faroes continued as a farming society right up to the termination of the twentieth century, when the acquisition of seagoing fishing vessels started – the first sloop was bought in 1872.

The transition from a society dominated by farming, to a farming/deep-sea fishing society radically changed the situation of the landless, enabling them to acquire a piece of land for cultivation, the so-called *trøð*, which was capable of providing an income for themselves; they were no longer dependent on the farmers, the landowners – the monopoly had been broken. The Faroes hereby transgressed to a fishing society with colossal sociological- and cultural changes as the result.

These changes were immediately reflected in the size of the population. At the first census in 1801, there were 5000 inhabitants in the Faroes. Over the period from 1811 to 1894, the population grew from 5000 to just over 15000. During the same period the area of cultivated land increased by approximately 57%, mainly due to the acquisition of the so-called *trøð's*, not just in the existing villages but also in the form of 30 new settlement villages. These newly established families existence was therefore based upon the cultivation of the *trøð*, being able to supply enough fodder or hay to sustain a cow or two, some sheep, some potatoes combined with fishing, and income derived from providing various other required services.

People had also become acquainted with the method of drying fish intended for export – the so-called *klippfisk*. A small production was started and after the abolishment of the Royal Danish monopoly on trade in 1856, the road lay open for economic expansion – a new era had begun. To this era belonged a new dominant localisation factor: natural harbours, where

loading and unloading could be carried out, but not least where sloops could be safely anchored during the winter. At these localities shipping companies flourished, and labour workers flocked to participate in the production of drying fish (Joensen 1985; 1987).

The Cultural Landscape

As cultural historians, we work with a certain time perspective. Therefore it must be evidently clear, that we also work with many various types of cultural landscapes. How then do we arrive at the various periods' dominant cultural characteristics, for example settlement types or farming methods expressed in the cultural landscape? To limit myself as much as possible, I have elected to concentrate mainly on the archaeological/agricultural landscape.

Settlements have been spread along the coast and fjords in the form of villages, and their locations are quite clearly related to topographical conditions. In the near vicinity of farms, areas were cleared and surrounded by dykes. These areas were used for raising corn and hay production –

this is what is termed the infield. The outfield on the contrary, was used for grazing animals and the very important aspect of peat cutting for heating purposes – the islands are, as we are aware of, treeless.

The term *bygd*, which in the Faroes is synonymous with a district – a legislative council on agricultural affairs – may comprise one or several *býlingar* i.e. settlement areas or *tun* in Norwegian. The actual residential area or settlement site was a specifically defined area, called *heimrust*, *rustari* or *skattagrundir*. It was here buildings, outhouses hay enclosures, angelica gardens and middens were established, but the residential area could also be used

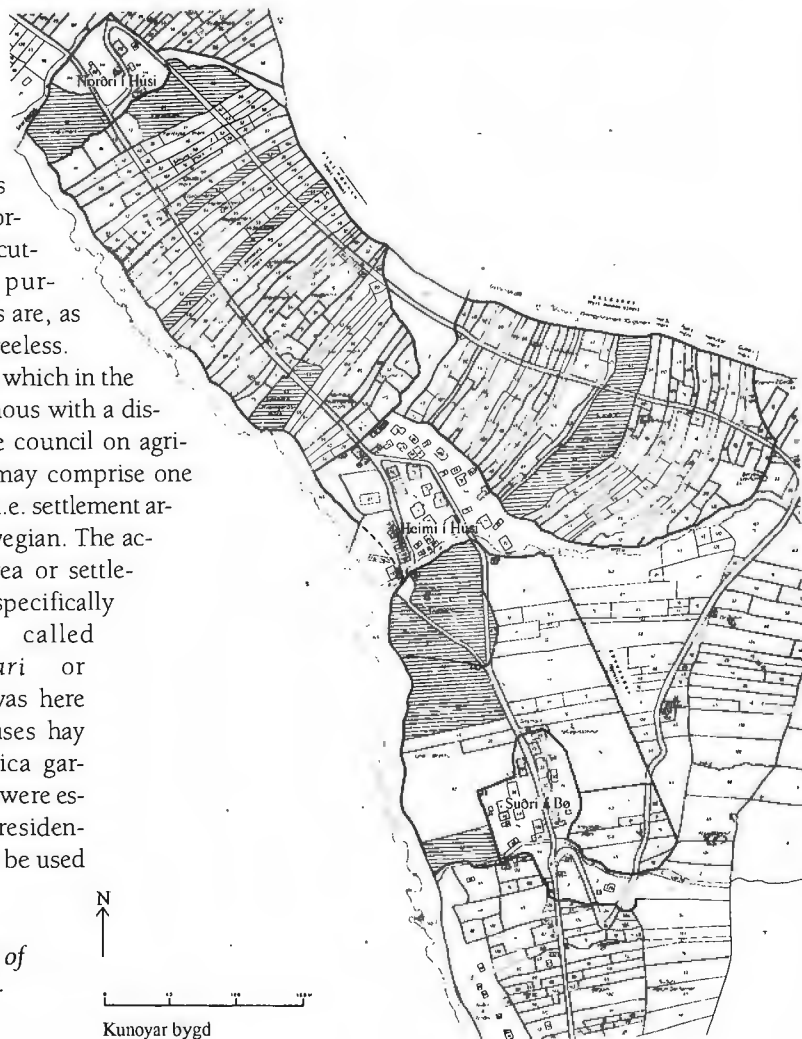


Fig. 2: The village of Kunoy. After Thorsteinsson 1981.

for animal grazing – called *beiti* in Faroese. The residential area was usually sharply divided by stone and turf dykes from the infield and similarly a clearly defined *geil*, a cattle passage connected the residential area with the outfield through the surrounding infield. The village Kunoy, figure 2, with its three separate residential areas is a good example.

For good reasons, some buildings have held a special location according to their function. Therefore the boathouses, the *neysts*, were naturally located by the shoreline or beach, quite often adjacent to a small pier. Similarly, a watermill would be located by a water-rich stream. On the contrary, the *sodnhús*, a building where corn was artificially dried over an open fire – was always located a certain distance away from other buildings due to the fire hazard. Finally, in many villages, outhouses intended for the storage or wind drying of meat and fish, are located on a rise in the terrain, exposed to the prevailing wind direction at the locality. Typically, a settlement would always be spread over a wide area.

If we disregard the monuments at the islands temporary Bishopric in the village of *Kirkjubøur*, signs of more ancient settlements in the landscape – be they from the Middle Ages or from the Viking period – are difficult to discern for the untrained eye. Not without reason, landscapes of this character have been described as hidden cultural landscapes. The fact is that research into the history of settlement development has shown, that where settlements first were settled – possibly already in the *landnám* period, the Viking period – that was where you stayed. Therefore settlements at the *heimrust* in some instances can archaeologically be traced all the way back to the Viking era, as was the case for example with archaeologically recognised



Fig. 3: Á Sondum, Sandur – Example of coastal erosion of settlement remains investigated 1994. Photo: S. V. Arge.

localities, e.g. *Niðri í Toft* in Kvívík (Dahl 1951; Matras, this volume), and *Toftanes* in Leirvík (Hansen 1991).

This continuity of the settlement at the same locality through centuries makes it difficult immediately to recognise remains or signs of the ancient settlement. Where the preconditions have been favourable however, this has led to the creation of farm-mounds – a settlement historical phenomena also acknowledged from other regions of the Norse and Viking world. Excellent examples of this are seen at the localities in *í Uppistovubeitinum* in Leirvík, where archaeological investigations during the period 1987-99, have been able to confirm settlement activity stemming from the late Viking period up through the mid-Middle Ages (Arge 1997a), and at the site *á Sondum* in the village of Sandur. The last mentioned, further exemplifies another problem, a current one for the settlement archaeological work, which is a quite extensive erosion of the coastline. In the exposed weathered slope or cliff at *á Sondum*, at least four different settlement phases, which overlap each other, have been observed. An assay of dog-bone from the lowest floor section unearthed so far has recently been carbon-14 dated and has given the preliminary result: AD1241-1282, calibrated with one sigma (AAR-6930).

Also the settlement site itself, the *heimrust*, has been subject to change up through the times. This is to be understood in the manner, that the area we today can determine as being the *heimrust*, could through time have been subjected to changes, and for example been much more extensive in earlier times. This fact could be decisive for the understanding of the individual settlement or archaeologically determined settlement remains, in relation to the village's former settlement picture in a broader whole.

Archaeological evidence is available, which suggests that in the Middle Ages settlements consisting of smaller farms, were much more widespread. Probably these were secondary farms, which settled away from the larger primary settlements, and which were abandoned already in the Middle Ages. These settlement remains can be more or less visible in the landscape. If the locality is located in the infield, it could have been subjected to cultivation over the centuries, whereby traces have become blurred or completely disappeared from the surface, and only a coincidence can reveal them once again.

This is the case with the village of Sandavágur. From this village we are aware of two settlements, which are referred to in the oldest surviving cadastre dating from 1584, and this is why I have elected to call them "historical settlements", here shown in squares: No. 1 *á Sondum*, which is the village's church site, and No. 2 *á Steig*, figure 4. Such settlements in Faroese are termed *fyrndarbylingar* meaning primary settlements. This written reference indicates it is most probable these two settlements stem from the Middle Ages; but on the background of latter years research into the history of settlement development, it is also probable these settlements could go all the way back to the Viking period. Their true age however we can only established through actual archaeological investigations. This therefore is the historical settlement picture we are able to establish with the assistance of written material, and these two settlements were those we knew of and were aware the village contained, until not so many years ago (Arge 1997b).

However, reconnaissance, coincidence and archaeological investigations have expanded this knowledge with no less than four more settlements. As these settlements are not recorded in any written material, I have taken the liberty of calling them "prehistoric settlements", here marked by a circle: No. 3 *í Eingjartoftum*, which according to my perception, based upon our investigations of *Innanfyri Heygagerði*, No. 6, is from the Middle Ages, and not from the Viking

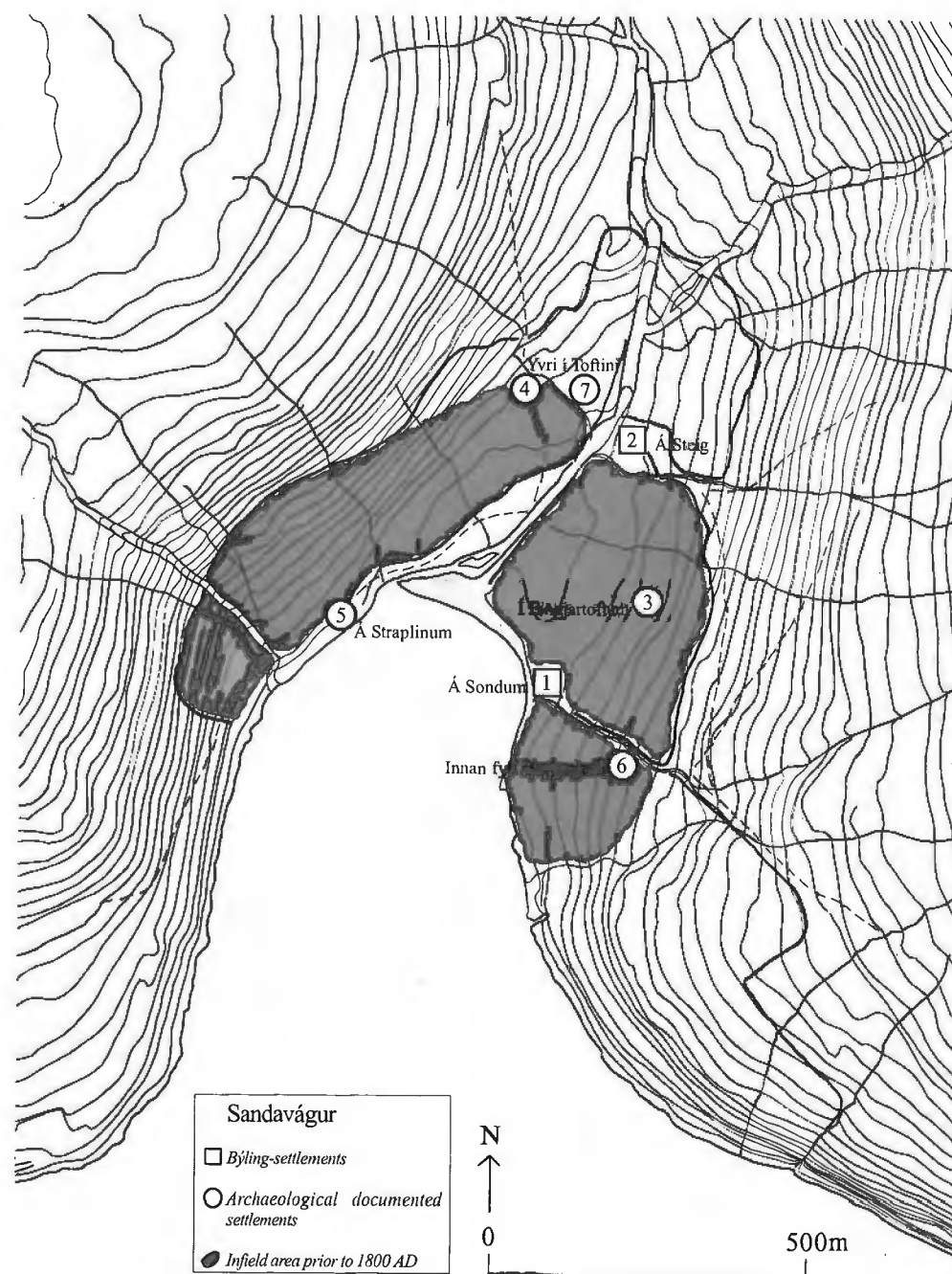


Fig. 4: Í Sandavági – Historic and pre-historic settlements, after Arge 1997b.

period as previously anticipated (Dahl 1961). No. 4 *Yviri í Toftini*, which stems from the early Middle Ages, and was functional until approximately the year 1400 AD; No. 6 *Innanfyri Heygagerði*, which is quite a small settlement, and by the way a rather complete replica of the *Eingjartoftum* settlement; also No. 5 *á Straplinum*, where one can observe settlement remains on a 40m stretch along the shoreline. Artefacts from the site indicate a date from at least the Middle Ages. The three first mentioned, number three, four and six, have been subjected to archaeological investigations, while information from the fourth settlement is attributed to the registration of traces in the slope and terrain (Arge 1997b).

As seen from the map, figure 4, where a thick black line depicts the size of the infield at the termination of the 18th century, and the dashed line shows the old hill paths, some settlements are located at the coast, while others are located somewhat back from the shoreline, while yet others are quite evidently located at the periphery of the old infield. By reconstructing the oldest possible picture of the extent of the cultivated infield, shown here as a shaded area, it is interesting to see the relation between the settlements – both historical and prehistoric ones – and the infield. Regarding the two settlements *í Eingjartoftum* and *Innanfyri Heygagerði* there hardly exists any doubt that regarding their periphery location in the village, their low key construction, and the character of artefact material, suggests a relative low social status in relation to for example the settlement *Yviri í Toftini*, which could also be the explanation for the differences between the two settlements construction and the archaeological material found on-site. Most likely they should be regarded as settlements, which have relocated from one of the two the “historical” settlements.

This example should underline the importance archaeological remains are as a source material for the history of Viking- and Middle Age settlements in the Faroes, where written material largely remains silent. The historical settlement picture, which emerges in Sandavágur, is according to my perception, not a unique picture of the settlement pattern or development here in the islands, but will no doubt generally also apply to other villages in the Faroes.

This example also shows what latter years archaeological and settlement historical studies have confirmed, and that is that where people in the Viking or Middle Age once settled we still today find villages – in other words, the locality has up through time been maintained as the settlement area. Most of the periphery desolately located farms were small, while the larger more important farms were located where the village still exists to this day.

Though the “pre-historic” settlement picture of the Faroes seems to have been rather stationary, the archaeological evidence seems to indicate to me that there both in the infield and outfield are other hidden older settlement layerings – an older pattern – which lies behind the historically known settlements, dating from the post-Reformation period, representing what we usually call the “pre-industrial traditional farming society”, but which social status within the society we still only have a vague limited knowledge.

Regarding settlement development, it has been maintained that it was the role land ownership played as the distribution factor for all produce, which meant that ownership and utilisation rights to land held the all important key deciding the development of the whole society, and it was not least these conditions – excluding the pure geographical parameters – which controlled settlement developments.

However, it has not been possible to maintain settlements in all locations – not in newer times either. In many localities life was so close to the limits for human survival, that only

small incidents terminated the settlement. Small accidents on land or at sea, or natural catastrophes meant abandonment of the settlement. In many of these remotely located abandoned settlements, building remains are seen as grass-covered mounds in the old *heimrust*, while the cultivated infield is still quite clearly visible in the landscape.

Traces after cultivation and farming methods

If archaeological traces of ancient settlements are more blurred and not so discernable in the landscape, ancient cultivation methods have definitely made a much more prominent mark in the landscape. Exactly the infield is another characteristic element in the Faroese cultural landscape. The characteristic cultivation method *reinavelta* can still be seen in unspoiled infield areas. This farming method entails splitting the field into approximately three-meter broad strips, *teigar*, which most often are half a meter higher on the one long side compared to the other. According to an ingenious system, each strip is cultivated and fertilised approximately every fifty years. The field is thereby ensured better drainage, at the same time it is heated more readily by the sun due to the sloping surface, figure 5, (Christiansen 1991).

When this ingenious farming method was implemented is unclear; the oldest written evidence referring to *reinavelta* dates to the 17th century, and this method has been used for as long as we can establish.

There are however traces of another cultivation method, the so-called *deildir* or as they are referred to in a diploma dating from the year 1412 AD, *ruddstaðir*, meaning cleared areas, which are found in the infield as well as the outfield, figure 6, (Thosteinsson 1979). These traces are the result of quite simply just clearing an area of stones, and are recognisable by

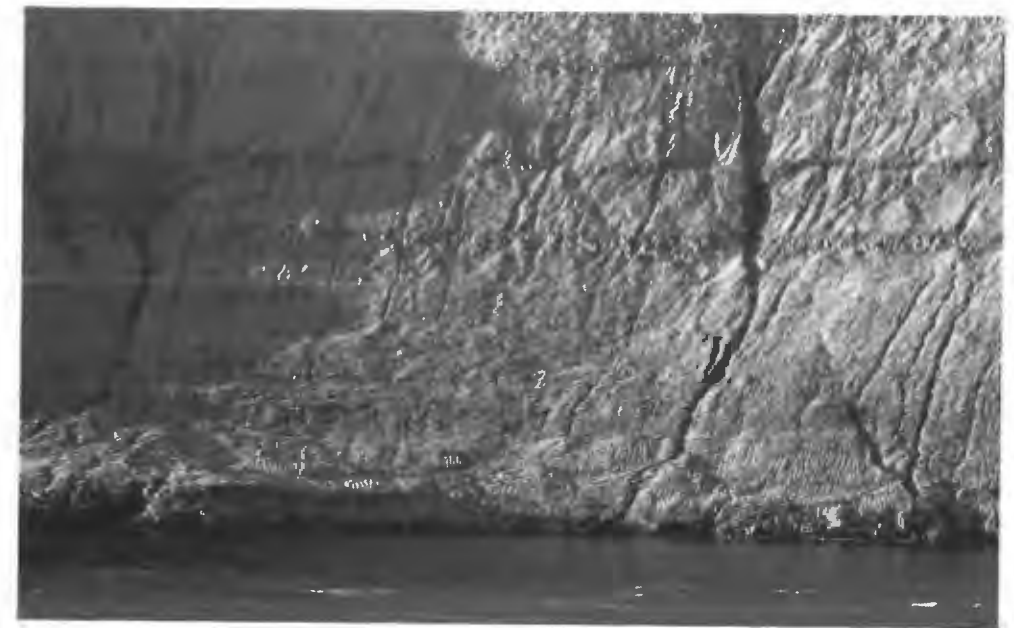


Fig. 5: *Á Blankaskála, Kallsoy* – Remains of the *reinavelta* in the infields along the coast are still visible, though the village was deserted early 19th century. Photo: S. V. Arge.



Fig. 6: Akraberg, Suðuroy – Ancient fields, “deildir” or “ruddstaðir”. Photo: S. V. Arge.

parallel low ridges made of stone and earth, separating the areas cleared of stones. The fields are characterised by being found on south and east facing slopes, and in several instances in quite inaccessible terrain.

The most probable explanation for this phenomena according to my view, is that due to the large extent of wet, soggy areas, they chose to locate fields in areas, which automatically drained themselves, as this cultivation method was not prone to self drainage as such. *Reinavelta*, on the other hand, targets exactly this problem; by replacing the old cultivation method with *reinavelta* this made cultivation on much larger and more difficult areas possible. It is therefore my opinion that *reinavelta* is a local invention, which replaced the so-called *deildir* or *ruddstaðir* (Arge 1991).

The old infield is continually being expanded – subsequently new arable land has emerged and over the last 200 years, also the formerly mentioned *trøð*, which were not necessarily cultivated, but were used for animal grazing or possibly for growing potatoes. The large growth in the population, previously mentioned, becomes most noticeable with the inclusion of these areas, as this was not just an expansion of the old infield, but in some areas progression high into areas behind the villages, or to the sides along the coasts is seen. Quite often these areas were quite steep making terracing necessary.

The outfield

On the Faroes the most evident traces of human exploitation of land up through the ages is seen when walking in the outfield, where modern developments have not yet managed to blur

or destroy them (Arge 1998; 2000). It was in the outfield, that the animals grazed – cattle quite close to the settlement in the so-called *húshagi* – sheep were more distant – and it was here the very important turf and peat cutting was done.

Walking in the outfield today, you cannot avoid seeing the remains of long stone dykes, old sheep pens, sheep shelters, *ból*, and peat storage pens, *kráir*, not to forget the former so important *varðar*, stone cairns, marking the hill paths over the mountains, figure 7. Apart from these structural remains, the landscape itself also bears clear signs of century long exploitation of the environment. For example, we can confirm that the state of the vegetation in the outfield to day, is clear evidence of the continuing pressure animal grazing presents. The same may be said of the landscape where peat has been cut.

If we penetrate deeper into the studies of the physical relics, we see discarded operational or farming methods, which in some instances are indicated by place names. These can be verified by detailed archaeological surveys and investigations of the localities in question, where there still more or less are visible signs in the landscape in the form of ruins of smaller buildings, remains of turf and stone walls intended to fence off certain areas.

The farming methods in mind are shieling activity and sheep milking. These were methods, which the Viking farmers brought with them from their homeland regions. Regarding shieling activity the large-scaled archaeological excavation in the 1980-ies at the site of *Argisbrekka*, adjacent to the village of Eiði on the island of Eysturoy has presented us with an excellent insight into this type of agro-economic economy and good reference points for the dating of this activity (Mahler 1991; 1996).

Over time experience has accumulated regarding the exploitation of the landscape. Origi-



Fig. 7: Cairn path, Sandoy. Photo: S.V. Arge.

nal methods have been discarded and or adapted in several ways. For example, the shieling system and sheep milking were abandoned already early in the Middle Ages, in favour of a more intensive sheep farming practise – as we know it today (Thorsteinsson 1977;1982).

Apart from localities harbouring traces of activities, where place names may indicate a function, there is a long row of localities where both low dykes of stone and turf, pens and ruins are present, but without any function explanatory place names attached to the locality – here an interpretation becomes very difficult without a more detailed survey and investigation. Before we obtain a more detailed oversight of the total stock of historical relics, where a comparative analyses can be compiled, any interpretation often becomes immensely problematic.

In the outfield there is also the natural presence of pronounced stones or boulders and moraine mounds – which people have attached, and some still do, supernatural properties, or supernatural stories tell of *huldufólk*, *vættrar* and *álvar*, supernatural creatures of which one did well to treat with the greatest respect.

Care and management of Ancient Monuments – the Legislative and administrative basis for the Faroes

Føroya Fornminnisav, the Faroe National Museum, administers the legislation Act determining protection for our cultural heritage, figure 8. The administration of the island's ancient sites and monuments is perceived as a pure cultural affair – it is under the portfolio of the Government's cultural department, and not the Environment department as is the case in other Nordic countries.

Ancient sites and monuments in the Faroes are administered according to a Parliamentary Act dating from 1948, last endorsed with minor changes in 1972. This Act was among the very first Acts to be passed after the Faroes future position in the Danish realm had been determined by the so-called Home Rule Act of 1948. The islands had then been isolated from the rest of the realm for the whole duration of the Second World War. The legislation was adapted from the then Danish Act governing Danish protection of the cultural heritage and the Nature Preservation Act of 1932.

The legislation from 1948 is therefore a Faroe area of Special Interest, according to the Home Rule Act. The legislation determines that all historic relics impeded in the ground are automatically protected. The legislation also provides the powers to protect areas up to 100m around the actual protected object. Buildings on the contrary, require active on the spot protection; also in connection with buildings it is possible to protect a 100m large radius.

It is the Faroese State Antiquarian, who is the Director for the Faroe National Museum established in 1952, who administers the Preservation Act. The State Antiquarian presents a motion regarding preservation issues before a board, the *Fornminnisnevndin*, who again make a recommendation to the minister for cultural affairs, who takes the final decision regarding the protection. The Preservation board has the following members: the State Antiquarian, who holds a permanent seat, a specialist in buildings and a lawyer.

Other legislation important for the treatment of the cultural landscape is: The Nature Protection Act from 1970. The legislation deals with nature protection, and the Preservation authorities. The State Antiquarian holds a permanent seat in the Senior Preservation Board, which is the highest authority regarding Nature Protection and Preservation issues.

In our context, it is important to mention that the legislation's paragraph 6 empowers the

preservation of land- and water areas on a scientific or historical basis, areas for example, which due to various reasons, may be of significant importance to the Public. It is worth mentioning that such prominent cultural features and elements as old stone dykes and sheep pens, cannot be forced protection according to the existing Act for the protection of the cultural heritage; such cases can be subjected to the Nature Protection Act.

There is also the legislation governing Town Planning and Construction Agreements, dating from 1954, last endorsed with changes in 1984. With the assistance of this legislation, it is possible to protect areas in built up areas, adjacent to or up against interesting buildings, and in this manner control developments and possibly prevent negative events.

Preservation action

The registration and surveying of ancient sites and monuments has been conducted by the Faroe National Museum. A systematic registration has not yet been undertaken, and therefore these historic sites and remains have not been mapped. Although we have a reasonable overview of the situation, I regard it as most important, that we as soon as possible are allocated the necessary resources to enable a systematic registration of the relics present in the whole country, the planning and its execution.

Remains or traces in the landscape from the islands oldest history are as indicated usually quite obscure, and therefore not so easily accessible for the normally interested. Therefore a substantial effort is required in connection with the administration of both objects and sites. The museum however is in the process of improving the situation, by signposting and the re-establishing of areas where archaeological surveys and excavations have been conducted – a process normally conducted with the cooperation of the local municipal authorities. A far greater effort in this area would be preferable, if only the resources were available – not least bearing in mind the targeting by the Faroe authorities of an expanding tourist industry.

Our knowledge of that part of the building material mass, which may be of a cultural historic interest, is not either based upon a systematic overview. Therefore the preservation efforts over the past few years have mainly been conducted according to registrations undertaken by the Faroe National Museum. It was especially due to some campaigns in the 1950-ies, that many buildings were listed; there are today approximately 80 to 85 protected buildings on the islands, including both common residential houses, as well as outhouses and churches.

I would also like to mention the effort displayed by the museum society *Føroya Forngrípafelag*, which is a self owned society established in 1916, and the actual forerunner for the museum, *Føroya Fornminnisav*. The society has been heavily engaged in the building preservation problems in the islands, and the society today owns 12 or 13 listed and protected buildings – including residential houses, which the society rents to private individuals, thereby sustaining activity in the buildings.

Regarding building preservation, there is no escaping the efforts of the local museums over the past few years. Where local museums have been established, a building has generally been acquired with economic support from the Local Museum Legislation Act – intended for museum activities, exhibitions and so forth.

Antiquarian protection has mainly been directed towards individual buildings – in other words spot protection. Larger and lesser areas have however, based upon the Buildings Protection Act, and the Town Planning Act, been protected – whole building areas and environ-

ments. In the village Norðagøta, via the Preservation Act, a protection order has been issued not only for the church, which represents a traditional Faroese parish church, but also for a defined area round the church containing ancient buildings, including the local museum, figure 9. A similar area protection order intended to protect a cluster of ancient houses, is currently being prepared for the *býling í Koytu*, in the village of Sandur on the island of the same name. The most extensive protection plan however, is the one regarding the old township in Tórshavn, *Tinganes*, which based upon an architect competition in 1969, was endowed with a special construction agreement in 1973.

Dangers – registration requirements

The cultural landscape is constantly being subjected to change. This represents a risk of interesting preservation worthy historic cultural objects or environments being damaged or disappearing altogether. In this respect a survey of the cultural landscape would be a necessary and invaluable instrument.

The development of settlements – modern residential areas within the villages – have in modern times been accomplished at the expense of the ancient infield. The periphery of the old settlement, the *heimrust*, was in many villages exceeded already early in the 20th century, and the erection of houses in cultivated fields was started – a development which has continued and accelerated in our times. Also, the unfortunate location of roads or larger transportation arteries may completely destroy a village scenario – for example where the main road has been located along the coastal zone, whereby the natural access from settlement to beach has been cut off.

In areas where settlement expansion has not made an impact, modern farming technology has for several years contributed to obliterating all traces of the ancient cultivation method, the *reinavelta*. The same is the case with the redistribution and matriculation of the infield, which did not start in the Faroes until 1927. This had the effect that a lot of the characteristic small plots of land were merged together under one owner, and subsequently the old drainage systems have been done away with, to enable modern machine cultivation.

Also the settlement pattern, characterised by distinct or separate *býlingar*, is becoming blurred. These old býlingar-settlements have in recent times become connected by roads, along which houses have been erected, and from there settlements have expanded, so settlements are now often just one large congregation of houses.

Fewer than two percent of the Faroese population is today involved with agriculture. The land owners or farmers, who wished to operate their farms as a modern undertaking, have in this connection, with an increased dairy production through the 1980-ies, included considerable outfield areas in valleys and higher up the mountain sides to boost hay production. A cultural historic mapping would be a very useful tool, to avoid conflicts between farming and preservation interests.

It has hopefully been projected, that the greatest threat to the Faroe cultural landscape is not so much farming developments as the expansion of the villages themselves.

Two Faroe attempts at Cultural preservation

Regarding cultural landscape maintenance we unfortunately have to admit, that in relation to the other Nordic countries, we in the Faroes have not come very far. There can be no doubt however, that the thoughts and ideas underlying this work, and their objectives, must be

acknowledged at some stage, and this acknowledgement must undergo a maturing process, before they can be expected to deliver concrete results. In this connection, I can mention that the first actual archaeological investigations on the islands was not carried out until 1941.

In spite of all this, it is my opinion we have finally started to move, in what I hope is the right direction. Firstly, I would like to emphasise the work done by the National Faroese Museum, in connection with re-establishing the village í Hoyvík as an open-air museum, where today the administration of the National Museum is located in some buildings of younger date. When this project is concluded, the re-creation of Hoyvík as an original settlement, with a yard complex – residential house, which oldest parts stem from the early 18th century, but with a 1920-style interior, and all the out houses belonging to a Faroese farm, will have been created. These are buildings, which are either preserved on-site or lying as ruins in the terrain, but will be re-created. There is no intention of transferring buildings or houses from other areas of the islands to this site. On top of this comes the infield areas, and animal paths leading from the farm to the pastures in the outfield, figure seven. The Hoyvík plans are a pure museum project.

Another project, which I intend to mention briefly, is the large preservation project on the island of Koltur – the smallest of the inhabited islands on the Faroes. In connection with appointing a new tenant on the island, the museum Society, Føroya Forngrípafelag, in 1987 took the initiative to preserve the unique cultural environment left on the island. Through a cooperation between this Society, the National Museum and the Faroe Land office, Føroya



Fig. 8: Open-air museum in Hoyvík.

Jarðarráð, which administers all public land on the Faroes, a plan was conceived for implementing a special antiquarian arrangement for the island, intended to preserve large tracts of land as well as individual buildings as whole units within the cultural landscape. The intention was that the farmer in the future would be able to use the old buildings and acquire machinery, by which he could maintain and still use the intricate old infield system. Based upon a combination of preservation, tourism and modern agriculture methods, it was the intention the farmer should be able to create a sustainable agriculture operation on the island. The reason for electing exactly the island of Koltur for a preservation project, was that modern times and developments have almost left the island untouched, whereby the ancient settlement structure of; *heimrust*, animal paths, infield and outfield, are still completely intact. The infield probably contains the largest area of the ancient method of field structuring, the *teigalendi*, preserved in the Faroes.

On the island, there are two separate settlement areas, *býlingar*. The settlement *Heimi í Húsi* is a unique whole entity, which in the future will naturally become the settlement to illustrate the ancient farming community, figure 10. Contrary to the settlement *Norðuri í Gerði*, which can be described as a mixture of the ancient farming community and an influx of the newer fishing community, where the new times, represented by the new farmer manifests itself, as it is here he has elected to settle. Plans had to be drawn up, which in a restricted degree, would permit new building (Thorsteinsson 1993).

The work, which has been ongoing since 1992, has been eagerly monitored by the general public. The work has been conducted by very good skilled workers, partly has paid work, but also to a large extent by voluntary workers. Furthermore, the Academy for Architectural Art in Copenhagen has undertaken several surveys on the islands and is involved with future plans. The work has mainly been financed by the society's own funds, but the Faroe Savings Bank, Føroya Sparikassi, has been most supportive. Two Danish foundations have also attributed considerable amounts. Through this project it was the intention to gather several institutions to cooperate on a preservation project; firstly, the museum society, which handled the practical aspects in the field, and then the antiquarian authorities, Føroya Fornminnisavni, which handled the formal preservation of buildings and enacted an agreement with the farmer regarding protected areas – both in respect of buildings and parts of the infield (Rasmussen 1992; Dyreborg & Jensen 1996).

Unfortunately the whole project took quite an unexpected turn. The idea to let preservation work be administered by the local museum legislation Act, was discarded by the political authorities. At the same time as the whole issue became political, the Public Land office turned its back on all the preservation minded bodies and institutions. We have to acknowledge, that the Faroe Public Land authorities have not yet fully recognised their sector responsibilities, which it so strongly has been emphasised to build up in a Nordic environmental context. This is deeply regrettable, but possibly the time is not yet mature, to reach this acknowledgement. It is now quite uncertain what future faces the large preservation project.

Conclusion

With this work description, and through the given examples, we in the Faroes have finally come to what I estimate the term Cultural Environment encompasses. This hopefully is just a beginning, which will serve to bring us further along the road towards a broader understand-

ing of the cultural environment, as a far more integrated part of the modern society in general, than the current situation today has revealed.

We have to acknowledge, that contrary to the situation in some of the other Nordic countries, it is only through the antiquarian work of the National Museum, the Museum Society and through the local museums preservation efforts that the cultural environmental interests of the Faroes are being considered. As several institutions today affect the cultural environment, it would be desirable to change this, so that also other sectors of the authorities and the administration in the future become an integrated part of this work.

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Chapter 3

“There is another set of small islands”

Arne Thorsteinsson

The first news of Dicuil and his then one-millennium old book “*Liber de mensura orbis terrae*” probably reached the Faroese public in 1832. This year Professor C.C. Rafn published his compilation of *Færeyinga Saga* with translations into Faroese and Danish.

In the foreword to *Færeyinga Saga* (p. XXXI-XXXII) Professor Rafn tells us that the Irish monk Dicuil in 825 described how a desire to live as hermits 100 years earlier, i.e. around 725, brought some Irish clergymen to the many islands in the northerly parts of the British sea. When the wind was favourable the islands might be reached in two days and nights from the northernmost of the British Isles. These islands had been uninhabited and unnamed since “the creation of the world”, and in 825 they had been abandoned by the hermits because of the Norse pirates. Professor Rafn had no doubt that these islands were the Faroes, and based on Dicuil’s account, the earliest Norse settlement in the Faroes was dated to 825.

During the times following this sensational contribution to the oldest history of the Faroes more or less trustworthy supplementary evidence appeared for an early Christian Irish settlement in the Faroes, monastic or secular. Such evidence has been presented from a number of disciplines, but it has all been disputed (Arge 1991), and only Dicuil seems to have been almost fully accepted as solid evidence of the presence of Irish hermits in the Faroes before the Norse settlement. The short passage in Dicuil’s text that supposedly refers to the Faroes has been translated into Danish and thence into Faroese. The Danish text reads as follows (Steining 1958, p.174):

“I Britanniens nordlige hav er der endnu mange øer, som kan nås fra de nordlige britiske øer ved to døgn direkte sejlads og ved medbør. En troværdig gejstlig fortalte mig, at han havde sejlet i to sommerdage og en mellemliggende nat i en liden båd med to rortøfter og var gået i land på en af dem. Disse øer er for det meste små, næsten alle adskilt ved smalle sunde, og på dem har eneboerne, som har sejlet op fra vort Scotia (Irland), boet i omtrent hundrede år. Disse fra verdens skabelse ubeboede øer er som følge af normanniske røvers indfald tomme for eneboere, har fuldt op af får og såre mange forskellige søfugle. Vi har aldrig fundet disse øer omtalt i forfatterens bøger.”

This passage has been used by Faroese and other Scandinavian scholars, and by British scholars, too, as the main source to the oldest history of the Faroes. In this translation the source seems trustworthy and there seems to be no reason to doubt the identification of the islands as

the Faroes (e.g. Matras 1959, Debes 1990, 58-65). The general public also seems completely convinced that the Faroes were inhabited by Irish hermits before the Norse arrived. Popular historical accounts most often begin with the words "The first inhabitants of the Faroes were the Irish monks" and so do even local histories.

Several years ago Dicuill's immense importance for the Faroese people's perception of their own oldest history and also for the historical interpretations of the scholars made me want to have a closer look at the whole *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*. In this paper, however, I shall concentrate on the islands around and north of Britain. I have used J.J. Tierney's edition and translation into English from 1967.

The islands of the world are described by Dicuill in chapter VII: the islands of Africa in verses 1-5, of Spain and Britain in verse 6, the island of Thule in verses 7-13, the small islands of the North Atlantic in verses 14-15, and the island of Scandinavia and farther east in verses 16-25. Most of them seem to be more or less mythical except for those best known to Dicuill, the islands in the verses 6-15.

Verse 6 reads as follows:

"We do not read of islands being found in the sea west or north of Spain. There are islands around our own island Hibernia, some small and some very small. Near the island Britannia are many islands, some large, some small, and some medium-sized. Some are in the sea to her south, and some in the sea to her west, but they abound mostly to the north-west and north. Among these I have lived in some, and have visited others; some I have only glimpsed, while others I have read about."

Dicuill's description of the part of the world that was most familiar to him comprises less than one verse in the book. There are no useful details, and it is of little help in the task of interpreting the part of the book that is most important to us, the geographical observations made by Irish-Scottish sailors in the North Atlantic. In this connection the most important question is whether Dicuill included Shetland among the many islands to the north "near the island Britannia" in verse 6. He may have. On the other hand, there is nothing in Dicuill's text that prevents us from searching for Shetland among the islands in the ocean north of Britain.

To Dicuill the island of Thule seems to have been a much more interesting subject than the well-known Britain. He tells us that thirty years ago he had met clerics who had lived on the island of Thule from the first of February to the first of August and had given him a lot of information about that island. In this paper, however, there is no reason to go into further details about Thule, except stating that the identification of Thule as Iceland seems quite plausible, and that Irish – Scottish clerics therefore reached Iceland before 800, though without settling. We may, however, be suspicious of the claim that the clerics reached Iceland on the first of February, having set out to defy the North Atlantic in midwinter.

After his lengthy discussion of Thule Dicuill goes on:

14. There are many other islands in the ocean to the north of Britain which can be reached from the northern islands of Britain in a direct voyage of two days and nights with sails filled with a continuously favourable wind. A devout priest told me that in two summer days and the intervening night he sailed in a two-benched boat and entered one of them.

15. There is another set of small islands, nearly all separated by narrow stretches of water; in these for nearly a hundred years hermits sailing from our country Ireland have lived. But just as they were always deserted from the beginning of the world, so now because of the Northman pirates they are emptied of anchorites, and filled with countless sheep and very many diverse kinds of sea-birds. I have never found these islands mentioned in the authorities.

The islands described in these two verses are those which scholars have identified as the Faroes. But if this identification is correct, something must be wrong with Tierney's translation into English.

A new look at the Danish and Faroese translations shows that there is a considerable and extremely important discrepancy between Tierney's translation and the traditional Scandinavian translations of the beginning of verse 15. Where Tierney's translation says, "There is another set of small islands", the Danish and Faroese translations say something like, "Most of these islands are small" (my translation). Thus the older Scandinavian translations build a bridge between the two verses, forcing them into a description of a single group of islands, the Faroes; while Tierney's translation splits up this group into two separate groups of islands, which cannot possibly be the Faroes both of them.

The beginning of verse 15 reads as follows in the original Latin text: "Illae insulae sunt aliae paruulae". My knowledge of Latin is limited, but experts that I have consulted have unanimously pointed at Tierney's translation as the correct one.

Since Tierney's translation is right the consequence must be that Dicuill in verses 14 and 15 describes two different groups of islands between Iceland and Scandinavia which were both well-known to Irish-Scottish seafarers. It does not take much geographical knowledge to see that these two groups can only be the Faroes and Shetland. But it may of course be discussed which verse describes which group of islands and which historical implications the correction may have.

I will try to give it a shot.

Iceland, named Thule by Dicuill, and described in verses 7-13, was known to Irish-Scottish seafaring clerics before 800. At least one group of clerics set out on an expedition to Iceland in the late 8th century, and made geographical observations which they afterwards related to Dicuill. They did not settle, however, but left Iceland on the first of August, and they brought no information to Dicuill about other clerics having settled there. We may be pretty sure that the expedition met no other human beings in the island of Thule. There may have been other expeditions, of course, but Dicuill at least gives us no reason to argue for a settlement of hermits in Iceland.

The next islands to be described by Dicuill between Thule and Scandinavia are those in verse 14, and the Faroes is the next group of islands to the (south) east of Iceland. The seafaring clerics knew the Faroes, and knew how long the voyage from Britain to the Faroes would normally take. Dicuill had met a priest who had made an exceptionally quick voyage to the Faroes and had landed in one of the islands. That is it. No word of any hermits having settled in the islands, and I am sure that Dicuill would have told us if they had, so sure that I do not hesitate to declare that according to Dicuill no Irish hermits have ever lived in the Faroes. This

conclusion must of course also make us even more critical of the value of the meagre supplementary arguments for a settlement of Irish hermits in the Faroes which have hitherto been leaning upon Dicuil (see Arge 1991).

Then Shetland is the next group of islands between Iceland and Scandinavia, and Dicuil describes it in verse 15. He describes the narrow sounds between the small islands, the great variety of seabirds and the countless sheep. Hermits sailing from Scottia have lived in Shetland for nearly a hundred years, Dicuil says, but now the islands have been emptied of anchorites because of the Northman pirates.

There is one minor problem with this identification. Dicuil seems to believe that the Scottish hermits were the only people in Shetland. That of course cannot be true, but Dicuil is not the first author to empty a country of its inhabitants. Anyway, it is quite clear that Dicuil was preoccupied with the seafaring achievements of the Irish-Scottish clerics in the North Atlantic, and did not pay much attention to the Pictish inhabitants of Shetland.

This interpretation of Dicuil's description of the islands in the North Atlantic is very much in keeping with the known situation in Shetland as presented by F.T. Wainwright (1962, Chapter 7, Picts and Scots), even if Wainwright believes in the traditional interpretation of Dicuil. My interpretation and proposed identifications of Dicuil's islands may of course be questioned, but it will not be possible in the future to maintain Dicuil's position as solid documentation of a pre-Viking settlement of Irish monks in the Faroes.

After having discussed the meagre sources to the oldest history of the Faroese Jørgen Steining (1958, 173) declares. "But in one single instance the Muse of History has been gracious to us" referring to Dicuil's book. I don't agree. The Muse of History, or whoever it was, was utterly mischievous when we were presented with an erroneous interpretation of an apparently trustworthy source, which till now has brought confusion and misunderstanding on which both scholars and the Faroese public for almost two centuries have based their perception of the country's oldest history.

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Chapter 4

Færeyinga saga – a Fine Piece of Literature in Pieces

Else Mundal

Færeyinga saga tells about actions which took place in the Faroe Islands from the middle of the tenth century and extend into the eleventh. It is the only saga to deal with this region in this period, and is therefore extremely important as a national treasure to the Faroe Islands. But this saga is also a very interesting piece of work which can throw light on several questions concerning saga literature and the development of saga literature. Before I go on to comment on *Færeyinga saga* I will give a short summary of the events described in the text.

In *Færeyinga saga* we are first introduced to *Pránder í Gøtu*, one of the central figures in the saga. He was an intelligent and cunning man, but evil. The brothers *Brestir* and *Beinir* were two of his relatives. They were masters over half the islands. The master over the other half of the islands was a man called *Hafrímr*. *Hafrímr* and the brothers *Brestir* and *Beinir* become enemies, and *Hafrímr* turns to *Pránder* to get help to kill the brothers. He gets *Pránder's* assistance, and *Hafrímr* attacks the brothers together with *Pránder* and his men. Both *Hafrímr* and the brothers *Brestir* and *Beinir* are killed in the battle. The nine-year-old son of *Brestir*, *Sigmundur*, and the eleven-year-old son of *Beinir*, *Pórir*, are present during the fight, and they witness the killing of their fathers. After the killing of *Brestir* and *Beinir*, *Pránder* wants to have the two young boys killed, but better men prevent him from doing that.

After these killings *Pránder* became master over all the islands. The young boys, *Sigmundur* and *Pórir*, were forced to follow *Pránder* to his home in *Gata*. Shortly afterwards *Pránder* tried to sell the two boys as slaves to a Norwegian merchant. The merchant refused to buy them, so *Pránder* paid him to take the boys away. In Norway the merchant set them free and gave them the money *Pránder* had paid him. After some time the boys decided to travel from the *Viken* area to *Prándheimr* to see *Earl Hákon*. But in the middle of the mountains they got lost in the hard and cold winter, and they were nearly dead when they at last came to a little hut in the mountains. A man who called himself *Úlfr*, lived there with his wife and their beautiful young daughter. This *Úlfr* was living as an outlaw in the mountains because he had eloped with the woman he loved, and when her father tried to take her back, *Úlfr* killed him. *Sigmundur* and *Pórir* lived with this outlawed family for some years. *Sigmundur* grew up to be a very promising

young man. One of his deeds was that he killed a dangerous bear living in a wood close by Úlfr's dwelling. When Sigmundr and Þórir left the outlawed family to continue their journey to Earl Hákon, the daughter of Úlfr, Þuríðr, was carrying Sigmundr's child.

Sigmundr and Þórir are received at the court of the earls Hákon, Sveinn and Eiríkr and they get their help to outfit a viking expedition. After four years on viking, Sigmundr and Þórir decide to sail to the Faroe Islands to avenge their fathers. In the meantime Þrándr í Gøtu has made Qzurr, the son of Hafgrímr, his foster son and has given him sovereignty over half the islands – as had his father had earlier – but Þrándr himself holds sovereignty over Brestir's and Beinir's half of the islands. Sigmundr kills Qzurr, but makes peace with Þrándr. Sigmundr now travels between the Faroe Islands and Norway as the earls' man on the islands. He reconciles the outlawed Úlfr with the earls, marries his daughter Þuríðr, and brings Þuríðr and their daughter Þóra, who was born shortly after Sigmundr's stay with the family in the mountains, with him to the Faroe Islands. His relations with Þrándr are rather unfriendly but peaceful.

When Óláfr Tryggvason came to power in Norway, he sent for Sigmundr who became his trusted man and who converted to Christianity. He managed to christianize the islands, even Þrándr was at last forced to accept the Christian faith. The relationship between Sigmundr and Þrándr goes from bad to worse, and Þrándr and his men attack Sigmundr at his farm. Sigmundr escapes, and he, his fosterbrother Þórir and a third man try to swim from Skufey to Suðrey. Sigmundr gets to the shore alive, but then is murdered and his body is hidden by the farmer on Suðrey. Þrándr now becomes master over all the islands.

Þrándr had taken Leifr, son of Qzurr who was killed by Sigmundr, as his foster son. He proposes to Þóra on Leifr's behalf, and she agrees to marry Leifr on the condition that he can swear that he had not killed her father, and he has to promise to find out what has happened to Sigmundr. Þrándr – who has probably known the truth all the time – now goes to Suðrey and conjures forth the dead Sigmundr, and the farmer on Suðrey is hanged. Leifr and Þóra marry; they have a son, young Sigmundr, who becomes the foster son of Þrándr.

After some time one of Sigmundr's sons, Þóralfr, is killed in Norway, probably by Sigurðr, one of Þrándr's men. The king of Norway, now Óláfr inn helgi, sends two ships to the Faroe Islands. The ships and the whole crew disappear. Þrándr who is unwilling to pay taxes to the Norwegian king, is suspected of having something to do with the disappearance. When the king at last sends Karl in moerski to collect taxes on the islands, he is killed by one of Þrándr's men.

Þuríðr and Þóra seek revenge for Þóralfr. They get their opportunity when Sigurðr, the man who had killed him, makes Þuríðr an offer of marriage on behalf of his brother. Þuríðr is surprisingly forthcoming, and asks him to come back for a final answer. Þóra and Leifr now hurry to Þrándr's farm to rescue their son who would become a hostage if they killed one of Þrándr's men. When Sigurðr returns, both he and his brother are killed by Leifr. Þrándr dies of anger, and Sigmundr's widow and daughter have got their revenge.

Færeyinga saga is not preserved as a separate saga, but split parts of the saga are preserved in *Flateyjarbók* (1387). The scribe of this manuscript copied *Færeyinga saga* into his interpolated

versions of the large saga of Óláfr Tryggvason and the separate saga of Óláfr inn helgi. However, some parts of the original *Færeyinga saga* had been used earlier. In the separate saga of Óláfr inn helgi the author (probably Snorri) had copied some parts of the original *Færeyinga saga*. The scribe of *Flateyjarbók* chose for one reason or another to copy these parts of *Færeyinga saga* from a manuscript of the saga of Óláfr inn helgi and not from *Færeyinga saga*. In about 1300 some parts of the original *Færeyinga saga* – or rather a shortened version of it – had been copied into the large saga of Óláfr Tryggvason. The scribe of *Flateyjarbók* also chose to copy these parts from the king's saga and not from the original *Færeyinga saga*.

The editions of the saga are “reconstructions” by the editors who have collected the split parts of the original saga from *Flateyjarbók*, and, for some parts of the saga also from different manuscripts of the large saga of Óláfr Tryggvason and the separate saga of Óláfr inn helgi, and placed them in chronological order. The chapters 1-27, 34-42 and 49-59 in the reconstructed editions are the parts of the saga which the scribe of *Flateyjarbók* copied directly from a manuscript of *Færeyinga saga*. These parts of the saga are probably rather well preserved. However, the chapters which he copied from a manuscript of the large saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, chapters 28-33, have a shortened text, and the parts of the saga which he copied from a manuscript of the saga of Óláfr inn helgi, chapter 43-48, also have a text which has been changed and shortened.

I will not go into the textual problems of *Færeyinga saga*. The latest edition of the saga, Ólafur Halldórson's edition from 1987, offers a full discussion of these problems. However, it is necessary to take these textual problems of *Færeyinga saga* into consideration. The fact that the saga is not preserved as a separate saga, that especially some parts of it have been shortened and changed, and that some minor parts certainly got lost when the original saga was split up to fit into a new context, is something we must bear in mind. In some cases these facts will make it difficult to draw definite conclusions about the saga.

Færeyinga saga is thought to be very old, from the years between 1200 and 1220. The scholars also seem to agree that the saga was written in Iceland, but on the basis of an oral tradition which the author in some way or another must have learned in the Faroe Islands or from people from the Faroe Islands. The arguments for an Icelandic provenance of the saga are in fact not especially strong. However, the arguments for any other provenance – a Faroese provenance included – are even weaker.

The main reason for counting *Færeyinga saga* among the sagas from the two first decades of the 13th century is that some parts of the saga are interpolated in the separate saga of Óláfr inn helgi, probably written by Snorri in the 1220s. According to what has been considered the truth since Sigurður Nordal wrote his thesis *Om Olaf den helliges saga. En kritisk undersøgelse* (Sigurður Nordal 1914), Snorri Sturluson wrote the separate saga of Óláfr inn helgi in the 1220s, and afterwards he incorporated a revised version of this saga as the central part in his *Heimskringla*. Accordingly, *Færeyinga saga* must have been written before the 1220s, or about 1220 at the latest.

In 1997 Jonna Louis-Jensen published an article “Heimskringla – Et værk af Snorri Sturluson?” (Louis-Jensen 1997). Her reason for the questionmark in the title of the article, was that the redaction of *Heimskringla*, with the saga of king Óláfr inn helgi rewritten and incorporated in the collection of kings' sagas, is found only in one branch of the stemma, in the manuscripts which are copied from the manuscript *Kringla*. Jonna Louis-Jensen suggests that *Heimskringla* as we have it with its three parts, i.e. the sagas of kings before Óláfr inn helgi

(*Heimskringla* I), the saga of Óláfr inn helgi altered from the separate saga (*Heimskringla* II), and the sagas of kings after Óláfr inn helgi (*Heimskringla* III), is the work of the scribe of *Kringla*, a manuscript from the period 1250-70. According to this theory, Snorri may still be the author of the separate saga of Óláfr inn helgi, but for the dating of *Færeyinga saga* it does not matter much whether the separate saga was written by Snorri or by someone else.

There are also other reasons than the fact that the saga is quoted in the separate saga of Óláfr inn helgi (and in *Heimskringla*) for dating *Færeyinga saga* to the years around 1200 or to the first years of the century. In the introduction to his edition of *Færeyinga saga* Ólafur Halldórsson also suggests that Styrmir fróði knew and used *Færeyinga saga* (Ólafur Halldórsson 1987: clxvi-clxx and ccxxxiii). Styrmir wrote his lost saga about Óláfr inn helgi around 1215. It is also an indication of *Færeyinga saga*'s early dating that the few written works we know with some certainty that the author has used, are works from the 12th century or from around 1200.

The early dating of the saga and the fact that it to a large extent must be built on an oral Faroese tradition, makes this saga an interesting piece of literature from more than one point of view. This saga is central to many questions which concern the form of oral tradition and the relationship between oral tradition and written sagas. It is also central to the problem of the dating of the saga literature and the understanding of the development of written saga genres.

In what follows, I will make a few comments on the lack of scaldic stanzas in *Færeyinga saga*, which probably indicates that there were no scaldic stanzas in the oral tradition behind the written saga either. I will comment on the portrayal of women in *Færeyinga saga*. As a source to the view of women in Old Norse society *Færeyinga saga* is an interesting saga because of its early dating, and because it builds on oral tradition from a region other than the rest of the saga literature. Finally I will argue that *Færeyinga saga* may offer a key to the dating problems of saga literature – especially to the sagas of Icelanders – and to the understanding of the development of saga genres.

It is difficult to draw conclusions about the oral tradition behind a written saga from the written saga itself. However, when not a single scaldic stanza is quoted in the whole of *Færeyinga saga* – Þrándr's creed is not a scaldic stanza – it seems a very likely explanation that scaldic poetry did not form part of the oral tradition behind the written saga, and probably had died out in the Faroe Islands by 1200. Scalds from the Faroe Islands are not mentioned elsewhere in Old Norse sources either. This may tell us something about the minimum demands on the society in which scaldic poetry could flourish. The minimum demands would consist of both active scalds and other people with enough knowledge and understanding of scaldic poetry to form an audience and to ensure oral transmission of the poetry – in every generation. The courts of kings or earls were centres of scaldic poetry. In the Faroe Islands no such centre existed, and the population was probably too small to guarantee enough skill in scaldic poetry to ensure that scaldic poetry was handed down from generation to generation. However, it is possible that some knowledge of the Old Norse poetic language survived – the poetic language of the Faroese ballads may indicate that.

The view of women in Old Norse society is another field on which *Færeyinga saga* may throw light. In the saga we meet three generations of women, and they are all central to the plot of a

story which the author probably knew from Faroese oral tradition. Ragnhildr, Sigmundr's mother-in-law, is herself portrayed as a very active character in her relations with Þorkell, her later husband. She voluntarily runs away with the man her father will not allow her to marry, and settles with her outlawed lover in the mountains.

Puríðr, Sigmundr's wife, is called *meginekkja*, 'the great widow', after Sigmundr's death. For the first years after her husband's death, she lived peacefully with her children. But then one of her sons was killed in Norway, probably by Sigurðr, one of Práðr's followers. Puríðr got her opportunity of revenge when the man who was suspected of having killed her son began to look for a wife for his brother, and the bride he had picked out for his brother was none less than Puríðr herself. To Sigurðr's and his brother's surprise, Puríðr was more forthcoming than they had expected, but she said that she wanted to discuss the matter with her friends and her sons. The person with whom she discussed the matter was in fact her daughter, Þóra, and we realize that the women have a plan. When Sigurðr returns to get the final answer, he goes up to the farm alone. His brother and the other men on the ship, are now afraid that they are caught in a trap. In the courtyard he meets Puríðr, and they sit down on a trunk of tree to discuss the matter. Sigurðr wants to turn towards the house and watch the door, but Puríðr wants to turn her back at the house and look at the church, and she got her own way. When Sigurðr again makes an offer of marriage on his brother's behalf, Puríðr answers that she – and her daughter – would prefer that Sigurðr offered marriage on his own behalf. Sigurðr is a married man – he had just married a young and wealthy widow whose husband had been mysteriously killed – but overwhelmed by surprise and happiness, he says that he would soon be a free man, and he tries to kiss Puríðr. At this moment Puríðr's sons and son-in-law run out. In the battle which followed Puríðr lost two more of her sons. But both Sigurðr and his brother were killed, and Práðr í Gøtu died from anger when he heard of this.

Þóra, the daughter of Sigmundr, is presented as the foremost of his children. Práðr í Gøtu had made Leifr, the son of Qzurr who was killed by Sigmundr, his fosterson. Práðr had asked Sigmundr again and again to compensate Leifr for the killing of his father, but Sigmundr had refused. After Sigmundr's death, Práðr wanted Þóra as Leifr's bride, and he proposed on Leifr's behalf. Þóra's family was not enthusiastic about this, but Þóra herself took over the negotiations. She promised that she would marry Leifr if he could swear that he had not killed her father, and if he would help them to get knowledge about the circumstances around Sigmundr's death. That he promised, and they got married. Práðr's plan was of course to get control over Sigmundr's family through the marriage between Þóra and Leifr, his own fosterson. Þóra's plan on the other hand, was obviously to get control over Leifr by marrying him. Her plan worked, and Práðr lost his best man to Sigmundr's family. To everybody's great surprise Þóra did not refuse when Práðr offered to take her and Leifr's son, the young Sigmundr, as his fosterson. But a serious situation arose when Puríðr and Þóra planned to have Práðr's man, Sigurðr, killed. That would make young Sigmundr Práðr's hostage. A few days before Puríðr with Þóra's help and advice caught Sigurðr in a trap and had him killed, Þóra planned a rescue operation, and she and her husband with a crew of seven men went to Práðr to save their son. They were given a good reception by Práðr, and invited to stay over night. Þóra demanded that her son should sleep beside her. She gave the reason that she wanted to find out what Práðr had thought him, and Práðr reluctantly gave in to her demands. When Leifr wanted to go to sleep, she told him that he must not sleep, his and his men's job was to destroy all the boats on the whole island during the night. Early the next morning they bid good-bye

hastily, and take their son with them. When Þrándr protests and goes after them, he cannot find any seaworthy boat, and Þóra and Leifr escape with their son.

There is no doubt that *Færeyinga saga* portrays women as very strong characters. We cannot know anything about the historical truth behind these stories, but that is not the point. The question of realism is more interesting, are the stories believable in Old Norse society? The women in these stories are heroines, and therefore we must expect the same overstatement and the same idealization as in the portrayal of saga heroes. The idealized female portrayal is not fully realistic, but is a very good indication of this society's ideal of a woman. Judging from *Færeyinga saga* women had the same personality traits as the male heroes.

The view of women in Old Norse society has been a matter of discussion over the last decades. Since Rolf Heller in 1958 published his book *Die literarische Darstellung der Frau in den Isländersagas*, scholars have more or less been divided into two camps, those who believe that saga literature, and other Old Norse written sources, give evidence to the existence of a women with more or less the same personality traits as men in Old Norse society, and those who – like Heller – regard this woman to be the authors' invention. Heller had attached special importance to the goading scenes, which he saw as the work of the writing author.

Færeyinga saga is a very interesting saga in connection with this discussion. Since *Færeyinga saga* probably is older than any of the sagas of Icelanders – or from about the same time as the oldest works within this genre – literary motifs in the sagas of Icelanders could not offer a model for the portrayal of women in *Færeyinga saga*. The author must have found the women in *Færeyinga saga* in a Faroese oral tradition. Consequently, *Færeyinga saga* gives evidence for the existence of a portrayal of strong saga women – in fact the strongest there are – from a region other than the rest of the saga literature. That makes *Færeyinga saga* more valuable as a source to the view of women in Old Norse oral tradition than any other individual saga. The goading scene, which Heller regarded to be especially literary, the works of authors, is also to be found in *Færeyinga saga*. But in this saga – or in the saga as we have it – the goading is not developed into a full scene. It is simply stated that Þuríðr and Þóra goaded Leifr because he did not do anything to take revenge, they grew to hate him, and called him a coward. This goading which is not built out to form a goading scene and does not have a specific literary function – or not the ordinary literary function – is perhaps a better evidence of goading women in Old Norse society than the more literary and stereotype motifs in sagas of Icelanders. Heller used all the sagas of Icelanders as source material, but he did not use *Færeyinga saga*. If he had did so, this saga would have caused him problems.

We happen to know that *Færeyinga saga* is a very old saga. If we did not know this for sure, I am afraid that many scholars would regard this saga to be young. Probably the saga would be counted among those whose dating was highly disputed. The reason for this is that many literary motifs in *Færeyinga saga* are motifs which also are found in literature from the late Middle Ages, for instance in some *fornaldarsögur*. Such motifs are Sigmundr's and Þórir's stay with the outlawed family in the mountains – some parts of the story reminds us of fairy-tales, Sigmundr's killing of the dangerous brown bear, the bridal robbery – Sigmundr's father-in-law had eloped with the woman he loved, and the romantic love-stories, both between Sigmundr's parents-in-law and between Sigmundr and Þuríðr. Further the close relationship between two foster brothers is a very frequent motif in the *fornaldarsögur*. Also the stories about Þrándr's use of magic power, for instance his conjuring forth of the dead and bloody Sigmundr holding

his own head in his hands, are motifs which I suppose many scholars, if we did not know it better, would have regarded as indicating a much later date than one of around 1200 or shortly after.

Færeyinga saga demonstrates very clearly how difficult it is to date written saga literature on the basis of literary motifs. It is of course true that some literary motifs are much more frequent in literature from the late Middle Ages than in literature from the 12th or 13th centuries, but they may occur in old texts as well. It is also a fact that some literary motifs are much more common in one genre than in others, but few motifs are found in one genre alone. The fact that many – or perhaps most – literary motifs in the written saga literature also existed in oral tradition, complicates the dating problem. When we think of some motifs as young, it is primarily because they are frequent in young texts. How frequent these motifs were in the previous oral tradition, and what form these motifs took in the previous oral tradition, will always be undocumented. But I wonder, was oral tradition – or motifs in oral tradition – perhaps more timeless than written literature, and was the oral tradition behind the different saga genres – sagas of kings, sagas of Icelanders, *fornaldarsögur* – perhaps less divided into genre types than the written sagas?

If oral tradition was more timeless than written literature, that is to say less exposed to changes in style and less bound by rules and patterns within a genre, written literature which to a large extent was built on oral tradition, would be more difficult to date than literature which was less dependent on oral tradition.

The author of *Færeyinga saga* had probably no obvious model for his saga in older written literature, and must have been more dependent on the oral tradition than many other authors who wrote later in the century. The result was a saga which would have been very difficult to date if it had not been quoted in a work from the 1220s.

There is also another characteristic feature in *Færeyinga saga* which is very interesting in connection with the dating problem of saga literature. In this saga there is more to be read between the lines than usual in saga literature. Time and again the author leaves his audience in ignorance of what is going on. This was pointed out by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson in his introduction to *Heimskringla* (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1945: xlv), and Peter Foote deals with this literary technique of the author in his article “On the saga of the Faroe Islanders” (Foote 1984: 165-187). At the beginning of the saga we hear of a theft, but we never get to know who the thief is. For a long time the audience believes that an entire crew from the Faroe Islands has drowned on their way to Norway. That is not the case. Práandri í Gøtu has the misfortune to drift back to the islands every time he is on his way to Norway on the earl's or the king's request, the audience of course suspects him of turning around and sailing home, but the author never reveals the truth. Several people on different occasions are killed or disappear in the saga, the audience are able to work out that they have been murdered, but the saga does not reveal by whom.

This literary technique is not totally unknown in other sagas. In *Gísli saga* for instance, the author keeps it a secret who murdered Vésteinn. But this method of presenting a story is far from common in saga literature, and must be regarded as advanced. The author of *Færeyinga saga* “is in fact antedating, by seven hundred years or so, certain elements of technique common in modern novels of mystery and detection” as Peter Foote says (Foote 1984: 175).

An advanced literary technique is not what we should expect to find in a work from around 1200 or shortly after, especially not in a piece of literature which did not belong to an

established literary genre. What we should learn from *Færeyinga saga* is that literary quality is more dependent on the author's talent than on anything else. It is of course true that an author who had read a lot of literature and who wrote within an established genre would profit from that. And an author's way of writing will normally indicate the time of writing. But great creative authors are not representative of their time, they are ahead of their time, and their literary technique – or literary quality – is therefore not a good dating criterion.

Literary quality – whatever that is – has all the same been used as a dating criterion. The adherents of the old 'free-prose' theory regarded the oldest sagas to be the best – or the best sagas to be the oldest. The reason for this was that they believed that the oral saga telling had developed to its highest level of artistry at the time the oldest sagas were written down. What they probably meant was that the oldest sagas best reflected the high quality oral story-telling. If we think of *Færeyinga saga*, there is no doubt that this saga contains some of the most gripping or entertaining episodes in saga literature – such as the story about the killing of Brestir and Beinir, the story of how Prádr conjured forth the dead Sigmundr, the story about Þóra's rescue of her son, Sigurðr's proposal to Þuríðr who wanted to see him dead, and so on.

According to the followers of the 'book-prose' theory, the early saga authors had "starting problems". The best sagas belonged to a "classic" period, or a middle period. Later the saga writing declined. "It is as if the very nerve of life is injured and we are gradually drawn into the dream-world of fantastic sagas, where the real hero is the *kolbit*", Einar Ól. Sveinsson said about the young sagas of Icelanders (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1937-38: 81). This quotation reveals, however, that what Einar Ól. Sveinsson – and many other scholars of his generation – first and foremost meant by literary quality in saga literature, was saga realism.

For the author of *Færeyinga saga*, realism was certainly not the main point. The degree of realism varies throughout the saga. According to the view of the 'book-prose' adherents, the lack of realism was primarily a distinguishing mark of late sagas, but it should also be possible to regard it – according to this theory – as a distinctive feature of the period before the saga realism was fully developed. However, a clumsy composition was the most distinguishing mark of the oldest sagas according to the 'book-prose' theory. Since *Færeyinga saga* is not preserved as a separate saga, it is very difficult to have a clear opinion about the composition of the original saga. However, nothing in the saga as we have it indicates that the composition was especially clumsy. But if the author was especially talented, as there are reasons to believe, he would have less starting problems than most other authors, and his saga would lack some of the marks which normally characterize the oldest sagas. In a way *Færeyinga saga* conforms to the preconception of an old saga both according to the 'free-prose' and the 'book-prose' theory if we adjust for the talented author who often is less representative of his time than the average author.

Færeyinga saga is often included among the sagas of Icelanders. However, this saga does not fully conform to the patterns of this genre – or subgenre – of saga literature. In most cases we can easily see from a rather short piece of text to what genre the text belongs. That is not always easy when *Færeyinga saga* is concerned. The reason for this is partly that this saga in fact stands outside the traditional division of saga literature into genres or subgenres. I have already suggested that the oral tradition was less divided into genre types than written literature. The closeness to oral tradition and the early dating of the saga to a period when most of the written saga genres were not developed, may also explain what we may see as a mixing of genres in *Færeyinga saga*. But what we may see as a mixing of genres did not bother the author,

he did his best and used the models he had at hand both from oral tradition and written literature, and in a way this saga together with *Orkneyinga saga*, *Jómsvíkinga saga* and perhaps *Ívars saga Hákonarsonar* represent a missing link so to speak between the sagas of kings and the sagas of Icelanders.

In some cases it is obvious that the author has looked around for models. He begins his story for instance by mentioning the first settler in the Faroe Islands, Grímr kamban. But he is not a forefather of any of the saga characters. He mentions that a lot of people fled from Norway during the reign of Haraldr hárfagri. He mentions that the *gøtuskeggjar*, the family of Þrándr í Gøtu, were descendants of Olof, the daughter of Þorsteinn rauðr, but he does not say how they are related. His beginning of the story is disconnected. But it is obvious that the author has searched for a way to begin his saga, and he found his model either in the oldest sagas of Icelanders, in the oral Icelandic tradition or in *Landnámabók*.

The author reports carefully who is master over the islands – all the islands or half the islands – at any time. Here he may have used *Orkneyinga saga* – consciously or unconsciously – as a model.

The saga of Gunnlaugr munkr about Óláfr Tryggvason has been mentioned as one of the sources of the author of *Færeyinga saga*. The speeches of the king with its rhetorical religious style may be borrowed from Gunnlaugr or inspired by him. However, Gunnlaugr's models were found in the legendary literature, and legendary motifs are to be found in *Færeyinga saga* side by side with Old Norse motifs. When Þuríðr and Þóra, for instance, goaded Leifr, the continuation of the story is highly irregular compared to common saga patterns. Sigmundur appeared to Þuríðr in a dream – with God's permission – and asked her not to be so hard on Leifr, and assured her that Leifr would avenge them in the end.

The searching for models in different genres and this mixing of motifs and patterns which we have in *Færeyinga saga*, common saga motifs, realistic and less realistic, mythic motifs and motifs borrowed from religious literature, is in my opinion a distinguishing characteristic of the oldest sagas within saga literature.

Færeyinga saga is a fascinating saga which so far has not got the attention it deserves. The author is a good storyteller, and he has a good story to tell. But besides, this saga provides us with a fixed point, or relatively fixed point, in saga chronology. Therefore this saga may be used to throw light on the dating problem of the sagas of Icelanders. In that field many problems remain to be solved.

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Chapter 5

Færeyinga saga: Victorian Visions and Versions

Andrew Wawn

In 1847, an octogenerian Englishman sat in his Cheshire home, in the final months of his life, annotating unpublished travel journals of an expedition to Iceland that he had organised almost half a century earlier. The Iceland annotations took up most of his time, but John Thomas Stanley also glossed those sections that described his two-week visit to the Faroes en route north. His memories were clearly still vivid. He expresses surprise that by 1847 more of ‘our noblemen & wealthy Commoners’ were not visiting the Faroes. It was a short and safe trip in a private yacht; the Faroese people are even more like the English than even the Scots or Irish; they exhibit no offensive ‘Coarseness or Vulgarity of Manners’; and the island affords many sights to excite ‘Sentiments of Sublimity and terror to be borne away in Mind to contrast with future or past Sentiments & add to them by Contrast’ (West 1970-6: III 203).

Stanley might well have added to this list of what advertising executives would now call Unique Selling Points by mentioning Faroese history, Faroese saga-steads and *Færeyinga saga*. Though not included in John West’s edition of the journals, Stanley’s earlier annotation (Lbs. 3886 4to, 213-14, 440-55) had included material copied from *Færoæ, & Færoa reserata: that is, a Description of the Islands and Inhabitants of Foeroe* (1676), John Sterpin’s English translation of Lucas Debes’s 1673 survey of Faroese life, customs and beliefs. The life and death of Sigmundur Brestisson features prominently in the selected extracts. The present paper seeks to explore the level of engagement with the Faroe Islands and *Færeyinga saga* amongst Stanley’s fellow nineteenth-century old northernists, by examining three visions of the islands and two versions of the saga. The visionaries are Walter Trevelyan in the 1820s, George Webbe Dasent in the 1860s, and Frederick York Powell over a thirty-year period from 1868. The versions are a chapter from the saga translated in 1864 by Dasent, celebrated translator of *Brennu-Njáls saga*; and a complete translation of the saga by York Powell, published in 1896.

By the time Walter Trevelyan (1797-1879) had finished his studies in Oxford and Edinburgh *Færeyinga saga* was, in a sense, an interest waiting to happen. Summaries of what had already emerged as the central canonical scenes from the saga had been available to British readers from the late seventeenth century: the deaths of Brestir and Beinir; Sigmundur slaying the bear, the conversion of the Faroes, King Ólafur’s prophecy over Sigmundur Brestisson’s gold ring, and the heroic swimming scene, which culminated in Sigmundur’s death (Debes/Sterpin 1676 201-32). Scholars could also read of these events in compilations such as Þormóður

Torfason's *Commentatio historica de rebus gestis Færeysium* (1695). Both these volumes enjoyed a long shelf life well into the nineteenth century, at which time they were joined by C.C. Rafn's *Færeyinga saga* (1832), a pioneering edition complete with translations into Danish and Faroese.

Faroese history and *Færeyinga saga* material were thus both available to early-nineteenth-century British readers in a variety of forms. Yet, at first sight, they had little effect on Walter Trevelyan. Like several young natural scientists before him (Mackenzie 1812, 1815; Allan 1814), Trevelyan had visited the Faroe Islands to undertake geological and botanical fieldwork. His earliest published paper (Trevelyan 1822) reports the results of his fieldwork in suitably forensic style, but makes no reference to Faroese literary culture. However, a later paper (Trevelyan 1832/1855) does reveal an interest in Faroese ballads, and evidence from British Library holdings confirms his more broadly-based philological sympathies. We find that Trevelyan was the original owner of the British Library copies of Peter Thorstensen's 1770 Danish translation of the 1695 Torfæus *Commentatio*, and of 'Fortælling om Thrond og Sigmund Brestisson', a lively Danish paraphrastic version of *Færeyinga saga* produced by the fiery Icelandic philologist Þorleifur Repp (1819; see Wawn 1990) while based in Copenhagen. We also learn that Trevelyan had corresponded with Johan Schrøter (BL MS Add. 29719), whose Faroese translation of the saga was included in Rafn's 1832 edition. Lastly, it was no doubt as a result of his contacts in and visits to Copenhagen (BL MS Add. 31026) that on the inside leaf of Trevelyan's own copy of the Rafn edition is a handwritten dedication from the editor.

It appears, however, that though Trevelyan was familiar with the Faroes, sharing his knowledge with other Tyneside natural scientists who later journeyed there (Seaton 1989: 65), and though he remained well connected in Copenhagen philological circles, his literary-cultural Faroese interests, like those of Stanley, were pursued largely in private. Attitudes had changed somewhat by the 1860s, as a broader range of Icelandic sagas began to attract English translators and readers: influential publications included George Stephens' *Frithiof's Saga: A Legend of Norway* (1839), Samuel Laing's *The Heimskringla* (1844), and George Dasent's *The Story of Burnt Njal* (1861). Dasent had visited Iceland over successive summers while preparing *Burnt Njal* for the press, and broke his 1861 and 1862 outward journeys at Tórshavn, where he also spent two weeks in 1863. The following year in the *North British Review* (Dasent 1864; reprinted Dasent 1873: I 1-104) he published a lengthy account of this last visit, and included the first (to my knowledge) English language translation of material from *Færeyinga saga*, based on C.C. Rafn's 1832 Icelandic text. Dasent's initiative did not go unnoticed, and the saga soon began to attract the attention of other well-informed old northernists (notably Metcalfe 1869).

The article as a whole takes the form of an address to an imaginary travelling companion, Dasent's 'implied reader'. The scene selected for translation, Chapter 38 in Rafn's edition, is one of the finest in the saga (first paraphrased in English in Debes/Sterpin 1676: 231-2). In it Sigmundr, fleeing for his life from Þrándr, escapes from Skúvoy, swimming alongside his kinsmen Einarr and Þórir. After struggling for a time to save the doomed Einarr, Sigmundr is asked by Þórir how long he intends to carry a dead man on his back; Einarr's body is then duly consigned to the waves. Sigmundr then assists the exhausted Þórir, who also dies before 'the peerless champion of the Faroes' (Dasent 1873: I 58) staggers ashore on Suðuroy, where he lies in a pile of sea-weed. His red clothing attracts the attention of Þorgrímr, who learns from Sigmundr of the recent grim events. Sighting Sigmundr's gold ring, Hákon jarl's fateful gift,

Porgrímr and his sons murder the helpless hero, before stripping him of his gear, and burying him alongside Þórir.

It is small wonder that this memorable narrative sequence attracted Dasent's attention. It addresses saga themes already familiar to the translator of *Njáls saga*: physical heroism, fellowship and friendship, family tensions, competing loyalties, the fulfillment of prophecy, the fateful power of gold, and a shameful killing: all serving to dramatise the underlying clash between the old order and the new in the Faroe Islands. Each moment finds expression in taut narrative and implication-rich dialogue. In examining Dasent's version a sense of his priorities as a translator soon emerges: (i) occasional paraphrastic editorialising—'*and so he shook Einar off—he had died you see from toil and cold*', 'Sigmund swam on till he reached *Sandwick* in Suderö. There was a surf running on the island *just as it runs now* [italics mark interpolations]' (all quotations from Dasent 1873: I 90-1); (ii) careful differentiation of speakers—'thou' (used by Einar) against 'you' (used by Sigmundr); (iii) creation of direct speech out of indirect—'Here we must part,' 'Nay, not so,' said Sigmund, 'lay your hands on my shoulders, Einar' for 'Sigmundr kveðr það eigi skyldu, ok far, Einar! meðal herða mēr' (all quotations from Rafn 1832, 183-4), in order to resolve the saga's sudden switch into direct speech; (iv) a disinclination to preserve tense shifts within the narrative; (v) occasional elegant variation (*máttfarinn*, used three times in the saga, reappears as 'strengthless', 'weak'—the third instance is omitted); (vi) archaistic colouring created by 2 sing. pres. *-est* forms, inversions of word order, deployment of medieval English alliterative vocabulary, as with 'ettle' ('I ettle there is no need of that') for *eigi ætla (ek) þess purfa*, and use of idioms such as 'Nay, not so', 'tis'.

A passionate cultural politics underpinned George Dasent's treatment of this *Færeyinga saga* chapter. At the level of painful European current affairs, he clearly read the whole work in the context of the 1863-4 German invasion of Slesvig-Holsten, sensing modern parallels in the saga's treatment of the clash between Faroese nativism and foreign influence. It would, he noted, be 'just as hard to get the Germans out of Schleswig as the rats and grampuses and fulmars out of Faroe' (Dasent 1873: I 84). At a more domestic level, Dasent's translated chapter reflects an alertness to the parallels between the Old Icelandic and Victorian English languages. He longed for a modern cultural-political extension of those linguistic parallels, arguing that Victorian socio-cultural values should embrace and emulate those of the old north (Wawn 2000: 142-82; Cook 2002 discusses Dasent's principles and practice when translating *Njáls saga*). And yet Dasent's philological alertness never made him into a relentless linguistic archaist in the William Morris mould. In his *Færeyinga saga* extract, especially, Dasent was sensitive to the capacities of his nineteenth-century common readers; the well-judged sense of stylistic alterity was achieved as much by deft insinuation as by white-knuckled insistence.

And so, briefly, to my third Victorian vision and second Victorian version. In 1864 Frederick York Powell was a fourteen-year-old pupil at Rugby School in Warwickshire. At about this time he first read Dasent's *Burnt Njal* in the town bookshop, and re-read it annually thereafter (Elton 1906: I 11, 31). He was sufficiently fascinated by the translation to teach himself Old Icelandic, and by 1868 he had translated *Hervarar saga* and *Gull-Þóris saga*; pioneering versions whose whereabouts, alas, is now unknown. It was at much the same time that he also translated the whole of *Færeyinga saga*.

If his decision to translate *Hervarar saga* need not surprise us (its 'Waking of Angantǫr' poem had long been popular), we might reflect on why York Powell (or, as Eiríkur Magnússon used to call him, Jorvík Powell) chose to work on *Færeyinga saga*. The attractions of the saga

and of the North Atlantic community it celebrated had, of course, been signalled in Dasent's 1864 *North British Review* article. Moreover, elements in *Færeyinga saga* may have reminded him of other 1860s old northern translations which could have caught his eye in the same town bookshop or school library: the bear slaying story echoes that in *Víga-Glúms saga* (translated by Sir Edmund Head in 1865), and the tales of young Sigmundr and Þórir with the outlaws recall the Icelandic outlaw stories published in 1866, in translations by George E.J. Powell and Eiríkur Magnússon (Powell and Eiríkr Magnússon 1866).

Whatever his motivation the precocious York Powell had completed a draft version of his *Færeyinga saga* translation by 1868-9. He then put it aside until working over it again in 1874 with an Oxford friend to whom he was teaching Icelandic (York Powell 1896: xxxix). Once again, however, sterner duty called him away, and the translation again began to gather dust, while York Powell worked as Guðbrandur Vigfússon's scholarly amanuensis. In this role he wrote a brief section on *Færeyinga saga* in the 'Prolegomena' to Guðbrandur's pioneering English language edition of *Sturlunga saga* (1878), and his translation of the *Færeyinga saga* 'Kredda' scene was included in the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (1883) volumes (Guðbrand Vigfússon and York Powell 1883: I 75), on which he worked with Guðbrandur. Eventually in 1896, some 30 years after the first draft, a much revised version of *Færeyinga saga* (if the 'Kredda' scene is anything to go by; see York Powell 1896: 75) was published as the second volume of The Northern Library, a short-lived series, the first volume of which was devoted to John Sephton's *The Saga of King Olaf Tryggwason* (1895) translation. It may even have been the Faroese matter in that volume which encouraged York Powell to resurrect his own *Færeyinga saga* version. The dedicatees of *Færeyinga saga*; or, *The Tale of Thronð of Gate* (1896) span the thirty year gestation period of the translation, and touch both sides of York Powell's life and personality: one was Henry George Liddell, a supportive Oxford professor of Classics, and the other was Henry Stone, an old Kentish fisherman whom York Powell knew as a teenager.

There is space for only brief comment on two aspects of York Powell's response to the saga: the style of the translation and the mindset of the translator. In an introductory section to the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (1883: I cxiv-cxvii), York Powell discussed insightfully the challenge of translating from Old Icelandic into English, 'the best vehicle for a translator from the old Northern speech to work in' (ibid.: I cxvi). He notes the need to translate the old life as well as the old language; the importance of syntax and tense as well as vocabulary; and the need to avoid 'the affectation of archaism' (ibid. I cxv). York Powell believed that philologically-driven literalism 'kills', and that 'the idiomatic spoken tongue of the Saga-makers should be rendered as far as possible into an idiomatic spoken tongue' (ibid. I cxv). In York Powell's translation of the death of Sigmundr scene (all quotations from York Powell 1896: 51), we may observe that there is less archaistic filigree than in Dasent; elegant variation seems less of a priority—the three *máttlaus* forms are simply translated as 'worn out'; there is no attempt to construct a thou/you distinction between Þórir and Sigmundr—'thou' is used by both characters, as in the Icelandic original. Similar unfussy fidelity to the original is discernible in York Powell's (i) retention of short sense units and coordinate syntax; (ii) retention of sudden transitions from indirect to direct speech; (iii) avoidance of editorialising, as when he favours 'if thou art cumbered with me' for *ef þú faltrast við mik*, rather than Dasent's belt and braces 'if thou falterest and lovest any time with me', or as when *lagðist niðr í þarabrukkit* is simply 'lay down on a heap of seaweed' (York Powell) rather than Dasent's more interventionist 'hid himself in a heap of seaweed'. His inclination to stay close to the Icelandic text in *hversu leingi skaltu... flytja dauðan*

mann eftir þær, ‘how long wilt thou flit a dead man on thy back’, seems preferable to Dasent’s more diffuse ‘how long...art thou going to swim dragging a dead man behind thee’. The overall effect of York Powell’s individual decisions is to create a style which is somewhat sparer and cooler than that of Dasent, though equally committed to suggesting the characteristics of ‘an idiomatic spoken tongue’.

As for the translator’s mindset, with York Powell, as with many nineteenth-century old northernists, there was a distinctive personal agenda driving his philological endeavours. His other writings reveal an essentially dualistic vision of history, philology—and life. We have already noted the 1896 volume’s twin dedications to a professor and a fisherman. York Powell tried to embrace both roles: he was an Oxford professor who frequently dressed in navy blue fisherman’s clothing and cap, as if to associate himself with the noble Viking-Age qualities identifiable (he believed) in deep-sea fishermen (Elton 1906 I 3, 79). He relished the duality of human nature generally, respecting earthiness as well as saintliness. He speaks as warmly of Rabelais and Montaigne as of King Alfred and Langland (ibid. I 390, 407); he was a Darwinian who saw the need for grit in the evolutionary oyster before a pearl could emerge. Small wonder, then, that he was attracted to a saga organised around the struggle between Sigmundr and Práendr. It was easy to admire Sigmundr, with his charismatic internationalism, triumph over childhood tragedy, and conspicuous bravery. To admire Práendr took more imagination, but, like many nineteenth-century Faroese readers of the saga (Rógvi Thomsen 1993), admire him York Powell did—the cunning conservatism, the unbending nativism, the elemental life force.

The Viking-Age Faroese society, York Powell suggests became stronger through the interaction and eventual fusion of the two elements. *Færeyinga saga* was also stronger because of the narrator’s non-judgmental presentation of each side in the struggle. York Powell disliked Lord Acton’s unshakeable sense that ethics were ‘the marrow of history’ (Elton 1906: I 406). He reviled those periods of English history most associated with Christian moralism, as with his loathing of the seventeenth-century Puritans (ibid. I 407). As his biographer Oliver Elton puts it beguilingly, York Powell ‘loved heathendom, being himself a heathen’ (ibid. I 29). He valued folklore for the way it taught that moral codes in early societies could be in a state of flux and moral vicissitude, and he valued sagas for the way in which complex and contradictory forces could be articulated and reflected upon in a non-judgemental way. His concern, everywhere evident in his translation, not to compromise the saga’s hard-won neutrality of vision was thus not so much an aesthetic whimsy and more an ethical imperative. It was central to his whole view of life.

We may conclude that *Færeyinga saga* was well but somewhat differently served by the worthy Victorian custodians discussed in this paper. And Frederick York Powell’s efforts lived on after him. The year of his death—1905—saw the second edition of a school reading book of selected saga extracts, which included York Powell’s version of Sigmundr’s childhood and his death (Speight and Major 1905: 188-205). In this way the tales of Práendr and Sigmundr which began the nineteenth century in the unpublished journal jottings of an Iceland explorer, eventually found themselves recycled for school-children alongside tales of Grettir and Gunnarr and Burnt Njáll. *Færeyinga saga* had finally found its place in the sun, or at least in the Edwardian national curriculum.

Appendix

1. *Færeyinga saga*, ed. C.C. Rafn (1832), pp. 173-4 [ch. 38]

...mælti Einar: hær mun skilja oss. Sigmundr kveðr þat eigi skyldu, ok far, Einar! meðal herða mēr, og svá gerði hann. Sigmundr leggst þá um hrið. Þá mælti Þórir, er hann lagðist síðar: hversu leingi skaltu, Sigmundr frændi! flytja dauðan mann eptir þér? Eigi ætla (ek) þess þurfa, segir Sigmundr. Nú lögðust þeir þartil, er eptir var fjórðúngr sundsins; þá mælti Þórir: alla æfi okkra, Sigmundr frændi! höfum við ásamt verit, ok mikla ástúð haft, hvorir okkar við annan, en nú er vænst, at þrjóti okkra samvistu, hefir ek nú framlagit, slíkt er ek er tilfær, vil ek at þú hjálpir þér ok lífi þínu, en gef eigi gaum at mēr, þvíat þar gefr þú þitt líf við, frændi! ef þú faltrast við mik. Þat skal aldri verða, segir Sigmundr, at við skilim svá, Þórir frændi! skulu við annathvort báðir á land komast eðr hvorgi. Sigmundr flytr nú Þóri meðal herða sēr, var Þórir þá svá máttfarinn, at hann mátti sēr nær ekki at veita, ok leggst Sigmundr þartil, er hann kemr at Suðrey. Brim var at eyjunni; var Sigmundr þá svá máttfarinn, at hann dró stundum frá landi, en annat skeið hóf hann at; skolaði Þóri þá af herðum honum, ok druknaði hann, en Sigmundr gat skriðit upp um síðir, ok var þá svá máttfarinn, at hann mátti eigi gánga, ok skreið upp í fjöruna, ok lagðist niðr í þarabrukit...

2. George Webbe Dasent, trans., *North British Review* (May 1864), 287-336; reprinted in *Jest and Ernest* (1873), I 90-1

...Einar said, 'Here we must part.' 'Nay, not so,' said Sigmund, 'lay your hands on my shoulders, Einar,' and Einar did so. So Sigmund swam on a long way farther, and then Thorir said as he was swimming behind, 'How long, kinsman Sigmund, art thou going to swim dragging a dead man after thee?' 'I ettle there is no need of that,' said Sigmund, and so he shook Einar off—he had died you see from toil and cold. So the cousins swam on till a fourth of the way was left, and then Thorir said, 'All our life long, kinsman Sigmund, have we two been together in great love one with the other, but now 'tis likeliest that our fellowship will be sundered. I have swum as far as I can, and I will that thou shouldst help thyself, and take no heed of me, for kinsman mine thou wilt lose thine own life if thou falterest and locest any time over me.' 'That shall never be,' said Sigmund, 'that we two should thus part, kinsman Thorir, either we will come both safe to land together or neither of us.' Then Sigmund put Thorir on his back between his shoulders, for Thorir was so strengthless that he could do little or nothing for himself, and so Sigmund swam on till he reached Sandwick in Suderö. There was a surf running on the island just as it runs now, and by that time Sigmund was so weak that now he drove up on land and now he rolled back again with the waves, and then Thorir slipped off his shoulders and was drowned, but as for Sigmund he could just crawl up on shore and lay down and hid himself in a heap of seaweed.

3. F. York Powell, trans., *Færeyinga saga, or The Tale of Thronð of Gate* (1896), p. 51 [ch. 38]

...Einar said, 'We must part here.' Sigmund said that should never be. 'And do thou, Einar, lean on my shoulders!' And he did so. So Sigmund swam on for a while. Then Thore said, as he swam behind him, 'Kinsman Sigmund, how long wilt thou flit a dead man on thy back?' 'I don't see that I need,' said Sigmund. They swam on till they had only a fourth of the way to go, when Thore said, 'All our lives long we have been together, kinsman Sigmund, and great love have we twain had towards each other; but now it looks as if our life together was come to an end. I have pushed on as far as I can, and now I would have thee to look to thyself and thine own life, kinsman, and give no heed to me, for thou wilt risk thine own life, kinsman, if thou art cumbered with me.' But Sigmund said, 'It shall never be that we two part so, kinsman Thore. We will both of us come to land or neither.' Then Sigmund took him on his shoulders, but Thore was so worn out that he could do hardly anything to help himself. Then Sigmund swam on till he got to Southrey. There was a surf running on the island, and Sigmund was so worn out by this time that he was now driven from the land, and another time borne towards it. And Thore slipped off his shoulders there and was drowned, but Sigmund got to land at last, and he was so worn out that he could not walk, but he crawled up the shore and lay down on a heap of seaweed.

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Chapter 6

Money and religion in *Færeyinga saga*

Richard North

Some things must be read into *Færeyinga saga* if the saga is to make complete sense. One of these is the use of coin to buy land, another a knowledge of the laws of inheritance. From beginning to end of this saga it appears to be the aim of the protagonist, Práandri í Götum, to buy or inherit ever more land of the Faroe Islands until he can own most of them as a personal possession. For a while Práandri's paganism is a means to this end. A long view emerges in Práandri's thinking in *Færeyinga saga*, one which is almost brought to fruition in the penultimate chapter. Although Práandri in this work is often seen as a Faroese nationalist at war with the stooges of Norwegian power, it would appear that he is less keen on preserving his countrymen's independence than on making himself into their ruler. A monarchy of the Faroes appears to be the prize which Práandri covets and all but succeeds in winning in *Færeyinga saga*.

This work is thought to have been written by an Icelander from Eyjafjörður in c. 1210-15 (Ólafur 1987: ccxxxii-iii and ccxxxix). Any study of *Færeyinga saga* is complicated by the form of the surviving text, which must be assembled from passages copied into later sources (*ibid.*: ccxl-ccxlv). The primary source is the fourteenth-century *Flateyjarbók*, which has a virtually complete text of *Færeyinga saga* derived from three sources: chs. 1-27, 34-42 and 49-59 were copied directly into *Flateyjarbók* from a manuscript of *Færeyinga saga* which is now lost; chs. 28-33 are found as interpolations in *Flateyjarbók*'s copy of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta*; and chs. 43 and 45-8 are found interpolated in *Flateyjarbók*'s copy of Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga*; ch. 44 was left out of *Flateyjarbók* (*ibid.*: xxxvii-liv). In addition, parts of *Færeyinga saga* survive less reliably in two older sources: chs. 1-33 were incorporated into *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta*, when this was written in the early fourteenth century (*ibid.*: xxxvii-liv); and chs. 43-8 were taken up by Snorri in the 1220s, who adapted them for inclusion in his *Óláfs saga helga*, in both versions, the Separate saga and the one in *Heimskringla* (*ibid.*: cxv-vi and xlvi-lxxiii). Not all of *Færeyinga saga* has survived (*ibid.*: cxvi-ii). Chs. 34-42 and 49-59, which are preserved only in *Flateyjarbók*, have gaps in their narrative concerning both the death of Óláfr Tryggvason and the accession of Earls Eiríkr and Sveinn Hákonarsynir (to go between chs. 33 and 34), and the reign of these earls with the son of Eiríkr and the accession of St Óláfr (to go before ch. 43). From these and a few other lesser sources a text of *Færeyinga saga* has been cleverly recovered by Ólafur Halldórsson. In this commentary I shall quote from *Flateyjarbók*, except where indicating another text, and I translate with the aid of Johnston (1975). *Færeyinga saga* survives as an engaging but broken text in which the colour of

Prádr's money shines through undiminished. The author lets him carry out his tricks with a literary art of concealment which keeps the reader ignorant for much of the time (Foote 1964a: 14-21). Prádr turns out to be a cheerful but ruthless schemer, an actor and heathen necromancer, but it is worth noting that the tale starts with his knack for making money.

Money in *Færeyinga saga*

Money in this saga, *fé* ('wealth') or *skatt* ('tribute'), is occasionally specified as silver and silver-based coin (chs. 2-3, 8-9, 48), but could also be imagined as homespun or other farm or fishing surplus. With silver, the author of *Færeyinga saga* was idealizing the Norwegian currency of his time, rather than that of the Faroes in c. 970 x c. 1040 when the story is set (Skaare 1976). In this period it is likely that no coins circulated in the Faroes. The hoard found at Sandur in Sandoy, which was buried in the 1070s with coins from England, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Germany and Hungary, provides exceptional evidence of coins in the Faroes at a later time; but this currency was probably obtained abroad in exchange for wool or other Faroese goods (Young 1979: 110). Oddly enough, the use of coins in Haleyri, the market in Halland to which the young Prádr travels in ch. 2, does fit with the late tenth century in which King Haraldr Gormsson of Denmark had a mass of new coins minted from c. 975 onwards, in an area 'which comprises Jutland, the Danish isles and Scania (with Halland and Blekinge)' (Skaare 1981: 38).

Prádr goes to Haleyri, possibly on the site of modern Skanör, in order to increase his capital. He has been brought up the younger son, but seems to have the same chance of inheriting the farm at Gøta in Eysturoy as Þorlákr his brother, who marries and yet stays on with their father Þorbjörn (Ólafur 1987: clxxvii). When their father dies, the brothers draw lots for 'the homestead' (*heimabolit*) and 'moveable goods' (*lausafe*, ch. 2). Lots are recommended for property division between brothers, among other cases, in the twelfth-century Norwegian *Gulabingslög*, § 282 (Keyser and Munch 1846-95: I, 94 (cf. I, 43 (§ 87), 53 (§ 123)); Larson 1935: 183; Foote 1970: 165). So it seems that here, as in many other chapters, the author of *Færeyinga saga* is using elements of Norwegian law to create the illusion of Faroese conditions, or at least 'to reinforce the impression of a strange setting' to an Icelandic audience (Foote 1970: 161-74, esp. 173). The homestead falls to Prádr, who turns down his brother's plea to swap the farm for more of the goods. Þorlákr leaves; no doubt with the money, he 'got himself a farmstead' elsewhere in the islands (*fék sér annan bustad*). Prádr, on the other hand, 'rented out plots of the land in Gøta to many men and took the highest rents' (*sellde alæigu landit j G?tu m?rgum m?nnum ok tok læigu sem mesta*). Historically, this appears to be the division of a larger farm into separate *bygdir*, a process underway in the Faroes and Norway as early as the Viking Age (Thorsteinsson 1978: 70-9; 1981: 197-200; Skre 2001: 7-9 and 26-7). With these gains Prádr pays for a trip to Norway, thence to Haleyri to meet the biggest crowd in the northlands. The wide-eyed innocent style of the saga does not allow us to be sure that it is Prádr who arranges what happens next. Two brothers, men of King Haraldr, put together a bag of silver in order to buy a golden ring off a trader named Holmgeirr *audgi* ('the wealthy'; possibly a Rus': he has a namesake in Sweden in the 1020s; cf. Jesch 1991: 126). Prádr pretends to be one of these men and relieves the other of the bag by sleight of hand. When they find out the theft, King Haraldr keeps everyone harbour-bound until the matter is cleared up (ch. 3). But Prádr makes yet more money: first, by making each Norwegian trader pay him an ounce of silver (half up front, half on completion) for a plan to get them out of Haleyri; second, by persuading the king to dun all men at the fair for some money

which may be pooled to make good the loss incurred by the brothers; when this is done, the king splits the remainder, a huge sum, taking one half and dividing the other between Pránder and his men. From this act of larceny Pránder walks off with 'such a great pile of money that the number of marks within it could scarcely be counted' (*sua mikit ófafa (...) er trauðt kom marka tale a*). Pránder buys a big 'trading vessel' (*byrding*), sails back to Gøta and puts some money back into his farm.

Pránder is more daring with his next opportunity. A feud opens up between two factions who are said to share rule of the Faroes (ch. 4): between Hafrímr in Hov on Suðuroy, who holds half the islands 'in fief from' (*j len af*) King Haraldr *gráfeldr* ('grey-cloak') Eiríksson of (southern and central) Norway; and the brothers Beinir and Brestir of Skúvoy, who hold their half in fief from Earl Hákon Sigurðarson of Trøndelag. The brothers are close, unlike Pránder and Þorlákr, for they live together with mistresses, not wives, in Skúvoy despite having another farm on Dímun (the author, never having been there, has mixed these islands up: Foote 1970: 159). Beinir and Brestir are cousins of Pránder through their father Sigmundur, brother of Þorbjörn. There is no love lost between the cousins. One day, two of Hafrímr's men quarrel over comparing patrons; when one hits the other, the victim, Einarr *Sudreyíngur* ('of Suðuroy', or 'the Hebridean'), takes refuge with his kinsmen Beinir and Brestir whom he had held superior to Hafrímr. Brestir later refuses to grant Hafrímr self-judgement, but when Hafrímr summons Einarr to the assembly in Streymoy, he finds that Brestir had forestalled him declaring the attack on Einarr just after it happened. The matter does not end there. In ch. 6, Hafrímr seeks help from Pránder, whose price is high: 'the value of two cows each spring, plus two hundreds [perhaps 240 ells of homespun] each autumn, and this payment shall be for your lifetime as well as after your death' (*tvau kugillde huert uor ok tuau hundrat huert haust ok skal sia skyllde uera efinlig ok sua eigi sidr eptir þinn dag*); nor is there a deal, he says, unless others come in with them. Hafrímr agrees and goes north-east to Svínoy, where Bjarni lives, a mother's brother of Pránder. Bjarni's price is less astute, if more obvious: 'the value of three cows each spring, plus three hundreds in meat each autumn' (*huert uor tít kugillde ok huert haust tít hundrat j slatrum*). For the foreseeable future, in this way, Pránder helps his kindred to a combined annual income of five *kúgildi* and five *hundrað*, effectively imposing a tribute on Hafrímr as if he now held his lands *í len* from Pránder.

An attack takes place on Brestir and Beinir which is successful (ch. 7). Rowing back to Dímun from an errand on the uninhabited Lítla Dímun, the brothers, and their young sons too, are caught before reaching shore by three boats each laden with twelve armed men and captained by Hafrímr, Pránder and Bjarni. The brothers run their boat aground and make a stand on a crag, leaving their sons to watch. Sigmundur Brestisson is nine and Þórir Beinisson eleven; together they see their fathers killed, but with the loss of six attackers including Hafrímr, whom Pránder, from a position of safety on the foreshore, carefully provokes into attacking Brestir. Doubtless thinking of the brothers' inheritance, Pránder now says that their sons should be killed. Luckily his mother's brother Bjarni will not allow this murder to take place. But the balance of power has now shifted in Pránder's favour. In an afternoon's work he has removed two royal *lénsmenn* from their hold over the Faroes; and by offering to foster the surviving children, not only Sigmundur and Þórir but also the nine-year old Özurr Hafrímsson, Pránder wins control over the estates of the islands' two leading families. In ch. 8, Pránder takes over the hereditary land of Sigmundur and Þórir by selling them off as slaves; their potential buyer, a Norwegian named Hrafn, is persuaded instead to take them for two marks of silver (*ij merkr*

silfurs, ch. 8), which he hands on to the boys in Tønsberg the next spring (ch. 9). Sigmundur and Þórir, too young to match the creative genius of their fathers' cousin Pránder, stay in Viken for two years until their two marks are spent (ch. 10). Of Pránder it is said that, as well as fostering Özurr for a rainy day, 'he takes into his keeping all the rule of the Faroes and all the money and lands which his kinsmen the brothers Beinir and Brestir had owned' (*hann tekur under sig Ríki allt j Færæyium ok allt fe þat ok eignir er þeir hafua att breðr Bæinir ok Brestir frændr hans*, ch. 9). By fostering his victims' children, it is accepted that Pránder is serving himself (Almqvist 1993: 178). Yet how? Where the sons of Beinir and Brestir are concerned, Pránder clearly takes possession of Skúvoy and Dímun in addition to his own estate. As regards Özurr, moreover, Pránder adds even more to his *fe*. In addition to his yearly two *kúgildi* and two *hundrað* from Özurr's estate in perpetuity, Pránder stands to inherit some or all of his land. According to *Gulapingslög*, § 270, the sixth type of inheritance of *óðal* ('family estate') consists of land received as payment for fostering a child, whoever provides the service (*barnfostr laun hverr sem gefr*: Keyser and Munch 1846-95: I, 91; Larson 1935: 178). It is believed that an idea of *óðal* similar to the Norwegian legal use of this term existed in the Faroes before its formal introduction to the islands with the laws of Magnús *lagabættir* ('law-mender') in 1262 (Björk 1961: 119-20). If we read some form of *barnfostrlaun* into chs. 7-9 of *Færeyinga saga*, we see that Pránder wins at least temporary ownership of lands in Suðuroy which had never belonged to his family. Historically, as Dagfinn Skre points out, 'the Medieval concept of property differed from the modern in the sense that exclusive rights over land were uncommon. The norm was that different persons had different rights to the same piece of land, and the relation between these rights reflected the social relationship between the persons' (2001: 11). Many chapters later in *Færeyinga saga*, we learn that Þorgrímur *ille* ('the bad') of Sandvík in Suðuroy is a tenant of Pránder in the southern Faroes (*l<a>ndzsete Prandar ór Gautu*, ch. 38). As Sandvík is a long way from Gøta, it seems likely that Pránder acquires this land early in return for his fostering of Özurr Hafgrímsson.

When Özurr comes of age and marries (ch. 22), Pránder makes a division of rule, granting him power over that half of the Faroes which had been held by Brestir and Beinir. However, he continues to rule all the islands by himself, 'for he and Özurr were not both of the same sharpness' (*þuiat þeir Özsorr voru æigi iafn slægir*). To an extent Pránder also recognizes the young Özurr's property rights: it is said that 'Özurr now owned two farms or really three' (*atti ?zsorr nu ij bu edr íij*), his father's estate at Hov in Suðuroy, plus the farms on Skúvoy and Dímun which had belonged to Brestir and Beinir. Sigmundur and Þórir have meanwhile become famous (chs. 16-21) and the Faroe Islanders have heard of them: as the made men of Earl Hákon in Norway, these cousins may be expected to claim their rights in the Faroes; and Özurr takes the precaution of building a fortress at their old farm on Skúvoy. Pránder has settled him there probably because he expects an attack from the cousins and perhaps because he hopes, when that happens, for the same mutual cancellation of parties as occurred on Dímun when their fathers died killing Hafgrímur. In the event, Özurr is killed and Sigmundur and Þórir live (ch. 24). Sigmundur and Þórir sail to the Faroes each with a ship of his own. A gale drives them apart but Sigmundur holds his course for Eysturoy and Pránder. A second gale blows him off course and he is forced to steer to Svínø, where Bjarni still lives. Sigmundur gives Bjarni his life but forces him to take the ship's company to Skúvoy, given that the winds do not allow them into Gøta in Eysturoy. Sigmundur's men and 50 men supplied by Bjarni make an assault on the fortress there before dawn. In a parley beforehand, Özurr offers to put

their case into arbitration, but Sigmundr refuses, and in the following battle he kills Özurr, leaving his son Leifr fatherless. Þórir meanwhile makes land in Suðuroy. A truce is arranged between Sigmundr and Práendr and both men come to the assembly at Tórshavn in Streymoy each with a crowd of supporters. Práendr, who is cheerful, regrets having stood by while Brestir and Beinir were killed, and to make up for this dishonour, he says, 'I will grant your those terms in which you will find the most honour and might take the greatest pleasure. I want you to make all terms of settlement between the two of us' (*uil ek unna þer þeirra setta er þer væri mest semd at ok þv mættir bezst vid vna uil ek at þu georir okkar j millum allar sættir*, ch. 23).

On the face of it this offer appears to give Sigmundr everything he wants, but out of habit, perhaps, Sigmundr refuses and says instead that he will refer the case to Earl Hákon of Norway. He is right to refuse, although he does so for the wrong reasons. According to *Gulapingslög*, § 119, if a man holds an inheritance which is unappraised, the minor heir must present his sworn claim to the property as soon as he comes of age, or at least at a time during the five winters before he fills his twentieth year (Keyser and Munch 1846-95: I, 57; Larson 1935: 115). According to *Færeyinga saga*, Sigmundr is eighteen and Þórir twenty when they make their way to Earl Hákon in Lade (ch. 13). So Sigmundr must be nineteen when he and his cousin become Hákon's liegemen at Yule after the following summer (ch. 18); twenty, when he raids Sweden in revenge for twelve of Hákon's men whom King Eiríkr had killed, fighting also with Vandill and Aðill; and twenty-one, when he returns to Norway from around Anglesey, bringing Haraldr *járnhauss* ('iron-skull'), an outlaw, to be reconciled with Hákon who had originally sent Sigmundr to kill him (ch. 21). When they come home to the Faroes, the next spring, Sigmundr will be twenty-two and his cousin Þórir twenty-four: too old since bereavement to reclaim their property by legal means, at least by the provision of *Gulapingslög*, § 119. So when Práendr offers to put the case into Sigmundr's hands, it seems that he knows he can declare this case invalid. It is possible that he hopes first to concentrate all the Skúvoy and Dimun estates in Sigmundr's hands so that he can then alienate them from Sigmundr and Þórir for good.

Earl Hákon is the other complication which Práendr would hope to avoid. Hákon has taken Sigmundr to his heart and given him a fabulous golden armring from the idol of his beloved goddess Þorgerðr *h?rda brudr* ('bride of the men of Hordaland', ch. 23). This scene, in which Hákon sheds tears to extract the ring from his mistress, appears to be modelled on a story about a cleric who falsely promises his devotion to a statue of the Virgin Mary (extant in *Martu saga*; cf. Ólafur 1987: clxxxvi-viii; expanded from Ólafur 1969: 246-9). At any rate, when the case threatens to go to Norway, it must be clear to Práendr that he will be stripped of all rule of the Faroes and reduced to the Gøta holdings and whatever else he may have got in the meantime. Sigmundr unwisely takes Práendr at his word that he will sail alongside Sigmundr to Norway the next summer (ch. 24). Of course Práendr never leaves the Faroes, but the settlement which Sigmundr gets from Hákon is good in both *fé* and *riki* (ch. 25). As regards money, firstly, the earl adjudges two wergilds (*manngioll*) for each of the two brothers Brestir and Beinir, a third for Práendr's attempt on their sons' lives, and a fourth for Práendr's bid to sell them into slavery. This atonement money may be divided between Sigmundr and Þórir as they see fit. Where the rule is concerned, secondly, Hákon acknowledges to Sigmundr that a quarter of the Faroes was once his 'in authority' (*j manna forede*). Sigmundr now gets possession (*eígn*) of half the islands, presumably his father's quarter, plus that which pertained to his uncle Beinir. But this is not restitution: it appears to be a new grant made possible by the

fact that Hákon strips Pránder of his power for the misdeeds which he then goes on to specify. Pránder may stay on in the Faroes, but loses his part (*hlut*), presumably half, of the rule; while Özur's heirs lose their inheritance (*arfua*). Hákon imposes this penalty on each offending party because both Pránder and Hafgrímur, Özur's father, killed his liegemen Brestir and Beinir. Nor will the deaths of Hafgrímur and Özur be paid for: in Hafgrímur's case because of the killing of Brestir and Beinir; in Özur's, 'on account of the injustice of his having settled on your possessions' (*firir þann vafinnat er hann settizst j eignir þinar*). The detail of Hákon's speech is not as clear as it could be; his language is modelled on that of a scene from *Orkneyinga saga* (ch. 38, c. 1200), in which King Óláfr Haraldsson makes terms with the earls of Orkney (Ólafur 1987: clxvii-viii). Implicit in Hákon's use of *þú*, however, is his adjudication of Sigmundur's ownership of all the family lands which had been held by Brestir and Beinir in common. That is to say, with half the Faroes Sigmundur ends up with both the power and the property which had belonged jointly to his father and uncle. The other half is to be held by Sigmundur 'in fief' (*j len*) from Hákon, to whom a yearly tribute must be paid. The difference between this and the earl's previous arrangement is that Hákon has switched ownership from the northern to the southern half of the Faroes, whilst giving Sigmundur title to half all for himself, as if he were now an earl. A precedent is thus established for Pránder.

When Sigmundur returns to meet Pránder at the Tórshavn assembly, he tells his older kinsman to pay up within a year. This is where their new trouble starts. Pránder asks for time, 'and at men's entreaty' (*en vid bæn manna*) Sigmundur gives in and allows him to pay the money in three years, meaning at the rate of a third a year. Pránder now congratulates him for taking over the 'authority over men' (*mannaforrad*) for as long as he had had it himself. There is nothing else in the text to show that Sigmundur will stay in power for twelve years, but fact that his story turns out this way is an early hint of Pránder's uncanny side. If we also wonder at the basis for Pránder's mockery and his continuing power, this may be imagined as his having bought or acquired sufficient land, in the twelve years of Sigmundur's absence, for the said crowd of 'men' at Tórshavn to be regarded as his tenants. Stripped of his *ríki* by Earl Hákon, Pránder still seems to have invested his great *fé* in the purchase of hidden but wide-ranging *eygnir*. This pattern of multiplying land-tenancies is fully in keeping with what is surmised of early Norwegian society from its archaeology and laws (Skre 2001: 6-12, esp. 9; Vestergaard 1988: 178). Where Sigmundur is concerned, the author says that the same autumn he returned to the Faroes, 'Sigmundur lived in great splendour and kept his farm stocked with a great quantity of provisions' (*hafde S(igmundur) Rausn mykla. ok at faung mikil j bu sitt*, ch. 24). These styles of outlay differ as much as the men do, one being a long-term strategist, the other a lucky tactician.

When the assembly breaks up, Pránder quietly offers to foster the young Leifr Özurarson (ch. 25). With Leifr's inheritance taken by Earl Hákon, there can be no income for Pránder from the dead Özur's estate, but later we learn that Pránder has begun to foster his brother's sons Sigurðr and Þórðr Þorláksson and his sister's son Gautr *raude* ('the red') at the same time (ch. 35). A presumed *barnfóstrlaun* from these boys might amount to an income which could add to Pránder's estate. Here, however, Pránder pays Sigmundur the first third of his four wergilds with reluctance, just before he sails for Norway that summer (ch. 25). If this were payable at 120 *eyrir* per man (Johnston 1975: 134), this third would amount to 160 *eyrir*. Sigmundur is at least prompt with the tribute he takes to Earl Hákon for his half of the islands. In Norway Sigmundur at last marries Þuríðr, the mother of their daughter Þóra and the daughter of Þorkell

þurrafrost ('dry-frost') who had fostered him and Þórir in the mountains (ch. 26). They sail back to the Faroes in the autumn, and come the spring when Sigmundr meets Práendr at the Tórshavn assembly he asks him for the second third. In reply Práendr is more audacious than before, asking Sigmundr to let him pay this amount (equivalent to 160 *eyrir*) not to him, but to young Leifr Ózurarson in compensation for Sigmundr's killing of his father (presumably worth 120 *eyrir*). Not only is this sum over the odds, at a third larger than the conventional amount, but with this demand Práendr sets himself against Earl Hákon and might even endanger himself in making the settlement void, were it not that the gap between Sigmundr's statutory authority and his real power has clearly grown in the two years since Hákon made the judgement. To get the money from Práendr, Sigmundr must threaten him with the sharp side of his axe; but he does not kill him, as he once intended (ch. 23) and as the law, whatever that is, might still allow.

The following spring is the same (ch. 26): Sigmundr asks for the third, the last in this case, but Práendr puts him off with another claim for compensation on behalf of Özurr. His power seems to have grown further: 'this time many men put in their word saying that they should settle the matter properly' (*margir menn leggja nu ord til at þeir skuli vel semja*). What connection do they have with Práendr? Sigmundr climbs down with a muddled promise not to let the matter drop, while allowing the payment of the last third to stand over. Yet he is ever the loyal servant and honours his obligation to Earl Hákon by collecting his tribute from the other half of the Faroes. However, the fact that he 'is late getting ready' (*verdr sid buinn*) might tell us that the islanders of this half, taking a leaf from Práendr's book, have themselves withheld money. It does seem likely that the author expects us to see this pernicious kind of influence behind Práendr's first victory over Sigmundr in Tórshavn.

Religion in *Færeyinga saga*

A few years later King Óláfr Tryggvason summons Sigmundr to Norway and makes him a Christian, sending him back to the Faroes with a mission to convert the islanders (chs. 29–30). For Sigmundr the new faith is not a departure from his old ways. Christianity indeed confirms the virtues of his existing way of life. From the moment Óláfr gives Sigmundr his great charismatic missionary speech, we know they are made for each other (ch. 29). In words which used to be regarded as a translated borrowing from the lost *Óláfs saga* of the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson (cf. Ólafur 1987: x-xiii), Óláfr compares everything in his life, his enslaved childhood, wanderings in exile and heroic feats, with that in Sigmundr's. It is true that the two men are much alike. To a smaller degree, Óláfr works the same evangelical magic on Kjartan Ólafsson in *Laxdæla saga* (ch. 40) and Leifr Eiríksson in *Eiríks saga rauða* (ch. 4), but with Sigmundr Óláfr's friendship is based on feeling. This becomes clear on Sigmundr's second visit, after a sports day of friendly man-to-man rivalry, when Óláfr tries to exchange his golden armring for a less harmful one in order to save Sigmundr's life (ch. 33). Sigmundr had promised Earl Hákon, who gave it him, not to part with the ring; and now Óláfr appears to make Hákon into a test case: 'so let him seem as good to you as you want him to, both the ring and the man who gave it to you' (*þa lát þer hann þíckia sva godan sem þu vill, bæði hringinn ok þann er þer gaf*, ch. 33). With a Christian king's foreknowledge Óláfr reveals that the ring will cause Sigmundr's death if he keeps it. Sigmundr holds out for his word to Hákon and so the spell with Óláfr is broken. But there is no doubt that Óláfr's love for Sigmundr is meant to be the highest moral achievement on the part of the Faroe Islander.

Sigmundr and his kindred forge friendships of their own: Brestir and Beinir preferred to live with each other rather than partition their family land (ch. 4); their sons carry on the tradition of living in the same household on Skúvoy, despite marrying (from ch. 24); with Þórir alongside, Sigmundr also befriends Þorkell Þurrafrost, their outlaw guardian (chs. 11–16), Sveinn and Eiríkr Hákonarsynir (ch. 17), another outlaw Haraldr járnhauss (ch. 21), Einarr of Suðuroy (ch. 36), and Earl Hákon himself (ch. 21) as well as bringing Hákon and Haraldr to terms (ch. 21); even before falling under the spell of Óláfr Tryggvason (ch. 29). Yet if Sigmundr's friendship with King Óláfr is so far his greatest, it is also his most dangerous, because it has made him adopt a religion which illuminates his rootlessness to the men of the Faroes. Christianity is the peripatetic faith, moving across nations from one ruler to another, spreading outwards from each royal centre along the way into ever more remote hinterlands. It travels with priests and royal tax gatherers, and who better to impose this faith on the Faroes than the wanderer Sigmundr Brestisson? Yet this wandering is just the weakness that Sigmundr fails to see. Óláfr has promised to make him 'the greatest man in the Faroes if Sigmundr would become his man' (*mestan maN i Færeyum ef S(igmundr) villdi geraz hans maðr*, ch. 28), but his promised power lacks an infrastructure. Sigmundr's relentless to-ing and fro-ing to Norway each summer is the fatal opposite of Þrándr's influence as a landlord at home.

Sigmundr thus makes an ill-judged announcement to the Faroe islanders in the Tórshavn assembly, mistaking his envoy's powers for local power while proclaiming a change of faith. Þrándr makes an immediate reactionary use of this mistake by presenting himself to the assembly as a champion of the old ways. Sigmundr is indeed slow when he says 'I have given Þrándr too much power' (*Of mikít valld hefi ek nv fengit Þrandi*). He understands that Christianity has finally tipped the scales against him, but not the means by which Þrándr's power has caught up with his greater wealth. That is to say, Þrándr all along has had the sense to invest his money in lands rather than in entertainments. There is an armed confrontation from which Sigmundr must back down. He lacks the numbers to deal with Þrándr, who exacts an oath from him not to convert the islanders: a public humiliation. Although Sigmundr later takes Þrándr and the rest of the islanders unawares (ch. 31), forcing baptism on the heathens with the panache of his mentor Óláfr Tryggvason, Þrándr throws off the new faith when he can (ch. 35).

Þrándr is clear about his reasons for staying heathen: 'I am not about to turn against my old friends' (*Ecki mun ek bregðaz hinum fornum vínun minum*, ch. 31). These other friends, no doubt dourer than Christ or His apostle Óláfr, may be imagined as the old gods Óðinn and Þórr. Þrándr's use of Óðinn may be seen later in the disguise which he (it is probably Þrándr) adopts when contriving the death of Karl of Møre, a reformed brigand whom St Óláfr Haraldsson sends as a tax gatherer to the Faroes (ch. 48; see below). Þórr, in particular, is visible in the prefixes of many names (Þórbjörn, Þorlákr, Þór[ø]ðr, Þórir, Þórgrímr, etc); also in 'Tórshavn', the main Faroese assembly site on Streymoy; and Þórr may be at work also in the storms which miraculously blow up whenever Þrándr needs them. Þrándr is spared Sigmundr's crew sailing into Gøtuvík (ch. 24), twice avoids being taken to see King Óláfr in Sigmundr's ship (ch. 31), and finds his nephews, whom the assembly has outlawed for killing Karl of Møre, restored to him after a storm which apparently drowns them on their way to Iceland (ch. 49; cf. Ólafur 1987: clxxxix). It has recently been shown that the Norse heathens held Þórr responsible for driving sea-currents and raising winds (Perkins 2001: 23–6); an image of Þórr which appears to bear out this divine role was found in Eyjarland, in Eyjafjörðr which is also

from where the editor of *Færeyinga saga* believes the author came (*ibid.*: 82-3; Ólafur 1987: ccxxxix). Pránder would appear to have called on Þórr in these three cases, if not also in the necromancy with which he calls up from his grave the headless Sigmundur to offer silent witness to his murder by Þorgrímr illi (ch. 40; Foote 1964b; see below). Þórr is a god of the land, for he is called *larðar burr*, 'Earth's boy' or 'country boy' (*Þrymskviða* 1 and *Lokasenna* 58). Land is the true source of power in *Færeyinga saga*: heathen householders become one with their family lands, and may even prove the right of their heirs to inherit (Skre (Myhre) 2001: 18-19), when they are laid in ancestral *haugar* ('mounds'), such as Þorbjörn in Gøta (ch. 2), Hafrímr in Hov in Suðuroy and Brestir and Beinir in Skúvoy (ch. 7); whereas the kingdom Sigmundur promises to the Faroes is decidedly not of this earth.

Pránder waits until Óláfr Tryggvason is dead before he revives his twice-made claim for Leifr's compensation in the Tórshavn assembly, in the more relaxed reign of Earls Eiríkr and Sveinn. It is then that he reveals to Sigmundur the true extent of his power. Having withheld the value of 160 *eyrir* from the four wergilds, Pránder asks for one wergild, the equivalent of a further 120 *eyrir*. Sigmundur of course refers him to Earl Hákon's outdated settlement, but Pránder repeats the demand, this time asking Sigmundur 'to grant Leifr compensation for his father such as the best men here in the islands may fix between you' (*at unna Leifui þeirra fodur bota at hinir bezstu menn geri með ykkir her j eyjunum*, ch. 35). In other words, Pránder increases his demand. Most of these promised arbitrators are in Pránder's pocket, if we are to believe him when he tells Sigmundur, who again refuses, that his nephews growing up with him think him unjust 'for not being willing to share the rule with them when we own more than half compared with you' (*er þu uill ekki midla Ríki vit þa. þar er ver æigum meirr en helming vid þig*). Hákon's terms are irrelevant now because Pránder 'owns' more land than the earl originally gave Sigmundur to rule. From Sigmundur, therefore, Pránder needs only the name of a rule which *de facto* he already has.

In this way it appears that Sigmundur has lost the battle for supremacy even before Pránder, on his third attempt, succeeds in hounding him, Þórir and Einarr to their deaths (chs. 37-8). First Pránder, his brother's sons Sigurðr and Þórðr and sister's son Gautr rauði, try to trap Sigmundur, Þórir and Einarr on Lítla Dímun, but end up caught there themselves while their resourceful victims escape (ch. 36). Later that summer Pránder tries again, this time ambushing the cousins at sea in a little island sound on their way 'to collect his rents' (*at landz skyllidum sínum*, ch. 36); but they capsize his boat instead. The third time, with his nephews again and this time about 60 men, Pránder surrounds Sigmundur's house on Skúvoy. Sigmundur has twice disregarded Þórir's advice to kill Pránder while he had the chance. For a while Sigmundur and the others escape through a tunnel, but Pránder tracks them to the edge of the island, hems them into the cliff-top and forces them to jump into the sea (ch. 37). They swim for Suðuroy, their nearest hope of land (by Skúvoy, the author means Stóra Dímun, five or six miles from their objective). Sigmundur carries first Einarr and then Þórir on his shoulders before ending up as the only survivor in the surf of Suðuroy (ch. 38). Here the author shows that his ideals are not limited to admiration for the amoral cunning of Pránder. With Sigmundur's 'passive courage of endurance' (Foote 1964a: 22), his heroic loyalty to his friends as one by one they slip back into the water, the author shows a fellowship in its finest hour. The next morning Sigmundur lies almost dead on the sand, until Þorgrímr illi, by chance a tenant of Pránder, catches sight of the red cloth he is wearing as he looks for driftwood on the beach. Sigmundur's fate is sealed by his other piece of finery, the pagan golden armring of Earl Hákon and Þorgerðr

Hörðabrúðr (ch. 23). Þorgrímur and his sons kill Sigmundur for this ring, cutting off his head and hiding his remains alongside the drowned body of Þórir. In ch. 40, Þrándr summons Sigmundur back from the dead in order to prove Þorgrímur's role in killing him, so as to marry Þóra Sigmundardóttir to Leifr Özurarson, his foster-son.

Some time after the death of Sigmundur, Óláfr, the new king of Norway (c. 1015-30), sets about troubling the Faroe Islanders for some tithes and taxes. This Óláfr is more like Þrándr than his predecessors. It is his style to impose Christianity as a tax infrastructure, not an evangelical mission. After ten years of dealing with the Norwegians, he turns his attention to the Faroes (ch. 43). This part of *Færeyinga saga* survives only in Snorri's use of it for his own sagas of St Óláfr (Ólafur 1987: xlv-lxxiii). At first the king seems to have little difficulty. Þrándr avoids the royal summons by shamming a fever, but King Óláfr still meets the Faroes' nominal leaders, who are Leifr Özurarson, Þórálfr ór Dimun Sigmundarson, and Gilli *logsogo maðr* ('law-speaker', from Snorri's borrowing of this part of the original *Færeyinga saga*, and perhaps a genuinely Faroese term: see Foote 1970: 163-4 and 174). Óláfr instructs these men to prepare for the arrival of tax gatherers and new Norwegian (Christian) laws. He binds them with oaths, bids them farewell and then sends off his own ship to get the first tribute. This ship disappears and no tax is collected. The next summer, having heard that his first ship was lost, Óláfr sends a second to the Faroes but with the same result. Þórálfr is despatched to talk to Óláfr, and Þrándr, probably fearing that his part in these disappearances will be uncovered, sends off his nephews to Norway ostensibly to sell their surplus of Faroese wool (the comedy of this scene is well brought out in Foote 1964a: 18-19). Þórálfr is murdered before he can meet the king and Sigurðr Þorláksson, the likeliest suspect, evades an ordeal before the king can use it to prove his guilt (ch. 45).

It is to resolve this crisis that Óláfr sends Karl of Møre to get his tribute from the Faroes (ch. 48). What follows is a tour-de-force deception from Þrándr which exceeds even his larceny in the market fair at Holeyri. At the Tórshavn assembly he begins by asking Karl to stay with him; luckily Karl has agreed to stay with Leifr. Politely, however, Karl asks if Þrándr could help him by collecting the king's tribute from Eysturoy and the islands to the north-east, effectively the third of the Faroes which it is clear Þrándr has turned into his *óðal*. Next spring Þrándr makes a show of falling ill with eye-ache, although he goes to the assembly. The silver has to be obtained by Karl's armed entry into Þrándr's darkened booth, but its quality is the poorest. Þrándr when challenged produces a substitute bag of silver which he calls 'my land-rents' (in Snorri's adaptation, *landsculdir minar*, ch. 48). The quality is good enough for payment of bad debts, but Karl still rejects it. Gautr rauði meanwhile pretends to tease his uncle for being soft with Karl. A third bag is produced, this time with silver which Þrándr's 'tenants' (Snorri's *landbuar*) have personally delivered to their landlord (Ólafur 1987: ccxvii). Karl settles down outside and counts this silver in his helmet. Just then a stranger passes by with 'an iron-shod staff in his hand, a floppy hood over his head, green cape, barefoot, with cross-tied linen breeches on his legs' (Snorri's *refði i hendi oc hávtt síðan a hofpe oc heclo grøna. berföttr knýtt línbrócum at beini*, ch. 48). The stranger plants the staff in the ground and warns Karl not to get hurt by his staff (*refði*); not long after, another man runs up and calls Leifr away to deal with Sigurðr Þorláksson, who has just stabbed a man in Gilli's booth; Leifr goes to investigate with his men, leaving Karl protected by a ring of Norwegians; this is when Gautr lands a hatchet bill on Karl's bare head which Þórðr then knocks in with a swing of the staff; Karl is carried off dead, no taxes are gathered and the Faroese regain their independence.

A full discussion of this scene is presented by Ólafur Halldórsson, who points out parallels for this stranger's likeness with Óðinn (1984: 45-50; 1987: clxxiv; 1990: 470-74). The bare feet and linen breeches reveal this man to be Práendr, hastily removed from his booth without time to dress (Ólafur 1984: 49; 1990: 473). The long hood is known from other sources including Óðinn's byname 'Síðhöttir' ('long-hood') in *Grímnismál* 48. But two other details deserve further attention. One is Práendr's *refði*, for which Ólafur's definition can hardly be bettered: 'Refði voru ekki litlar axir á löngu skafti' (...) 'heldur eins konar *scepter* — veldissprotar sem konungar báru og einnig einstöku bændur, sem ævinlega hafa talið sig konungum æðri' (1990: 473-4). A *refði* is the name for a gold-tipped staff used by Óláfr Tryggvason to smash an idol of Þórr in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* (Unger 1860: 320-21); for two batons held up by St James in a vision to a doubting Greek bishop to prove that he is God's 'good knight' (*góðr riddari*) in *Tveggja Postula saga Jóns ok Jacobs* (ch. 114; Unger 1867: 700); and for a staff carried about by the chieftain Valla-Ljótr in *Laxdæla saga* (ch. 87). Ólafur seems right here about the regal associations of the *refði*, but holds to another interpretation of Práendr's role which may need some revision, when he defines Práendr's staff here as a 'tákn bændavaldsins, almúgans sem konungsmenn allra alda skyldu vara sig á' (1990: 474; accepted by Almqvist 1992: 183). Far from being, as Ólafur suggests, a warning to foreigners not to tangle with Faroese nationalism, Práendr's *refði* looks as if it represents his own claim to rule the Faroes.

The *hekla* which he wears might throw light on how this power has been won. One of Ólafur's many insights is the way in which the Faroese mountains, when seen from the right angle, resemble green capes (1990: 471-3). There can be no doubt that this is the effect intended here in *Færeyinga saga*. If Práendr chooses this moment to identify himself with the Faroes, the greenness of the cape reveals the beautiful land, pastures, infields and outfields, of the Faroes which he must have been acquiring ever since dividing up Gøta for rents. The difference with Sigmundur Brestisson nine chapters earlier could not be more striking. It is Sigmundur's red tunic which gives him away to his murderer Þorgrímr illi in ch. 39. No doubt some effect of moral retribution is intended against Sigmundur here whereby he pays the price for that other treasure, his golden armring, or at least for not heeding Óláfr's warning about its heathen source. In Sigmundur's death there is also an ironic reversal of roles, to judge from Þorgrímr, who says 'low lies our chieftain now', before killing him (*lagt fer nu hofdinge vorr*, ch. 39; cf. Ólafur 1987: clxxxviii-ix). 'How are the mighty fallen' is a phrase always redolent of pride. Yet here the author seems to have another purpose in mind, to show that Sigmundur's death is really due to his *skartsmaðr* misunderstanding of the uses of wealth. Práendr's pagan regalia shows that money in his country is best used not for display, but to buy land. In the Faroes the true colour of money is green.

Práendr takes the long view

Some more matchmaking takes place. With what aim? is the question. When Práendr succeeds in killing Sigmundur and Þórir, Sigmundur's wife Þuríðr inherits. Not only for her great abilities is Þuríðr called *megin ekkia* ('the great widow', ch. 39): the one-time holdings of Brestir and Beinir now appear to be in her hands, for later it seems that Leifr Þórisson Beinnissonar, a merchant, has no place of his own (ch. 53). This is doubtless why Práendr plans to marry his foster-son Leifr Özurarson to her daughter Þóra Sigmundardóttir. Although the pretext is to compensate Þóra for the loss of her father, Práendr's true purpose is likely to be the joining of Sigmundur's estate with what remains of the original holdings of Hafgrímr; Leifr's heir, who

takes Sigmundr's name, stands to inherit it all. The marriage goes through when Þrándr clears up the mystery of Sigmundr's death (ch. 40), and Leifr grows into the role of a good husband and upstanding householder. He appears to share some of the rule of the Faroes with Gilli lögsögumaðr, his mother's sister's son (ch. 49). Then, after the court at the Tórshavn assembly has outlawed them for Møre-Karl's murder, and after they appeared to drown in a storm, the ghosts of Sigurðr, Þórðr and Gautr return. But Þrándr's nephews turn out to be real enough. After Þrándr tricks Leifr and Gilli into convening assemblies without weapons, it is almost comical to see his heavies arrive in full armour to enforce their uncle's right to self-judgement, which results in a settlement allowing them to live where they please, and Þrándr to divide the rule of the Faroes three ways: him to have one third, Leifr the second and the sons of Sigmundr the rest. As he puts it, 'who rules where has been a cause of envy and gnawing strife for a long while' (*hafsa Ríki þessi leingi at ?fund orðit ok bitbæinum*, ch. 49): at any rate in his mind. The sting in the tail of his apparently reasonable verdict is the offer which he then makes to foster Leifr's three-year-old son Sigmundr. The boy's mother Þóra might surprise us when she agrees to this, after Leifr wins a stay of execution by asking leave to refer the matter to her. But it seems that she and her mother know how to lull Þrándr into a false sense of security.

Not long after Sigmundr Leifsson moves in, Þrándr tells his nephews to move out. The reason he gives them is their slothfulness, but it is worth remembering that before the shouting starts Sigurðr complains that Þrándr 'is sitting on his father's inheritance' (*segir hann sitia yfir f?dur arfui sínum*, ch. 50). Why he and the others are forced out can be explained with wider reference to this legal context. Þrándr's nephews have always threatened not only Sigmundr's position but also that of Þrándr himself. When Þrándr earlier tells Sigmundr that Þrándr and his kinsmen own more than half the islands, he may also have their claims on his own patrimony in mind (ch. 35). Before then he may have gained some non-familial land in Suðuroy by commuting his lifetime income from Hafgrímr's estate, then by fostering Özurr Hafgrímsson; according to the rights of *barnfóstrlaun* he would normally expect some more *óðal* from his fostering of Leifr Özurarson; and presumably he is entitled to even more from the Suðuroy estate, as well as from Skúvoy, for fostering the young Sigmundr. At least it can be surmised that this steady fostering of Hafgrímr's heirs in three generations over forty years has helped Þrándr to drain ever more of his estate into Þrándr's ownership. But Þrándr is not getting younger, and no heir of his is mentioned in *Færeyinga saga* until Guðrún, his young daughter, in the same chapter Þrándr asks his nephews to leave (ch. 50). It thus seems plausible that Þrándr is thinking of a legal requirement much like the Norwegian law concerning *bræðraskipti* in *Gulapingslög*, § 282:

þa skal þingat hvera i þa kvisl oðol. sem loten ero bæðe at boðom oc at abuð. bioða þvi at eins i aðra kvisl ef þa søker þrot. æða aldauda arfr verðe. En eigi skiliasc óðol með þeim at helldr fyrr en hvartveggia ma eiga dottor annars. (Keyser and Munch 1846-95: I, 94)

('[It [the heritable family land] shall be offered to the other branch [of the family] only in case the first branch comes to extreme want or in case there is no heir to the inheritance. Yet the latter line does not lose its right [to the land], and the *óðal* shall not pass from it until one or other line may marry a daughter in the other'. Based on Larson 1935: 183)

Any Christian law would forbid first cousins such as Guðrún and Sigurðr Þorláksson to marry.

Several generations must pass before the marriage between cousins is allowed (until a few years after the Lateran Council of 1215, between fifth cousins: Hastrup 1985: 92-3). Sigmundur Brestisson has built a church (ch. 35), while Práendr keeps a creed of an idiosyncratic kind (Foote 1969, republished 1984). On the other hand, it seems unlikely that Christian law is working outside Skúvoy; and Práendr casts off most Christianity (*kastar Raun miog tru sinne*), not only Práendr but also 'all his companions' (*aller hans kumpanar*, ch. 35). In ch. 50, in this way, it looks as if Práendr throws out Sigurðr and the others because any one of them might make a case for recovering his patrimony, plus all the added gains, out of fathering an heir on Práendr's daughter. Práendr seems to have another husband for Guðrún in mind.

Práendr's ultimate *coup* is a matter for interpretation, given that it never happens. From his juxtaposition of young Sigmundur and Guðrún in one household in chs. 49-50, it appears that he plans to marry them with each other, but this is no more than an implication. However, as Guðrún is mentioned very late in the saga, it seems reasonable to suppose that she is young enough, the product of a late liaison between Práendr and a bondwoman, to marry Sigmundur Leifsson (her second cousin twice removed). Should this uncanonical marriage take place, Práendr's baby grandson would inherit all the *óðal* lands of his father's father Leifr (the remaining Suðuroy) and of Leifr's mother-in-law Þuríðr (Skúvoy, Dímun and anything else belonging to her) as well as the lands which Práendr had obtained for himself out of patrimony, inheritance and purchase (which might be almost everything else). With this marriage Práendr would turn the Faroes into *óðal* for a line of succession. It seems likely that this has been his meaning all along.

For his own part Sigurðr Þorláksson is kicked out and must find a new inheritance. He moves into a wealthy farmer's house in Streymoy, becomes his partner, murders the man, whose name is Þorhallr, and takes over his wife, children and estate (chs. 50-1). At the same time Sigurðr has killed and robbed a group of Norwegian merchants. In his parting sentence, the author remarks that 'Þorhallr and his wife Birna had a big number of children' (*þau Þorhallr ok Birna attu mart barnna*, ch. 51). This line is not without purpose, as Ólafur has said (1987: ccviii), but rather shows Sigurðr's abuse of the law. According to *Gulapingslög*, § 114 (*Felaga erfð*), a man inherits his dead partner's property entirely if this is three marks or less, or half if more, providing no 'heirs' (*erfingjar*) make a claim within three years (Keyser and Munch 1846-95: I, 51). Historically, there is a high incidence of widows remarrying in early medieval Scandinavia (Benediktinow 1985: 49-50). In the Faroes it seems this process could be expedited. Gautr rauði carries out the same type of crime against a fisherman named Þorvaldr (ch. 52). When Sigurðr kills the rich merchant Leifr Þórisson, after luring him to stay at his new place in Streymoy, *Gulapingslög*, § 113 (*Gest erfð*) would say that he inherits all his guest's property should the man die without heirs (which seems to be true in this case); if it comes to more than three marks, he must share half of this with the king, but if this is also a Faroese requirement it can scarcely be enforced at this time (Keyser and Munch 1846-95: 51). With these and other crimes Sigurðr and his kinsmen build up a stake of their own, in opposition to their uncle Práendr. Eventually Sigurðr, not Práendr, sets up a match between his brother Þórðr and Þuríðr meginekkja (ch. 56). Their goal must be to secure Sigmundur's estate on Skúvoy and perhaps that on Dímun as well. Práendr plays no role in this match, but even if it succeeds, his kindred are spread further across the isles. One way or the other, Práendr can expect Sigmundur's half of the Faroese *ríki* to fall to him as inherited property: either through his fosterson's (Sigmundur Leifsson's) inheritance of Skúvoy through his mother Þóra; or through

whichever of his brother's sons marries the great widow Þuríðr. Whichever happens, the other surviving children of Sigmundur Brestisson, Steingrímur, Brandr, Heri and Þóra, look sure to be squeezed out.

The dramatic climax of *Færeyinga saga* consists of the women's thwarting of Þrándr's monarchic intentions, if that is what they are (chs. 57-8). After a tense and unexpected night's stay Þóra and Leifr retrieve their son from Þrándr's insidious clutches, then Þuríðr and her other children and Leifr contrive and nearly fail to kill Þrándr's nephews, Sigurðr and Þórðr Þorlákssynir and Gautr rauði (discussed in Almqvist: 79-83). With the escape of his fosterson, and the death of his nephews, it could be said that all Þrándr's deep-laid plans come to nothing. His own death occurs shortly after 'with hellish torment' (*af helstride*, ch. 59). Something more is meant by this manner of dying than the grief which he should feel for his nephews, who have become his rivals. Perhaps the author means that the red-haired Þrándr finds his own death to be a foretaste of eternity. Is hell his reward for prolonging his pagan faith? At any rate, Þrándr's death spells the end for any Gøta monarchy. Some normality in the Faroes is restored when Leifr Ózurarson takes all the rule for himself (*Ræðr nu æinn ollum Færeyium*, ch. 59), then confirms this by presenting himself to King Magnús Ólafsson to receive the royal fief (*ok tekr af honum len yfir Færeyium*).

It remains to ask why the Faroes' perpetual link with Norwegian kings was of such interest to the Icelandic author of *Færeyinga saga*. Possibly this was because of King Sverrir, who ruled 1177-1202. Sverrir's son Hákon was continuing and winning the same struggle for Norway at the time in which it is suggested this saga was written (c. 1210-15). Sverrir himself was born in the Faroes, and after he had fought his way to most of the power in Norway, he replaced the depleted aristocracy with new 'district officials' (*sýslumenn*: Helle 1993: 438; Vestergaard 1988: 192). Einarr and his son Skeggi, Sigmundur Leifsson's descendants at the end of the saga, are named this way (cf. Ólafur 1987: ccxxxii-iv). The ideology of Sverrir, a novelty in the late twelfth century, was to promote the cause of common law 'under den rettslige fiksjon at landskongedømmet var kongeættens odel'; hereby his male descendants, including the great Hákon Hákonarson (ruled 1217-63), took sole possession of the Norwegian throne, including the Faroes (Taranger 1934-6: 110-45, esp. 113). There is a similar claim of total land-ownership in *Haralds saga ins Háfagra* (ch. 6), in the case of King Haraldr *háfagri* ('fairhair'), who 'established such rights wherever he won dominions into his power that he took possession of all inherited lands and made all the householders, both rich and poor, pay him rents' (*setti þann rétt allt þar, er hann vann ríki undir sik, at hann eignaðisk óðöl öll ok lét alla bóendr gjalda sér landskyldir, bæði ríka ok óríka*; Bjarni 1941: I, 98). Haraldr is said to own even more in *Egils saga* (ch. 4, probably also by Snorri), where every square foot of inhabited and empty land as well as water of any kind becomes the tyrant's property, 'and all the householders had to be his tenants' (*ok skyldu allir búendr vera hans leiglingar*; Sigurður 1933: 12). These claims are fictions (Krag 1989: 292-9). Perhaps Snorri's statement is related to them, that Óðinn 'took possession of many lands' (*egnaðisk mörg ríki*, in *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 2); Bjarni 1941: 11). However, it is unlikely that these fictions originated with Snorri. It is hard to see where Snorri could have found them unless in the ideology of Sverrir's struggle for Norway. That is to say, if we carry the speculation further, either Sverrir's ideas may have influenced this author's conception of Þrándr, or some old tales of Þrándr shaped the conduct of Sverrir. Whichever is the case, the themes of money and religion in *Færeyinga saga* throw light on Þrándr as the first man of the Faroes who would also be king of the Faroes.

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Chapter 7

The Mythology of Rulership and the Saga of the Faroe Islanders

Gro Steinsland

Introduction

The *Saga of the Faroe Islanders* describes the conversion of the Faroe Islands, the struggle for power, and the shifting alliances both among the local chieftains and between them and the Norwegian rulers, here mainly the pagan earl Hákon of Hlaðir and the missionary king Ólafr Tryggvason. Even the conversion king Ólafr Haraldsson appears in the saga. The basic conflicts about power and religion, two strongly interrelated aspects, are primarily depicted as a conflict between members of one and the same family, the *Gotuskeggar*. The events described in the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders* took place in the middle of the tenth century and extended into the eleventh. The scene constantly shifts between the Faroes and Norway.

Virtually none of the characters featuring in the saga occur in any other works, nor are there any other sources relating to the events described in the saga (Halldórsson 1987: ccxl).

There are many complex questions relating to the saga as a textual source. There exists no original text of the saga. Based on an analysis of other sources that incorporate parts of the saga (*Óláfs saga helga*, *Heimskringla* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta*, *Flateyjarbók*), it has been suggested that the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders* was written in the years 1210-1215 (Halldórsson 1987: ccxlviii).

Before this saga was composed, few works existed that contained any information about the Faroe Islands and their settlers. According to Halldórsson all the information available in Nordic historical sources in the period covered by the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders*, can be summarized as follows:

- 1) People from Norway settled in the Faroes during the reign of Haraldr hárfagri.
- 2) Members of the noble clan in the Faroes were known as the *Gotuskeggar*, descendants of Ólof, the daughter of Þorsteinn rauðr, her grandmother being Auðr enn djúpauðga.
- 3) The Faroe Islanders were converted to Christianity in the reign of Ólafr Tryggvason (Halldórsson, *ibid*).

It is not my aim to discuss the age and origin of the saga as such or the problems connected to the different textual layers of the work. I wish instead to draw attention to a possible mythological pattern underpinning the text, and which relates particularly to the main character Sigmundur Brestisson, the figure in the saga who comes closest to a traditional hero. Himself the son of a chieftain, Sigmundur's career is one of the main themes of the narrative. To

the best of my knowledge the mythological pattern addressed here has until now been ignored in scholarly literature.

I would like to advance the hypothesis that, in creating his main character Sigmundr Brestisson, the author explores a mythological pattern known from other sources relating to Norse pre-Christian rulership or kingship. Various elements of mythology and ritual belonging to the Norse pagan ideology of rulership, elsewhere attested in eddaic poetry, genealogies, scaldic poems and the kings' sagas, are used and adapted in the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders*. There are reasons for arguing that this mythological pattern is of pre-Christian origin (Steinsland 1991). It consists of elements relating to the initiation of a new ruler, trials, erotic alliances, the transfer of knowledge and the begetting of an extraordinary child. The recurring motif of an exceptional ring is particularly significant, and on a hermeneutical level leads to a discussion of the great themes of legitimation, destiny and death of the ruler.

The results of this analysis should therefore contribute to the discussion of the transformations of pagan elements in the Middle Ages.

The saga describes a number of interesting characters. The two main antagonists are Prádr of Gotu and Sigmundr Brestisson, both products of a pagan society undergoing a dramatic change as Christianity was gaining a foothold in the Faroe Islands. Old Prádr is struggling to maintain both the old religion and the independence of the islands, although it appears as if he is first and foremost demonstrating his power against the claims of the missionary king Ólafr Tryggvason. Sigmundr is the young son of a chieftain who himself becomes a convert to new religion and who, in the end, brings Christianity to the Faroe Islands. However, it is interesting to note that Sigmundr always remains a transitional figure. He is brought up in the old society and fostered by a pagan. And even though he later becomes a follower of Ólafr Tryggvason and is baptized, his destiny seems to be determined by the pagan initiation of his youth.

Through his description of the dramatic life of Sigmundr and his companions, the author succeeds in telling the story of the great cultural, social, political and religious transitions from paganism to Christianity which Nordic culture underwent during the late Viking Age. On the one hand, the new religion radically changed the old beliefs and cult-practices; on the other hand, elements of the mythology and rituals deeply rooted in the old institutions of society must still have remained alive, as they find expression in the literary fabric of Iceland in around 1200 (cf Meulengracht Sørensen 1992, on elements of *Freyr*-mythology in several sagas).

The Conflict

The difficulties in the lives of the two cousins Sigmundr and Þórir begin when, at the age of nine and eleven years, respectively, the boys witness the murder of their fathers, Brestir and Beinir. These two good men, brothers and sons of a chieftain, were brutally slain at their home on Stora-Dímun at the hands of the people from Sudrey, supported by Prádr of Gotu and his men. The reactions of the two boys to the crime are significant as a first indication of their respective characters: Þórir cried, but Sigmundr said: "Let us not cry, but rather remember this for a long time."

Prádr of Gotu argues that the boys should also be killed immediately, since they have witnessed the crime. He does not receive the necessary support for this cruel advice and,

cunning as always, turns around and offers to take the boys into fosterage and to bring them up in his own household.

This crucial event changes the boys' lives, setting the stage for a dramatic future. From now on Þórir and Sigmundr have to go through several trials that take the form of an initiation. The narrative then focuses on the development of Sigmundr's character. Mythology and ritual elements connected to Óðinn and to the female power Þórgerðr Hordabrúðr become central features in the shaping of the future hero's destiny.

Political alliances between the Faroese and the pagan earl Hákon at Hlaðir, a worshipper of Óðinn and Þórgerðr Hordabrúðr

The brothers Brestir and Beinir shared the chieftainship at Skúfey, and were themselves allied to the pagan ruler earl Hákon in Norway, who claimed power over half of the Faroes as well. This account is not based on historical or political facts. The oldest mention of the Faroes as a feudal tributary to the Norwegians is found in *Historia Norvegiæ*. It may have been Ólafr Haraldsson who instituted tax collection in the Faroe Islands (Halldórsson 1987: ccxlvii). The tradition, unknown elsewhere, of a political alliance with the earl of Hlaðir is however much exploited in this saga. The story of the conversion of the Faroese then unfolds in a rather dramatic way.

Earl Hákon at Hlaðir is traditionally known as a great pagan ruler and *blotmaðr*, who struggles mightily against Christianity. The ruling family of earls was especially associated with Óðinn and with a remarkable female power, Þórgerðr Hordabrúðr, a sort of *fylgja* of the family at Hlaðir (Mundal 1974). That the family of earls at Hlaðir nursed an intimate relationship with the godhead Óðinn is underlined in *Háleygjatal*, the genealogical praise-poem by the scald Eyvindr skaldaspillir. The opening stanzas of the poem establish a mythological theme by claiming that the family of earls is descended from an erotic alliance between Óðinn and the giantess Skaði. Sæmingr, their offspring, was himself a son of this strange exogamic couple. The scald Hallfreðr Óttarsson, himself connected to the seat of power at Hlaðir, also exploits this mythical theme of the female connected to the earls. He pictures the relationship between the ruler and his territory as a sacred marriage between the earl and the land (Ström 1983). In this metaphor the bride, lying in her lover's arms, represents the territory held by the ruler. The mythological theme underlying such poetical metaphors is the myth of *hieros gamos*, the sacred wedding. In Norse tradition the sacred marriage is most frequently depicted as an erotic alliance between a god and a giantess, an alliance that must be characterized as an extreme exogamic marriage.

The genealogical tradition represented in *Háleygjatal*, with the family of earls presented as descendants of mythical ancestors, seems to contradict an older genealogy which linked the origin of the family to the couple Helgi and Þórgerðr Holgabruðr/Hordabrúðr. Helgi is the eponym of Helgeland, the suggested primary territory of the earls at Hlaðir, further north along the Norwegian coast (Storm 1885). But let us first examine the function of the disguised Óðinn in the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders* (cf Vestergaard 1999 who suggests Odinic traits in the figure of Þrándr of Gotu).

The helpers – Hrafn and Úlfr

It cannot be by chance that the helpers saving the two cousins Sigmundr and Þórir carry the

names Hrafn, 'the raven', and Úlfr, 'the wolf', both of which animals played important roles in the Odinic mythology.

a. Hrafn

As indicated above, Pránder of Gotu advanced himself as a foster-father of Sigmundr and Þórir. However, he soon tries to get rid of the two boys by attempting to sell them as slaves to Hrafn, a merchant who had arrived from Norway. Hrafn comes to understand that the two robust but despondent youths are sons of the murdered Brestir and Beinir, and refuses to take them to Norway as slaves. As usual when meeting resistance, Pránder changes his strategy, and instead offers Hrafn a large amount of silver if he would take the boys away, never to return to the Faroe Islands. Hrafn accepts this offer, though we are not told why – does he take the money out of personal greed or has he already made other plans for the boys?

After his departure from the Faroe Islands, Hrafn treats the boys well and, on their arrival in Norway, even offers them the silver he received from Pránder. Hrafn behaves like a good friend in need, and wants the boys to be able to take care of themselves.

The author mentions no family background for Hrafn. On the contrary, he appears more like a stranger, although he immediately recognized the boys. He turns out to be a man experienced in worldly matters and widely travelled. In all these traits Hrafn resembles Óðinn himself. In Norse mythology the raven is the bird of Óðinn: his two ravens fly all over the world, returning every night to their master with news. The function of Hrafn in this saga is obviously that of a charitable masked helper. By taking the boys over the sea, Hrafn saves their lives. But are the boys safe when he leaves them on the shores of Norway?

b. Úlfr

The next helper is Úlfr, 'the wolf', whom the boys happen to meet high up in the mountains of Norway, at Dovre. Again this is a story about saving life. Contrary to Hrafn, this man in the mountains has a family background, but has forfeited his right to be a member of ordinary society. Later on, the boys hear the story of Úlfr's life. He had been outlawed due to a youthful infatuation; he had abducted the girl he wished to marry, against her family's wishes. After he had murdered the bride's father, Úlfr was declared an outlaw. However, both the boys and the reader are unaware of this background in the first part of the story.

From mythological tradition the reader knows very well that two wolves used to be the companions of Óðinn on his travels in the wilderness. Like the raven, the wolf is a non-domesticated animal, a symbol of the anti-social and more frightening aspects of the god, of wilderness and death, but also of hidden and necessary wisdom, brought forth from beyond the borders of the normal world.

Trials and initiation

Forced to leave Hrafn, their first helper, Sigmundr and Þórir, in a bold but childish move, decide to seek out the Hlaðir earl himself in order to ask for help. But in the mountains they lose their way. This happens at Dovre, a dangerous and difficult area along the road to Niðaróss.

According to a well known literary tradition several outstanding figures met their destiny there, as with king Haraldr Fairhair who had a crucial meeting with the Saami girl Snæfriðr at Dovre (*Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, ch. 25, *Heimskringla*).

The boys have run out of food and are completely exhausted by the time they finally

discover a small farm in a remote valley at Dovre. Two women, one young and one old, are at home; they turn out to be mother and daughter. They treat the boys well, giving them food and warm clothes, but they are obviously afraid of their husband and father whom they expect to return home at night. At first sight, this resembles a classic fairy-tale motif, but in fact the author develops a genuine mythical and ritual theme here, for this is a typical element in the initiation of the hero.

An initiation pattern from *Grímnismál*

The mythological pattern followed by the author here is known from the eddaic poem *Grímnismál*. This poem is one of the many sources that deal with initiation into rulership, especially with the relation between the ruler *in spe* and the godhead Óðinn.

The prose introduction of *Grímnismál* tells of a strange experience of two royal brothers, Agnarr and Geirræðr, eleven and nine years old respectively. There is an obvious parallel with the relationship between Brestir and Beinir, and between Sigmundr and Þórir.

Losing their way at sea, in misty weather, late at night, the two boys in *Grímnismál* arrive at a distant island where a strange couple live. The couple take care of the two boys over the winter. The foster-father likes the younger Geirræðr, while the foster-mother prefers Agnarr. During the winter, the old man frequently takes Geirræðr aside and offers advice in secret on a wide range of matters.

As the narrative unfolds in the following stanzas, the audience learns that the couple at this remote outpost of civilization were Óðinn and Frigg in disguise. It is typical of this sort of narrative that the focus of the text shifts from a legendary to a mythical dimension. Later, we find the strange couple sitting in their mythical abode, quarrelling about the respective merits of their protégés. Óðinn accuses Frigg's favourite, Agnarr, of having sex with a giantess in a cave, begetting a child with her. On the other hand, Frigg accuses Óðinn's favourite, Geirræðr, of being a young king who is mean to his men.

It is obvious from this that the younger brother Geirræðr managed to assume power contrary to the normal rules of succession, according to which the elder brother would be preferred as the next ruler. The poem therefore also deals with *ultimo-genitur*, the preference of the youngest son for rulership. This is an unusual notion in Nordic culture, and it is difficult to find historical examples. The idea is, however, very common in mythological sources, as in *Grímnismál* and *Hyndluljóð*. In addition, as we have seen, it is very well attested in the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders*, with Brestir and Beinir, Þrándr and his brother, Sigmundr and Þórir. In all these cases the younger relative stands out as the better one.

From the mythological pattern of *Grímnismál* the interesting points for our discussion of the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders* are the trial and the initiation by the remote couple in an isolated place, the transferring of knowledge from Óðinn to the future ruler, and the element of *eros* and begetting associated with the initiation of one of the brothers. Let us take a closer look at these elements.

The trials in the mountains

Úlfr behaves like a good foster-father. He trains the boys in every aspect of physical activity, and in all such exercises Sigmundr turns out to be the more accomplished of the two. Úlfr has strictly forbidden the boys to go into a dark forest near the house. Eventually, however, Sigmundr cannot resist the temptation any longer. Breaking their promise to their foster-father, both

boys venture into the forest, where they are attacked by a wild and fierce monster. It is a bear, described as 'grey as a wolf' — the association with Óðinn's *berserkir* is clear, and was surely intended by the author. The *berserkir* were clothed in bear furs, and were Óðinn's sworn men, and this initiation rendered them invulnerable in battle. However, Sigmundr succeeds in killing the monster and, somewhat surprisingly, this act does not anger his foster-father. Quite the contrary, in fact: Úlfr is said to love Sigmundr even more after this event.

Behind the figure of Úlfr the audience recognises Óðinn, the nameless and incognito foster-father in the wilderness, here in the shape of an outlaw with a deep secret. It is at the end of the winter — when the boys have grown into men mature enough to confront society's demands upon them, and when they are about to leave Úlfr's family — that Úlfr first reveals his real name and the story of his life. It was always the nature of Óðinn to operate incognito. Again the close parallel with *Grímnismál* is obvious: Óðinn only reveals his real name when the time is ripe. Secretly he gives advice and initiates his chosen one. But initiation by Óðinn is a two-edged weapon; it may in the long run turn out to be a fateful experience.

The numbers nine and eleven

Recognizing the mythological pattern underpinning the text, the reader becomes aware of the importance of specific numbers in the saga, notably nine and eleven. At the time their fathers were murdered, Þórir and Sigmundr were, respectively, eleven and nine years old. The number nine reappears throughout the saga like a sign, with several of the characters being nine years old when something crucial happens to them. Thus, Óssur, the son of Hafgrímr, is nine years old when *his* father is killed; Sigmundr's daughter, Þóra, is nine years old when her outlawry comes to an end; and the future Sigmundr, son of Sigmundr's daughter, is to spend nine years as a foster-son of Práendr's, a fate that the first Sigmundr himself escaped. It would appear that nine years represents a meaningful interval, at the end of which important changes take place.

We have already pointed to parallels in *Grímnismál*, where the numbers nine and eleven play an important role in the narrative, with Geirrøðr nine and Agnarr eleven years old at the time of their initiation. And in both stories rulership is eventually assumed by the youngest brother, not by the first-born.

The numbers nine and eleven are also significant in *Skírnismál*. In this poem, the giant-maiden Gerðr's eventual promise to meet Freyr after nine nights may contain an allusion to an initiation or ritual change. The number eleven is also important in *Skírnismál*. One of the presents offered to Gerðr consists of eleven golden apples, usually known as the apples of Iðunn, magic fruits that are said to ensure the gods' eternal youth and health. In a comparative analysis of Norse mythology the number eleven turns out to be connected to death as well: it was eleven gods who assembled after the crucial murder of Baldr (cf. *Hyndluljóð*). In literary sources this motif seems to be used as a specific topos signalling a group of warriors lacking their chieftain (Steinsland 1991: 142). This creates a parallel to Þórir. The loss of his father marks him for life. Together with Sigmundr he undergoes the initiation in the mountain, but Þórir, unlike his cousin, is not able to make the best of this. Similarly in *Grímnismál*, Agnarr loses out against the cleverer and younger Geirræðr.

The symbolism of the number nine is also connected to the myth of Draupnir, the ring of Óðinn, which produces — literally, drips — eight identical rings every ninth night. The use of this number nine appears to follow a very strict pattern in the case of Sigmundr. He is nine years old when his father is murdered; he then spends nine years undergoing the trials and

initiation that prepare him for life as a young chieftain. The author also underlines that Sigmundr is eighteen when he leaves his foster-father Úlfr. Nine years later, at the age of twenty-seven, Sigmundr has managed to bring the outlawry of Úlfr and his household to an end, and publicly celebrates his marriage with Þúriðr at the Hlaðir earl's home. Afterwards, he is able to assume rulership over the Faroe Islands. In fact, it appears as if these last great events are rather compacted in order to sustain the pattern of nine-year intervals. (On the number nine in a sacrificial context, see Sundqvist 2002: 133ff).

Eros and the pre-christian mythology of leadership

In the mythology of rulership there is usually a strong erotic element. *Eros* features in the prose part of *Grímnismál*, but in this source the pattern of initiation consists of two different types. Firstly, there is the initiation by Óðinn, which has as its core the transfer of sacred knowledge, offered to the young initiate by Óðinn himself (Fleck 1970). Secondly, there is the pattern of initiation that focuses on an erotic alliance with a foreign woman in the wilderness. This sort of initiation is reflected in *Grímnismál* in Óðinn's accusation that Agnarr begat offspring on a giant-woman in a cave. This is an allusion to the erotic motif, *hieros gamos*, which appears in several sources relating to the pagan ideology of kingship. Among the eddaic poems *Skírnismál* gives expression to the myth of *hieros gamos*, with the narrative leading towards an erotic alliance between a god and a giantess. And in *Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla*, Snorri describes how Fjölfnir, the first ruler of the *Ynglingar*, is the offspring of the alliance between Freyr and Gerðr. Snorri's narrative relies on traditions connected to *Ynglingatal*. As noted above, the same mythological pattern lies at the base of *Háleygjatal*. The lesson is that the person best suited for leadership needs to be the offspring of an extreme exogamic alliance. The son who assumes power needs to be born of mythical parents of opposite character (Steinsland 1991).

The author of the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders* seems to expose and play with this mythological pattern. He associates Sigmundr, the maturing hero, with all the possible elements of mythological lore. In addition to the knowledge he acquires from Úlfr, Sigmundr also learns the lesson of *eros* in the wilderness at Dovre. He falls in love with Þúriðr, the daughter of Úlfr, and they have a child. Remarkably, the girl's parents do not seem to disapprove. Indeed, his foster-father Úlfr promises Sigmundr not to marry Þúriðr to another man, until Sigmundr has accomplished the deeds that society requires of him in order to qualify for a position of leadership.

We have seen that the main motifs connected to the mountain story are outlawry, physical and mental exercises, an existence at the limits of society, a foster-father whose name turns out to be an alias, the transfer of knowledge, and the experience of *eros* — in short, initiation by Óðinn. Later the reader will be told that the girl begotten in the wilderness is special, and will eventually fulfil a significant role in the story.

This is another element of the mythical tradition employed by the author. A giant-woman usually plays an important role in the initiation. The author of the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders* presents the daughter of Sigmundr and Þúriðr as being very similar to a giantwoman: she is said to be rather tall, not very pretty, but clever: '...Póra var ellzst dotter þeirra er fædd uar afíallinu hon uar mikil kona ok skorulig ekki dauæn ok hafdi snemmendis vitzku bragd a ser' (Halldórsson 1987: 81). It is this daughter, Póra, who alone will be able to mediate in the conflict between the competing powerful families of the Faroe Islanders. The classic pattern is

therefore adhered to: the woman begotten in the wilderness has a special task to fulfil in the drama.

The fateful ring – an initiation to Þórgerðr Hordabrúðr

No ring is connected to the erotic alliance between Sigmundr and Púriðr in the mountains. Instead of employing the ring motif in relation to this erotic alliance, the author deploys it in relation to another important female figure, the fierce and mighty family-goddess at the seat of earls at Hlaðir, Þórgerðr Hordabrúðr.

When Sigmundr, whom earl Hákon has learned to appreciate highly, is about to settle on the Faroes, the earl establishes a ritual bond between Sigmundr and his favourite goddess. First he interrogates Sigmundr thoroughly about his personal faith and religion, and Sigmundr has to confess that he only believes in his own power. Earl Hákon then brings Sigmundr to the sacred place of the family, the holy building dedicated to Þórgerðr Hordabrúðr. Here a ritual performance takes place, consisting of prayers and offerings of silver to the goddess who is present in the form of a statue. When Þórgerðr responds by loosening a golden ring from her arm, the earl immediately presents the remarkable *dýrgrip*r to Sigmundr. The ritual is a symbolic sacred wedding, connecting the two parts forever. Sigmundr, for his part, promises the earl that he will wear the sacred ring on his arm for the rest of his life.

A reader familiar with the old patterns of mythology would rightly expect this sacred ring of Þórgerðr Hordabrúðr to determine Sigmundr's fate. The ring is connected to the ideology of kingship in the eddaic poems as well. *Skírnismál* is the source that most elaborately deals with the mythology of the sacred marriage. Draupnir, the ring offered to Gerðr by Freyr/Skírnir, was the ring of Óðinn, which had already travelled from the abode of the gods to the realm of death, through the death of Baldr. The mythical ring is a link between life and death, a symbol of fate, a sign of *eros* and love, of begetting, of fruitfulness, but also of destiny, and of the violent and non-heroic death of the hero. Through Sigmundr's initiation to Þórgerðr the author creates a set of distinct expectations amongst his audience.

Ólafr Tryggvason and the ring

When Ólafr Tryggvason comes to power in Norway, he asks Sigmundr to become his man and persuades him to receive baptism. The author has Ólafr Tryggvason deliver a missionary speech, declaring that the god in whom Sigmundr should now believe is the only true god, the creator of heaven and earth. The king believes that Sigmundr will become a true Christian, as he has heard that the young man was never a great *blotmaðr*, but rather relied on his own *mátt ok megin*. Again the author stresses the motif of the 'noble heathen'.

Ólafr Tryggvason's speech represents a new order, a new religion and a new ideology as well. This is important, and the speech itself is delivered in an appropriately solemn manner. Two different religions, two different orders confront each other at this point in the saga. The Norwegian king has the universal God on his side, and Sigmundr is invited to become one of the good men around the king. Norwegian hegemony over the Faroes is clearly taken for granted.

But the ring was to bring an element of frustration into the relationship between the king and Sigmundr. Aware of the *dýrgrip*r on Sigmundr's arm, Ólafr Tryggvason requests that he be given it, adding that he is ready to exchange it for another that is just as valuable. However, against all rules of honour, Sigmundr refuses to comply with his new master's wish. Instead of

offering the ring to the king, Sigmundr talks about his love of and respect for the pagan earl who gave him this *dýrgrip*. The king, disappointed, humiliated, and red as blood, explains that he already knew the story of the ring. However, as he explains it, his aim had been to release Sigmundr from the fateful destiny associated with the ring of Þórgerðr Hordabrúðr.

The reader never exactly comes to understand the king's reaction. Did he really wish to save Sigmundr, or did he simply want to own the valuable piece? This dramatic scene turns out to be the last meeting of the two men, for shortly afterwards Ólafr Tryggvason loses his life at Svolder. Sigmundr may or may not have been able to escape his violent destiny had he transferred the ring to the king. Yet within the saga's ideological context, though the king had sought to save Sigmundr from the grip of paganism, such is Sigmundr's attachment to the ring that he remains forever a mediator between paganism and Christianity, notwithstanding his efforts to convert his fellow men to Christianity.

The death of Sigmundr

In line with the demands of the myth, the pagan goddess's ring becomes the cause of Sigmundr's death. Attacked at home by the men of Práendr of Gotu, Sigmundr, Þórir and a man called Einarr literally have to swim for their lives. Sigmundr himself is strong enough to swim ten miles, towards Sudrey, but both Einarr and Þórir soon weaken. Sigmundr carries them on his back, first Einarr who nevertheless soon drowns, and then Þórir who eventually perishes on the shores of Sudrey.

There on the shore Sigmundr also ends his life. Lying completely exhausted among the seaweed, he asks a local farmer and his sons for help. The last scene of his life's saga shows us a helpless chieftain, not a bold hero dying with honour on the battlefield. For the sake of the golden ring that shines on his arm, Sigmundr is brutally decapitated on the shore. The ring that until then had brought him only good luck finally betrays him. The lesson is well known from the mythological ideology of rulership: the dangerous, but necessary alliance with the foreign woman, fruitful as it might be, ultimately brings the ruler a harsh destiny — often, as here, a dishonourable murder at the hands of a minor character. The belief in fate is obvious in the dishonourable words uttered by the farmer, standing beside the helpless Sigmundr: in Peter Foote's translation, 'Low lies our Lord now!' Foote's version continues: 'This is the end of Sigmund, the fine, fair man, who on strength and skill at arms and in all feats came second only to King Ólaf Tryggvason.' (Foote 1984: 184)

Sigmundr Brestisson ended his life in a dishonourable way. We are close to tragedy here, though not to classical tragedy. It is rather the Norse mythological pattern of a hero initiated into the dramatic destiny of the ruler.

Sigmundr – a transitional figure between paganism and Christianity

a. Sigmundr stands out as a transitional figure, bridging paganism and Christianity. The author's mastery of the subject can be discerned in the creation of Sigmundr's complex character. His whole-heartedness, his lifelong loyalty to his friends, and his care and love are all elements that we learn to admire. But although he is baptised and accepts Christianity, he never completely dissociates himself from paganism. In a way he never escapes from the initiation to Óðinn and Þórgerðr Hordabrúð.

But the lesson is not quite that simple. It was not only the ring that caused the death of Sigmundr. It was just as much his ethics, and his lifelong loyalty towards his *frendir*, a mindset

that Sigmundr brought with him from the old society. The saga unfolds at a time of cultural change, and it is noteworthy that the author, clearly a supporter of Ólafr Tryggvason and Christianity, seems nevertheless to appreciate some of the values of the old, pagan society.

b. This article argues for the existence of an underlying structuring mythological pattern in the text, mainly apparent in the shaping of the character of Sigmundr Brestisson. It suggests that this pattern, consisting mainly of Odinic mythical and ritual elements connected to the ideology of rulership, should not be regarded as a superficial literary element. On the contrary, the element of mythology constitutes a structural pattern in the saga.

The mythological elements are not limited to the character of Sigmundr alone. The further development of the saga is dependent on presuppositions laid down in the text in mythical guise.

c. It is only possible to enter the coming Christian era, which ought to be an age of harmony, by passing through several intermediate stages, as exemplified in the mythical erotic alliance of Sigmundr and the mountain woman. As we have noted, the mythological pattern, on which the textual structure is based, was the myth of *hieros gamos*, the erotic alliance in Útgarðr.

Póra, the offspring of the erotic experience in the wilderness, and the daughter of Sigmundr and Þúriðr, proves to be the one person clever and bold enough to overcome the main enemy Práðr of Gotu. It is her outstanding intelligence and cunning, as shown, for instance, in her remarkable willingness to marry the son of her father's murderer, and in her willingness to let her young son Sigmundr be taken into fosterage by Práðr, and even in her apparent willingness to plan a marriage between her mother Þúriðr and Práðr, which in the end defeat the old fox at Gotu. It is Póra's cunning that completely outmanoeuvres Práðr, driving him to a death caused by his own disappointment and sorrow. Póra's extraordinary character needs to be attributed to her specific, almost mythical origin — the descendent of an initiate and of a woman of the wilderness, begotten during the coming hero's period of initiation. All the different elements here belong to a mythological pattern, familiar to the author from pagan tradition. It is only the offspring of a *hieros gamos*, an alliance of opposite partners, which can embody and bring forth the new era.

At this stage we are able to grasp the deeper meaning of the origin of Sigmundr himself, with his mother being a *frilla*, with no recorded family background. Her Christian name Cecilia is unusual, and must be understood as an anticipation of Sigmundr's introduction of Christianity to the Faroes.

The last link of the narrative is the young boy Sigmundr, a grandson of Sigmundr Brestisson. With him the transitional phase comes to an end, and peace and harmony are established in the Faroese society. When the young Sigmundr becomes the new master at Hóf at Sudrey, his mother Póra becomes the housekeeper at his side. The story has come to a lucky end. All the disastrous antagonism is gone — a new era and a new order in the history of the Faroe Islands are about to begin.

Recognising the underlying mythological pattern in the saga narrative should help to extend our understanding of both the work itself, and of the aims and perspectives of its author. It should also serve to heighten our overall appreciation of the sophistication of the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders*.

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Chapter 8

One Facet of the Tendency in Færeyinga Saga

Andras Mortensen

Færeyinga saga is the only written account about the history of the Faroese in the Viking age and early middle Ages. It is not a contemporary saga but written a couple of hundred years after the events took place. Therefore, from a critical point of view Færeyinga saga cannot be regarded as primary source material to the period it describes. Instead it must be regarded as a secondary source, or rather as the processing and interpreting of older material, which we, given the fact that the account is the only one preserved, neither have any knowledge about nor viability to confirm. Because of this from a truth seeking critical point of view, Færeyinga saga must be regarded unreliable as historic source material and more as poetry, even though the author seems to give the impression, that he retells the history as it really was.

As a starting point this strict verdict, which not only concerns Færeyinga saga but the Icelandic saga literature in general is correct. However, in my opinion it is also a bit arrogant, considering that the judges are scholars of history who themselves call upon future readers to rely on their processing and interpretation of the source material of the past. In my opinion there is something contradictory to this point of view, which makes me expect that this strict visual angle is likely to undergo modifications in future historical research.

My opinion is however not unique but follows the trend called New Cultural History or New Historicism. As to the saga research, scholars now try to base their understanding of it in the question: "Why did the authors present their knowledge of history in a literary shape and how did their contemporaries make their announcements?" The basis of this new approach is that the truth-value of the sagas is considered in light of the question regarding what function the literary shape had in proportion to the standards of worth that the public had at that time. The precondition for this new angle is that history scholars work across scholarly boundaries at the same time as they keep in mind the critical method of their subject. To understand the literary shape of the saga, the history scholars have to base their critical examinations on the results of the literary historians. To interpret these results with reference to, how the readers understood the historical element in the author's narrative, they have to use tools, which anthropology has developed about how people function in a culture. (Cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1993, 17-32).

One great value of this approach is that it has opened the eyes of the historians of the middle Ages to the dimension of cultural history. In the following presentation, which is to be

understood as a starting point for an analysis of this kind, I am however only going to use this method to a limited extent. The reason is that the anthropological approach on its theoretical basis has limitations concerning the problem in interpreting the historical element in an account. This followers of this trend seem to have been well aware of. In my view the core of this dilemma is that the anthropological approach has synchronic basis and is fit to map the type of communication between author and the contemporary public but when it comes to valuation of diachronic aspects relating to the account, e.g. the kind of communication between the past and the author, it fails. The method to examine this kind of communication belongs to the classical historical research. Therefore, in my opinion a critical orientated valuation of the account has to be made before the anthropological point of view can be used. In practice performing a valuation of the tendency of the account does this. This is what I am aiming to do – with the paradigm of new cultural history about interdisciplinary testing at the back of my head. On the basis of the results that the literary scholars of Færeyinga saga have arrived at I am going to examine one facet of the tendency of the saga, namely the facet that the use of the term “sýslumaður” has given inspiration to.

In the case of literary examination of Færeyinga saga two scholars in particular attract attention, although others could also be mentioned. They are Finnur Jónsson who in 1927 published the first scholarly edition of the saga and Ólafur Halldórsson who in 1987 issued a more extensive edition based on close examinations of intertexture between preserved variants of the saga and other manuscripts from the Middle Ages. The main objective of both was to reach a conclusion about how Færeyinga saga came into being, particularly when and where it was written. The main reason for this objective was that the Færeyinga saga now known is a reconstruction based on narratives about faroese matters in younger sagas that seem to retell these narratives either directly or indirectly on the basis of an original text later lost, and that the author is unknown. To arrive at cognition about these matters is of fundamental importance to our understanding of the preserved saga as a historical source.

Time does not allow a closer description of the intertextual circumstances of the preserved saga but later I am going to describe those of them, which are of importance to my topical estimate. I will for now only in a few words display their principal results and how I explain these.

Jónsson's and Halldórsson's superior conclusions are that Færeyinga saga was written some time after 1190 and before 1218, presumably in the second half of this period. The author was an Icelander and most likely belonged to the literary circle of the monastery in Pingeyrar in Northern Iceland. To a large extent the author seems to have used material from older manuscripts contained in this monastery's library, including a later lost version of Orkneyinga saga, which in rewritten form is included in the Orkneyinga saga now known and dates from about 1230. He also seems to a large extent to have based his narrative on oral tradition, particularly in those parts concerning incidents that had happened in the Faroes.

In addition I think there is basis for saying firstly that the oral tradition concerning incidents in the Faroes was of faroese origin and secondly that a certain time had passed from when the author had heard the oral account until he put it into writing. This I think can be seen in the inconsistency that while the author on the one hand seems to be very well informed of political incidents that had happened in the Faroes, he on the other hand displays certain Faroese localities incorrectly. In my opinion, this can only be explained by the suppo-

sition that he didn't remember his oral account's information about the localities as well as he remembered the information about the political drama.

Apart from the results about when and where *Færeyinga saga* was recorded, the scholars of intertexture have exposed how the author worked. Now I will return to the previous question, namely, to what extent *Færeyinga saga* can be used as a historical source to Faroese history when the achievements of the literary scholars for the time being are taken into consideration.

To this assessment I am going to start with a statement in the last chapter of the saga. Here the author gives a genealogical elucidation that maps the period of the saga events, i.e. the period from about 960 until about 1047, in relation to his own time about 150 years later. In the last chapter the author points out that two men of his age named Einar and Skeggi were directly related to the last principal character in the narrative, the chieftain Leivur Øssursson, and that these two "a short time ago" had been "sýslumenn", i.e. the Norwegian king's sheriffs in the Faroes. The reason why I emphasize this is that this mingling of saga time and author's time indicates that the author had a purpose with his narrative – as if he somehow wanted to convince his readers with historical evidence. Therefore, given that *Færeyinga saga* in its basic narrative is about the power-political development in the Faroes in the period 960-1047, it is a reasonable assumption that his purpose was of power-political kind. The genealogical elucidation can therefore be seen as a sign that the author thought the two sheriffs' relationship with Leivur Øssursson to have power-political importance and therefore his emphasizing of this may be a clue regarding the tendency of the saga.

This clue I intend to use as a basis for my further examination, which accordingly ought to be about how the author brings historical evidence for power-political relations between the chieftainship in the past and the institution of sheriffs in his own time, and the examination of which according to the cultural historical method ought to be based on the results of the literary scholars.

Before I take these results into consideration, I have to mention that according to Norwegian scholars of history the political term "sýslumaður" (sheriff) belongs to the 12th century. The term has therefore nothing to do with the time that *Færeyinga saga* is about. Most likely, the origin of the sheriff's institution in the Norwegian kingdom is connected with the civil wars after king Sigurd Jorsalafarers death in 1130, which lead to the organizing of the Norwegian state. In this development the sheriffs had a very important role as a consequence of that they were the king's retainers sent out to be responsible for the king's authority in the local districts while the king's authority in the local districts before that had been watched over by local aristocracy. (Cf. Helle 1976, 206; Holmsen 1976, 169 ff).

Even if "sýslumaður" as a term doesn't belong to the saga time, in *Færeyinga saga* it is claimed that sheriffs were in the Faroes already in the 10th century. In the reconstructed saga chapter 16, which is preserved through *Flateyjarbók*, the author lets one of the main characters, Sigmund Brestisson, introduce himself to earl Hakon of Lade in Norway as son of Brestir, "who for a time was Your *sýslumaður* in the Faroes". This anachronistic remark therefore supports our suspicion that the author had some kind of purpose with his reference to Einar and Skeggi. The question now is, whether a similar purpose can be pointed out when the results of the literary scholars are taken into consideration.

No such purpose can directly be pointed out but if we examine the context where this utterance occurs more closely, we discover that the idea is not at all absurd. To expose why I

think there is a connection between the sayings that Brestir in 10th century and Einar and Skeggi in 13th century were “sýslumenn”, I am going to do a very short transcription of the narrative about the political development in the time of the saga.

The author begins with a short narrative about the circumstances around the Faroese landnam. He tells us that men who fled from king Harald Fairhair's supremacy built the Faroe Islands. He then continues with an introduction of the parties involved in the story, i.e. the Hov-family and the Götuskeggja-family. Havgrímur í Hovi was chieftain of one half of the Faroes and had it in “len”, i.e. as fief, from king Harald Gráfeld. Brestir and Beinir who belonged to the Götuskeggja-family were chieftains of the other half and had it in “len” from earl Hakon of Lade. The third party was that of Pránder i Gata who wasn't a chieftain but belonged to the Götuskeggja-family and was cousin to Brestir and Beinir on the fathers side. He then tells of a dispute, which arose between the two chieftain-families and ended tragically: The chieftains of both families die and leave infant sons too young to take over their reign. On the side line in this game however stands Pránder ready to take over and by political manipulations he becomes solitary chief, on the one hand as foster father of Havgrím's son, Øssur, and on the other hand as guardian for Brestir's and Beinir's sons because he was their fathers cousin. To provide for their future heritage he sends them out of the country to be slaves. From the description of this dispute, which according to the results of the scholars of intertexture likely is based on an oral account, we understand that the power base of the chieftains was the sanction of the Thing and that the chieftains functioned in the political system as party leaders in the same way as the Icelandic “góðar”. From the narrative, we also understand that the chieftains were attached to the Norwegian king by individual agreement characterized by the term of “len”. Again considering the statement in chapter 16 that Brestir had been earl Hakon's “sýslumaður”, this therefore apparently means that he was “sýslumaður” because he had taken “len”.

The very thing to take “len”, i.e. the substance of the author's anachronistic use of the term “sýslumaður”, is the core of the drama, which is subsequently described in the saga. Because of the anachronistic wording concerning the term “sýslumaður” we also have reason to believe that the question of taking “len” in the meaning described above in minor extent may be based on reality in the past than on reality in the time of the author and therefore somehow is constructed. This suspicion is supported by the contradiction that while the author in his preface tells that the Faroes were built by men who fled the supremacy of king Harald Fairhair, he tells us in the narrative, which follows and which deals with the period about one hundred years later, that the king of Norway in the meantime had become feudal overlord in the Faroes, without giving any justification for this dramatic change.

Still, a kind of justification is given in the saga. To catch sight of this we have to use the interdisciplinary method, which the scholars of cultural history have proposed. If the arguments for the hypothesis that the question of “len” maybe not has a historical basis were weak, an examination of this justification based on the results of the literary scholars brings us on firmer ground. This justification is given in the narrative about a sentence, which earl Hakon, promoted by Sigmundur Brestisson, is said to have passed on the basis of the special fact that Brestir had been his “sýslumaður”.

In the version of *Færeyinga saga*, which is preserved in *Flateyjarbók* and thought to be the version closest to the original version, the sentence of earl Hakon divided into 7 items. Two of them are about how the power in the Faroes should be organized in the future. These two

items are firstly that Práendr and his foster son Øssur should lose power because Práendr and Øssur's father, Havgrímur, had committed an act of injustice against Sigmundur's family, and secondly that Sigmundur should take all the Faroes in "len" but pay taxes to the earl from the half of the islands that the earl judged to himself.

In the chapter following this we are told, how the Faroese reacted to the sentence, particularly how Sigmundur managed to collect the fine that the earl had sentenced upon Práendr. Elsewhere in a more vague expression we are told that the Faroese did not like the sentence but didn't revolt either. Now I come to the point, which I think brings us evidence that the question of "len", which the author makes the centre of interest in his narrative, is unlikely to be based on historical facts, but is somehow constructed. Scholars who have examined the intertexture of the saga present the evidence, but without drawing any attention to the relevance their results have for the understanding of the saga. With reference to the earl's sentence Ólafur Halldórsson has pointed out that most likely two of the items of the sentence are constructed and that the construction is based on an older written source, *Orkneyinga saga*, and the description there of the sentence of king Olav Haraldsson on the earls of Orkney and Shetland how the power should be divided between them. (Halldórsson 1987, clxvi ff). These two items are the same two I mentioned before.

In connection to this and as a support to this conclusion I also have to point out that in *Orkneyinga saga* we find the justification for the right of sovereignty to the Norwegian king that is missing in *Færeyinga saga*, i.e. a justification, that entitled king Olav Haraldsson to pass a sentence in power-political matters between the earls of Orkney. The justification was that king Harald Fairhair in the past had conquered the islands and appointed an earl who became forefather to subsequent earls, to reign on his behalf.

In other words my conclusion is that we in the sentence of earl Hakon have a manifest indication that the justification for the faroese chieftains taking "len", i.e. the core of the story in *Færeyinga saga*, most likely is constructed and put into the narrative according to some kind of an agenda, which either was invented by the author himself or by someone close to him, at the same time as the author in other matters, especially those concerning events that had taken place in the Faroes, seems to have based his telling on oral tradition. By that reason we also can deduct that one of the main objectives with the saga was to justify the authority, which the Norwegian king exercised in the Faroes about 1200.

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Chapter 9

Experiments with peat charcoal and iron production in the Faeroe Islands

Ditlev L. Dall Mahler & Arne Jouttijärvi

Iron slags are often found on Faroese Viking Age and Early Medieval sites, such as those excavated in Sand, in Seyrvági, Kaldbak and Argisbrekka (Arge 1992: 22, Mahler 1993: 487). The slags clearly indicate a metal working industry, but could some of the slags also be the result of an actual smelting process? If so, what form of fuel was used? It is generally accepted that the local vegetation precluded a stable charcoal production based on wood, although this question is still being discussed. Beech trees found at an excavation in the village of Eiði have been ^{14}C dated to 890 AD cal. (K-5618). However it still seems unlikely that the Faeroe Islands ever had enough wood to produce an adequate amount of charcoal to sustain a regular self-sufficient iron smelting industry. Traces of furnaces or bloomery sites have yet to be found, and concentrated investigations implemented. It has generally been accepted that all iron had to be imported. But was this really the case? Is it likely, that Viking Age societies allowed themselves to be dependant on foreign aid for such a central commodity as iron, a metal so vital to their daily economy? Bog iron is readily available in the Faeroe Islands, and pits containing peat charcoal have been registered on several sites. The use of peat charcoal as a high energy fuel is an obvious choice. Analysis of the Faroese slags, show that these contain a high quantity of oxides, such as titanium, not found in Norwegian iron (Jouttijärvi 1992). Why is this? In order to find an answer to this and other questions, a number of experiments were implemented and the following objectives defined:

- 1) How to produce peat charcoal in sufficient quantities from quality peat
- 2) was the extracted peat charcoal of a quality to sustain an extraction process i.e could it produce the necessary temperatures for smelting and working
- 3) What is the effect of using peat charcoal on the chemical composition of the iron and of the slags?

Peat charcoal was produced in remote places in Scotland up until the turn of the last century (Crawford 1966:108), and peat charcoal production seems to have been part of the local, domestic industry disappearing with the spread of cheap fossil coal. R.F.Tylcote has touched upon the same question – that is peat charcoal and iron smelting- with regards to the Early Medieval period in Scotland (Tylcote 1986: 187). The iron production industry in Viking Age and Medieval Iceland was widespread and based upon charcoal derived from the island=s birch forests. The last known occurrence is registered in the 1560' es, and there is no

evidence that peat charcoal played any role in the Icelandic iron industry (Fridriksson & Hermanns-Audardóttir 1992: 5). So far, we have no concrete evidence of any form of iron production in Norse Greenland. However the presence of slags on at least seven different sites indicates some form of iron working process.

In the Faeroe Islands, written records from the 17th and 18th centuries emphasize the importance of access to high quality peat for domestic fuel. In the 1780 'es, the Danish king required his civil servant J.C Svabo to provide him with a full description of the Faeroe Islands, which also resulted in a whole chapter on peat. Svabo mentions 15 different kinds of peat, graded after density, organic matter and ash content. The first peat sort mentioned is: ABlaaramógvur@- meaning black peat, described as being as hard as fossil coal and useable as fuel. Next he mentions AKolamógvur@ or charcoal peat. He continues A this kind of charcoal peat is also used by blacksmiths@. However, we have no recent records of peat charcoal being produced in the Faroes.



Fig. 1: The closed peat number 8 from 1996 at Archaeological Historical Centre, Lejre. (DM-fig1.tif)

During the mid 1990' es, eight experiments in the production of peat charcoal were conducted at the Historical-Archaeological Experimental Centre, Lejre. Due to the limited amount of peat available, the sizes of the pits were restricted to some 60- to 70-80 CMS in diameter and some 25-30 CMS in depth. The experiments proved that peat took longer to catch fire than wood, in that peat is more humid than wood. But once on fire, the heat has a generating effect, resulting in a steep rise in temperature and, to put it mildly, a fair amount of smoke. After two hours the pit is ready to be banked with damp turfs and then an hour or so later the charcoal is produced at a temperature of some 4-600 °C. Some 16 hours later, the tempera-

ture still recorded an average of 200 degrees. If the pit is not properly sealed, the result is pure peat ash. The experiments showed that it was possible to produce 25-30% peat charcoal of the total amount of peat used. In comparison, the large scale peat charcoal burnings carried out in Southern Jutland in the 19th century, produced 50 % charcoal (Schmidt 1948: 101). Large amounts of peat were used. In a similar burning the amount of peat used, numbered some 8000 pieces (Hove 1983: 17).

After each of the experimental pit burnings, the peat charcoal was sorted, and small pieces of coal that might block the furnace shaft and hinder the planned smelting process removed.

In 1997 the experiments were carried a step further by using the peat charcoal in a smelting process. As we did not have access to Faroese bog iron, and as the primary target of the experiment was to evaluate the peat charcoal for smelting purposes, ore from Jutland was used. The chosen ore was not particularly rich with 57% FeO, but had never the less given a fair return in earlier experiments.



Fig. 2: The starting of the slag tapping shaft furnace. Arne Jouttijärvi to the right. (DM-fig2.tif)

The furnace was built along the lines of the small, Medieval Norwegian slag tapping shaft furnaces, which resemble the Stamford furnace (Tylecote 1986: 183) and a furnace known from earlier experiments at Historical-Archaeological Experimental Centre, Lejre (Jouttijärvi 1995). It was expected that the peat charcoal would disintegrate to a certain degree and thus block the air current during the firing. In order to avoid the smaller coals from blocking the furnace, the shaft was made broader and was only filled to a height of 0.5 m. Furthermore only lumps of peat charcoal larger than o. 4 CMS were used in the experiment.

The actual burning of the peat charcoal together with the ore in the furnace proceeded very satisfactorily and the level of 1200 °C was easily reached. Compared to wood charcoal,

the most significant difference was the amount of peat ash produced, estimated to around 20 w / w %. To maintain the air current in the furnace it was necessary to repeatedly clear the blow holes of peat ash.

After 11 2 hours of smelting, 29 kg of peat charcoal and 17 kg of ore had been used. In spite of the relatively poor ore mentioned, a bloom containing some 0.3-0.5 kg of iron was produced – enough to weld a small bar.

Analysis of the ore, ash and the slag inclusions within the iron were made (se fig. 3). For our experiment, the traces of Magnesiumoxid (MgO) and Titaniumoxide (TiO_2) are of the greatest importance. The Faeroe Islands are part of the North Atlantic Basalt Plateau/Plain stretching from Northern Ireland and Scotland to Greenland. This basalt is characterized by a high content of Al_2O_3 (10-15%, MgO (6-11%) and TiO_2 (1-5%). Earlier experiments show that the slag inclusions contain the remains of the smelting slag, and therefore mirror the ore used (Jouttijärvi 1994 & 1995). The Faroese ore contains the decomposed elements of the basalt, and it is therefore to be expected that the ore is rich in Magnesiumoxides and Titanoxides. In locally produced iron, the slag inclusions must have the same composition.

As can be seen in Fig. 3, it appears that the ash from the Faroese peat contains much higher concentrations of the mentioned substances, due to the basalt, than the Danish ore does. Because of the higher concentrations and the quite different composition, the ash has had a very clear impact on the amount of Magnesiumoxide and Titaniumoxide within the slag inclusions. It is important to note though that the composition of the smelting slags and the slag inclusions follow one another.

The next question to be addressed was, whether the use of peat charcoal in the actual smithing processes would produce the same composition of oxides. In order to test this, another experiment was started in 1998, this time with the use of peat charcoal in a furnace, (fig. 3).

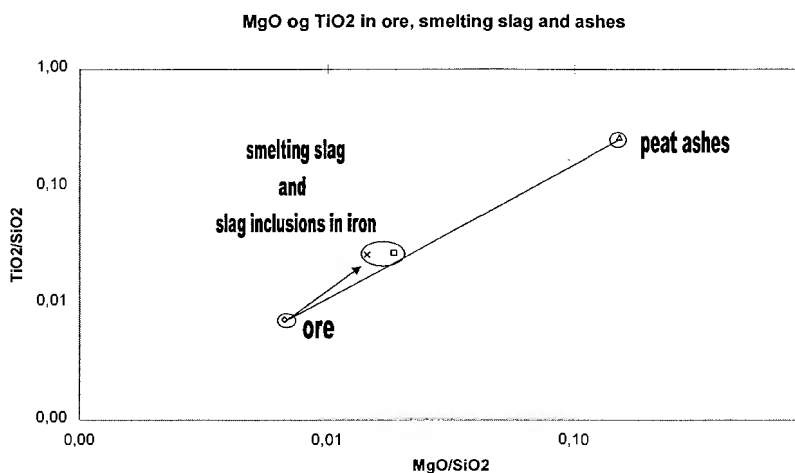


Fig. 3: MgO and TiO_2 in ore, smelting slag and ashes. AJ. del. 2002. (DM-fig3.tif)

The peat charcoal was excellent for smithing, and even without being blown they burned as gently as stone coal. Restricting the heat was thus much easier than when using wood charcoal. Additionally the peat charcoal reacted almost as quickly as wood charcoal when blown, and the necessary temperature was easily obtained. The peat charcoal worked very well in the purification as well as in the more heat demanding processes as welding and joining.

During the purification processes a small Plano convex slag was created, and part of this and of the slag conclusions in the purified and welded iron were subjected to a wide range of analyses, (fig. 4). From the earlier smelting experiment, which produced the iron bloom, we know the composition of the smelting slags. The content of Magnesiumoxide and Titaniumoxide are shown in fig. 4 together with the results of the analyses of three slags from Argisbrekka in the Faeroe Islands.



Fig. 4: An open bowl shaped forge furnace was dug some 25 CMS wide and 6 CMS deep, with a tuyere of clay at one side containing the central blow hole for the bellows. Once the furnace was heated, peat charcoal was introduced and we started working on a lump of iron made in Jutland during an experiment with wood charcoal. (DM-fig4.tif)

The analyses show that the chemical composition of the smelting slags and of the slag inclusions in the iron are also in this case rather similar. There is thus no indication of a change in the composition of the slag inclusions, due to the use of peat charcoal. This is a reasonable observation as the slag inclusions do not have contact with the peat ash, as they are encapsulated within the iron.

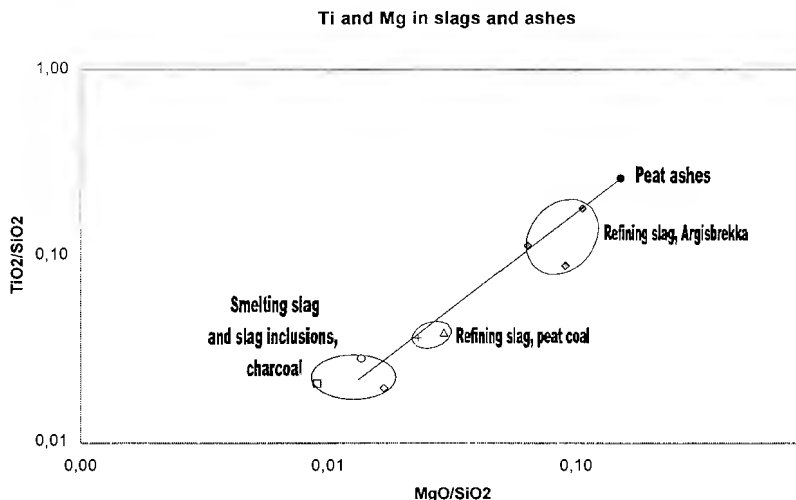


Fig. 5: The content of Magnesiumoxide and Titaniumoxide are shown together with the results of the analyses of three slags from Argisbrekka at the Faeroe Islands. AJ. del. 200. (DM-fig5.tif)

It is to be expected that the Plano convex purification slags have a tendency towards the composition of the peat ash, as both will end up together at the bottom of the furnace. Earlier experiments have shown that purification slags – in relation to the smelting slags from the same geographical area – generally have a higher content of Calciumoxide (CaO) and Kaliumoxide (K₂O), which exactly constitute the main part of wood charcoal ash (Lund & Jouttijärvi 2001).

Conclusion

Peat charcoal is easily produced, and there is no problem in attaining the necessary temperature for producing fluid slag. Furthermore the composition of the slag inclusions in a piece of iron is the product of the ore and the ash of the used fuel. High contents of Magnesiumoxide and Titaniumoxide in archaeological iron indicate that it was most likely produced somewhere on the North Atlantic Basalt Plateau/Plain. Imported Norwegian blooms worked with local peat charcoal do not produce any detectable change in the composition of the inclusions.

The purification slags from Argisbrekka have a composition which is far more similar to the peat ash than the purification slags from the experiments at Lejre. This is not alone due to the blending of slag and peat ash, but must be due to the higher content of oxides in the original slag. If this is the case, the purified and welded iron from Argisbrekka was produced in the Faeroes and not imported from Norway as generally thought.

There is reason to be cautious, as our results are based on just a few analyses. Numerous, systematic analyses of archaeological slag material, and not least the iron objects themselves,

are required before we can safely establish the presence of a historical, local iron industry in the Faeroe Islands.

Acknowledgments

In 1989 during the 11th Viking Conference I discussed the whole question of peat charcoal production with Alexander Fenton, who very kindly let me use his notes on the subject. Thanks to yearly grants from Historical-Archaeological Experimental Centre, Lejre, I was able to carry out a number of experiments between the years 1993 and 1997. Without the help of Sune Winther, Sandoz, the Faeroe Islands, who provided me with some 250 kg of excellent peat, these experiments could not have taken place. Warm thanks to curator Hans Kapel for the information on the slags from Greenland.

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The Viking Settlement „Niðri á Toft“, Kvívík, Faroe Islands – a reanalysis

Anna Katrin Matras

Introduction

This presentation is based on a master-thesis at the University of Copenhagen in 1995 (Matras 1995). The theme of the thesis was Scandinavian building customs and house morphology of the North Atlantic during the Viking expansion. Achievements from previous studies of the comparative material from Norway and the Scottish Isles gradually turned the focus of the thesis towards the Faroe Islands.

I soon realised, however, that one of the problems in doing this type of study is that quite a substantial part of the relevant material is either unpublished or based on excavations conducted more than fifty years ago. The prevalent standards of the time of these excavations, of course, had their limitations compared to those of today. My hypothesis therefore was that a re-assessment of the analyses and conclusions produced on basis of these excavations was strongly required.

Consequently, it became the main intention of my work to establish an archaeological method, in its broadest sense, to re-analyse the methodology and results of older excavations and thereby make them comparable to modern research. The space, available for this presentation, does not allow to go into detail about the methodological aspects. Consequently, concentration will be put on a presentation of a case study of the first excavated Viking settlement site in the Faroe Islands, the well-known farmstead at “Niðri á Toft”, in the settlement of Kvívík.

The site „Niðri á Toft“

The farmstead “Niðri á Toft” is centrally located in the settlement of Kvívík on the western coastline of the island of Streymoy (Fig. 1). The settlement was excavated through various campaigns during the period 1941-1957. The excavations were conducted by the late, former State Antiquary of the Faroe Islands, Sverri Dahl (1910-1987). Dahl subsequently presented his results in a number of publications (Dahl 1951; 1968; 1971a; 1971b). The results included his overall interpretation of the lay-out of the excavated structures on the site, which is represented in his published site-plan (Fig. 2).

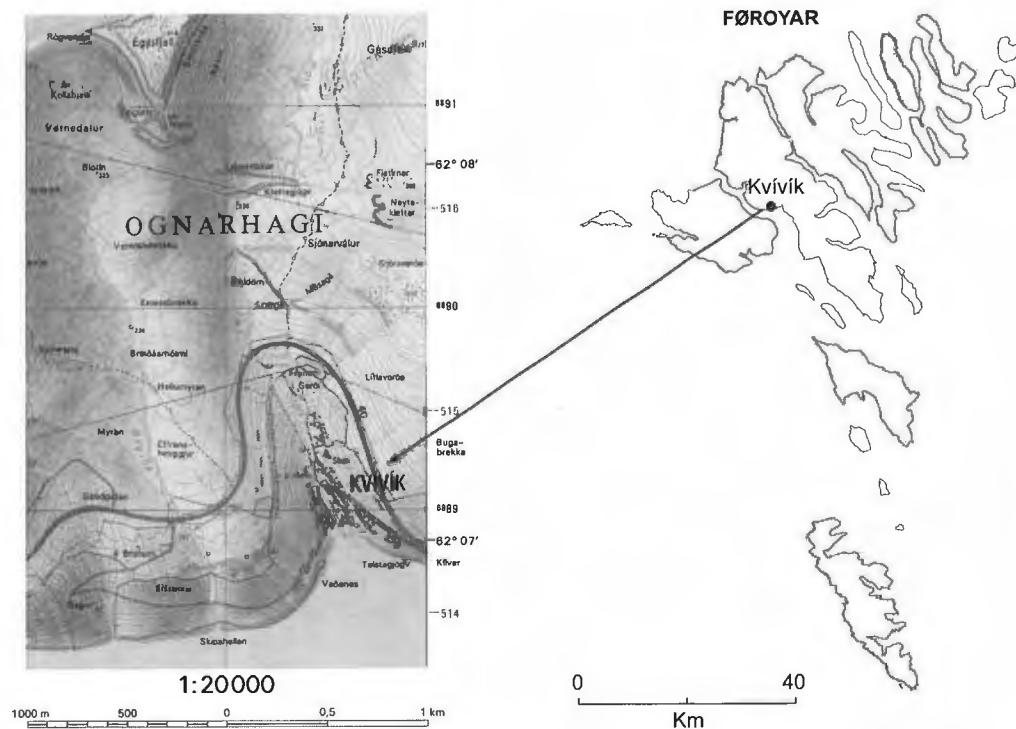


Fig. 1: The settlement of Kvívík on the western coastline of the island Streymoy. The arrow indicates the location of „Niðri á Toft“. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

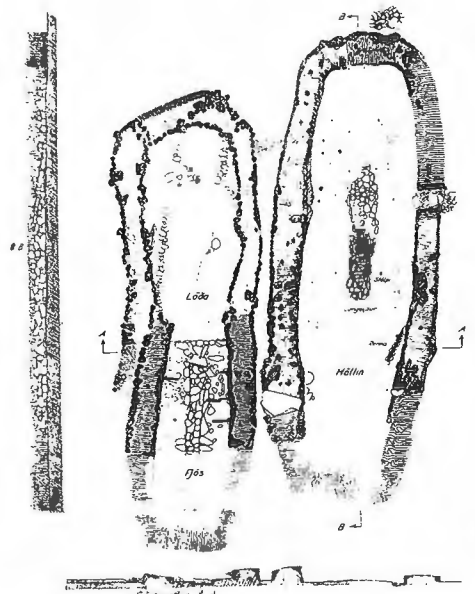


Fig. 2: Sverri Dahl's final site plan of the excavated buildings at „Niðri á Toft“ (Dahl 1968). It is on the basis of this plan that the buildings have been restored. The longhouse (dwelling) is to the right. The byre is to the left. In the southern continuation of this is the barn.

It can be derived from the plan that the main structure at the site is a longhouse, which was interpreted as a dwelling. To the west of this building and parallel to it, a contemporary building was identified. This building Dahl interpreted as a byre. At a later stage this byre was provided with an extension, which Dahl interpreted as a barn. It should be mentioned that the longhouse was superimposed by a medieval structure, which will be referred to later in this paper.

The longhouse was built with a double stone-built wall with a fill of soil and turf, a characteristic of Viking Age houses in the Faroe Islands. The length of the building was 21-22 meters while the width was 5.75 meters (internal measurements). Along the northern part of the axis of the longhouse a longfire of seven meters in length and one meter in width was uncovered. An entry was located in the eastern wall of the house. Along the eastern wall, south of the centre of the building, an outlet was uncovered. Dahl interpreted the building as a three-aisled longhouse with two lines of roof-supporting posts, and with benches along the walls.

The byre also had an inner and outer stone-built wall with a fill of soil and turf. The internal measurements were 5.5 metres in length and 3.5 metres in width respectively. Along the axis a stone-built drainage ditch was identified, seventy centimeters in width and with stalls on both sides of it. At a later stage the northern part of the original wall had been penetrated to make space for an addition. Dahl assumed that this addition should be interpreted as a barn, but he never published any details to substantiate his interpretation. The restoration of the site is based on the recordings produced during this field-work.

The re-analysis

The most surprising data turned up in the available material from the excavation campaign of 1957. This year Dahl and his team continued excavation initiated the previous year in the area north of the byre, during which a habitation layer was uncovered. Fig. 3 shows the distribution of artefacts from this area.

The artefact assemblage contains a good number of soapstone items, such as shards from vessels and spindle-whorls, as well as

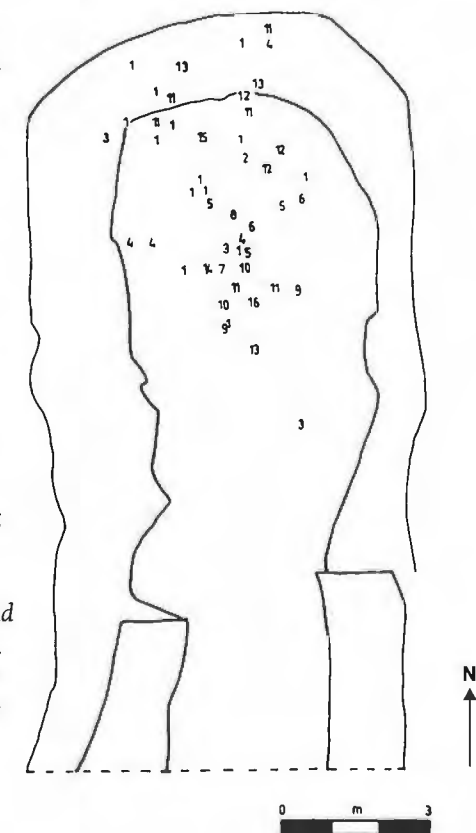


Fig. 3: Objects found in the area excavated in 1957 and from layer below stone circle III (Phase 1 – level +320 – +390). 1. Shards of soapstone vessels; 2. Spindle whorl of soapstone; 3. Whetstones of fine-grained, dark schist; 4. Whetstones of coarse-grained, light schist; 5. Amber bead; 6. Glass bead; 7. Bone bead; 8. Bead of unidentified material; 9. Wooden toy boat; 10. Wooden toy horse; 11. Wooden nail; 12. Wooden barrel stave; 13. Wooden „kharvi“; 14. Fragment of hide; 15. Worked piece of turf; 16. Circular wooden disc with perforation. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

whetstones of various sorts of schist. Furthermore, the assemblage includes several types of beads and wooden objects, such as, for instance, toy-boats and toy-horses.

Against this background it seems surprising that Dahl interpreted this area as a barn. From a general point of view one would not expect an artefact assemblage of this character to be associated with such a building. Attention should also be paid to the fact that the concentration of finds was extending beyond the walls of the alleged barn.

It is not possible to associate any northern gable end of the building with the oldest habitation layer. Wall-constructions, however, have been located to the west and to the east. These wall-constructions are curving inwards towards a possible gable end to the south which, however, was not identified. It is, however, quite clear that the building together of the structures to the south is a secondary one. No evidence for inner details such as, for instance, fireplace and entrance has been found. Based on the lay-out of the wall-structures and the distribution of finds, the size of this building can be estimated to have been approximately 8 metres in length and 4.5 metres in width respectively.

Furthermore, Fig. 3 shows that there was no direct connection between the habitation layer and the byre to the south of it. As a matter of fact, there is a distance of two meters between the northern end of the byre and the demarcation of the habitation layer. This observation leads the attention directly to the three cross sections which were established during Dahl's excavation.

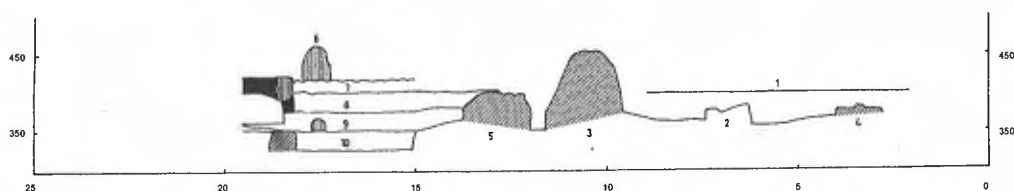


Fig. 4: Sequence of layers in the western part: At the top: a stone circle I, which in level stretches from +436 up to +443 (6). Underneath this there is another stone circle II, which is placed from level +400 up to level +440 (7). This superimposes a third "stonecircle III"; from level +380 up to +400 (8). This again superimposes the area excavated in 1957, referred to as the "oldest habitation layer" (9 and 10 in particular). The level of the dwelling in the eastern part is equal to the level of the "oldest habitation layer" to the west. Other numbers: (1) Medieval house; (2) Longfire; (3) Western wall of the dwelling; (4) Eastern wall of the dwelling; (5) Eastern wall of the byre. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

Fig. 4 shows the cross-section which ran through the mentioned "byre-area" and further through the dwelling where it crossed the longfire and the eastern wall just south of the entrance. It has already been mentioned that the excavation team was working in the "byre-area" in 1956. It is noteworthy, however, that they were excavating at a higher level than the one illustrated in Fig. 4.

In the western part of the section a number of layers are indicated: at the top a stone circle I (which in levelling covers from level +436 up to +443) can be seen. Below this there is another stone circle II (which is placed from level +400 up to +440.) This again superimposed a "stonecircle III" (which stretches from level +380 up to +400.) At the bottom of this sequence then follows the area, which was excavated in 1957. In the following this area is referred to as the "oldest habitation layer".

The "oldest habitation layer" can be subdivided into two: The upper part is the one in which most artefacts were found. The lower part can be interpreted as representing the "building-phase". The layer contained waste-wood (shavings), ropes of twined juniper branches, birch bark, hazel nuts, objects of worked wood and other minor items. Superimposed by this layer was the original vegetation horizon.

Looking at the part of the sections which covers the dwelling, it is first of all worth to notice at what level the medieval house was situated (level +400). Furthermore, that the floor level of the dwelling is lowest in the centre (level +360), but increases up towards the wall (level +370). Finally, it can be stated that the level of the dwelling is equal to that of the "oldest habitation layer" to the west.

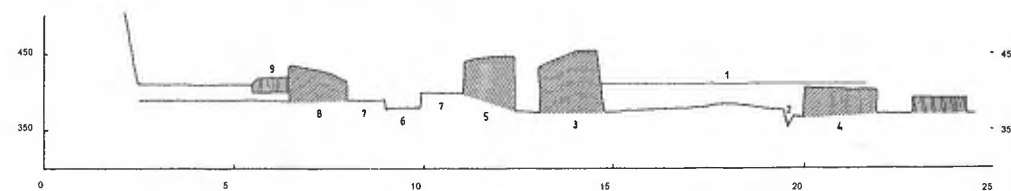


Fig. 5: A combination of Dahl cross-sections in the western area and in the eastern area respectively. To the left the byre with the secondary wall (9) in the western side of the byre-area (8). In the dwelling the drain (2) near the eastern wall (4) can be seen. The level is rather uneven (highest on the middle at level +380, on the western wall (3) at level +370, while the bottom of the drain is at level +350). The later built together wall is at a higher level than the byre. Other numbers: (1) Medieval house; (5) East wall of the byre; (6) Drainage outlet; (7) Stalls. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

Dahl made one cross-section in the western area and one in the eastern area. A combination of these two can be seen in Fig. 5. In the section the byre is indicated by the secondary wall in the western side of the byre-area. In the eastern part the area stretching two and a half meters south of the long-fire can be seen. The drain near the eastern wall of the dwelling is seen in the eastern part of the section. Otherwise the level is rather uneven, (highest in the middle at level +380, on the west-wall at level +370, while the bottom of the drain is at level +350). The later "built together wall" is at a higher level than that of the byre.

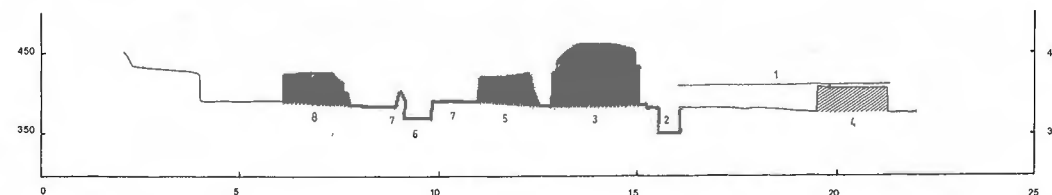


Fig. 6: To the left the area south of the built together wall structures. Inside the dwelling the floor increases from east to the west. In the byre area the stalls are at the highest level while the drainage outlet from the byre is lowest. Numbers: (1) Medieval house; (2) Drain (3) Western wall of the dwelling; (4) Eastern wall of the dwelling; (5) Eastern wall of the byre; (6) Drainage outlet; (7) Stalls; (8) Western wall of the byre. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

The last cross-section (5x.) was established towards south (Fig. 6). To the west the area south of the "built together" wall-structures is seen. Inside the dwelling the floor level increases from east to the west. In the byre area the stalls are at the highest level while the drainage outlet from the byre is at the lowest level.

Another two cross-sections were produced by Dahl. Both are longitudinally directed, one in the center of the dwelling (through the axis at 7y), the other through the centre of the byre and the barn (in the axis of 16y). A combination and re-drawing of these two appears in Fig. 7.

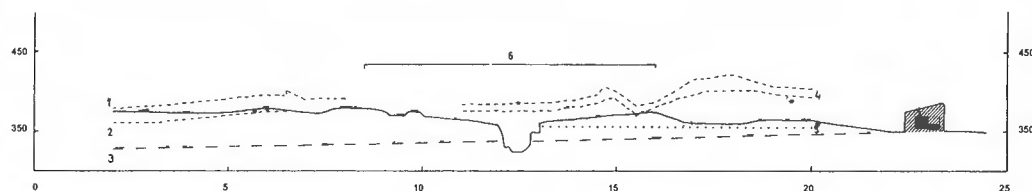


Fig. 7: The byre and the barn. The full-drawn line indicates the level, which was excavated in the dwelling-area. To the north the northern gable end is seen. 1. The level of the stalls in the byre; 2. The level of the bottom of the drainage outlet of the byre; 3. Estimated natural fall in terrain; 4. The level of the stone circle III; 5. The approximate level of the oldest habitation layer; 6. The extent of the long-fire. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

The first thing to note is that the full-drawn line indicates the level to which they were excavating in the dwelling-area. Against north is the north-end. Furthermore, the section shows:

1. The level of the stalls in the byre
2. The level of the bottom of the drainage outlet of the byre
3. Estimated natural fall in terrain
4. The level of the stone circle III
5. The approximate level of the oldest habitation layer
6. The extent of the longfire

An interpretation of the data from these sections leads to the conclusion that the area, in which they were excavating to the deepest level, is the area of the northern part of the byre, i. e. the area excavated in 1957. It is important to note that the data from the 1957 excavation were never communicated to others.

It is also a fact that the bottom of the habitation layer never was reached along the walls. From the longitudinal section of the dwelling, it can be deduced that the level of the floor is thirty centimeters lower in the northern than in the southern part. This, despite the fact that there is a natural sloping in the terrain from the north towards south. The discrepancy should be seen in relation to the fact that the excavators had problems in identifying the northern gable end and the eastern wall, and therefore excavated to a deeper level here until the foundations appeared.

Regarding the artefacts it is clear that shards of soapstone vessels were found in the area against the western wall on a deeper level than the lowest level in the cross-sections. In the

southern part, on the contrary, it was already stated in 1946 that the only object found there was a sinker. Therefore, it seems, the excavators found no temptation to go any deeper. Thus it is clear that they never excavated through the floor-layer, neither did they reach the bottom of the foundation.

Regarding the artifact-assemblage, it should be stressed that no pottery but only soapstone shards were found in the oldest habitation layer. It should also be mentioned that archaeological material from the Viking and medieval house respectively had been mixed up by recent activity in the area.

Conclusion

The re-assessment of the phases, as presented above, is based on a re-analysis of the stratification at the site. This leads to new conclusions about the phases.

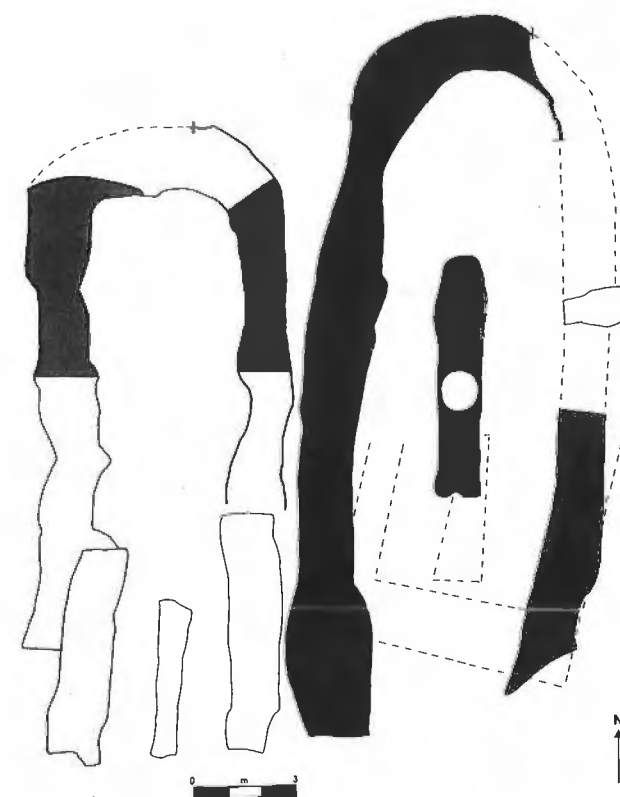


Fig. 8: Phase 1. The longhouse with its long fire to the right. To the left an adjacent building of unidentified function. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

Phase 1 is the earliest phase at the site (Fig. 8). It corresponds with Dahl's interpretation as regards the earlier mentioned dwelling, but differs by having another contemporary building lying next to it. As mentioned, no details about this building have been recorded, which

makes it difficult to say anything about its function. No byre can be documented in this early phase. However, the fact that no objects or structures, such as for instance a fire-place, were found in the lower-lying end of the building, may indicate the presence of a byre in this part of it. From the cross-section it can be derived that the excavation in this part of the house was not extended to the bottom of the habitation layer. Therefore, a possible drain or outlet may well be hidden here still.

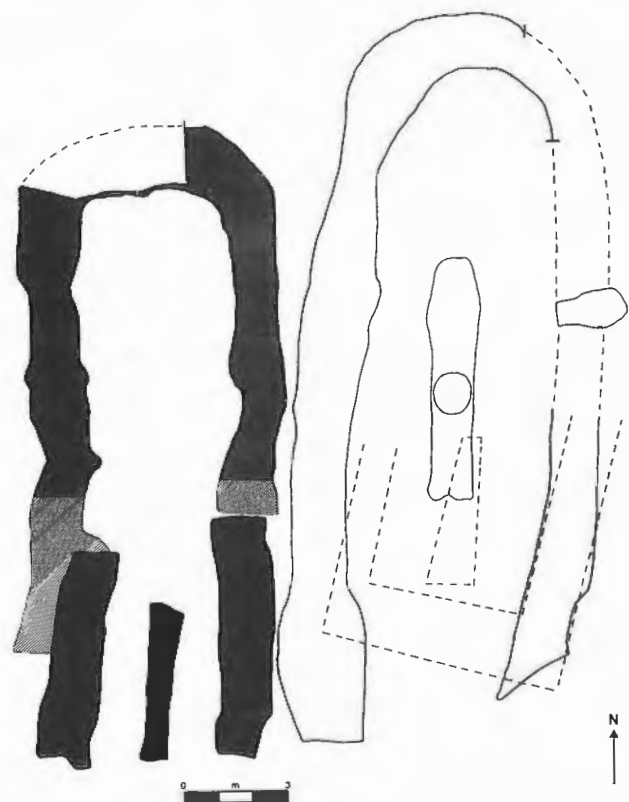


Fig. 9: Phase 2. The byre in the south with a contemporary building to the north of it. The hatched area is the expected built together wall between these two buildings. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

Phase 2 (Fig. 9) is characterized by the occurrence of a separate byre west of the dwelling, and in the same stratigraphic horizon as the Stone Structure III. The built together of the two structures is a secondary one. No dwelling contemporary with the byre has been located so far.

Phase 3, the latest phase on the site, is represented by the medieval house (Fig. 10), which superimposed the dwelling of Phase 1. West of this, and at the same level, a number of stone structures were found, but no plans of these are on record. There is a fine correspondence in the chronology of the objects found in the house and the stone structures, which substantiates the interpretation, based on the stratigraphy, that they are contemporary.

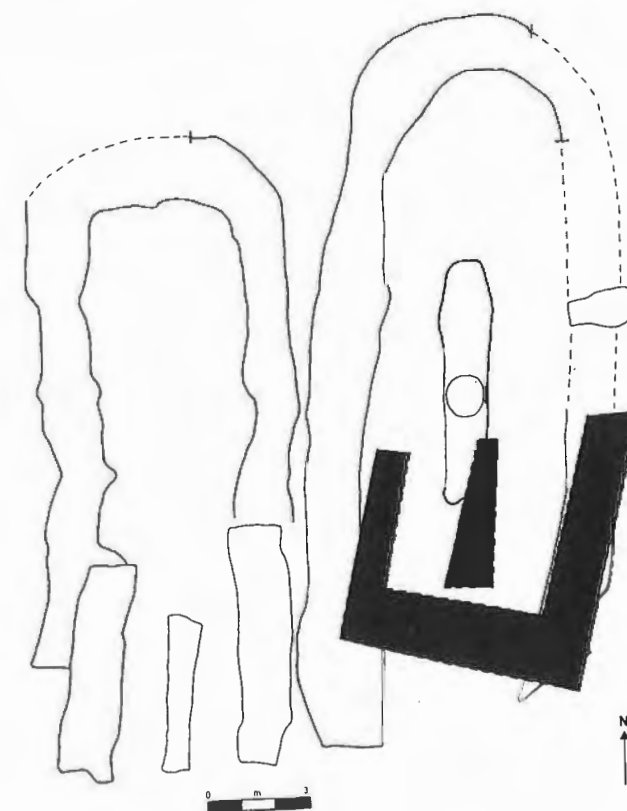


Fig. 10: Phase 3. The medieval house. The upper stone circles to the north of the byre have not been included in the plan as no drawings of these are on record. Drawing: Anna Katrin Matras.

As presented in the beginning of this paper, the purpose of the study was to make the results of an old excavation useful for contemporary research. The new results may be summed up as follows:

- A habitation layer was identified, which can be interpreted as an building belonging to Phase 1.
- The excavation of the floor-layer was incomplete, and the bottom of the foundation was never reached.
- Regarding the artifact assemblage it has been established that no pottery was found in the “oldest habitation layer”.
- It was possible to distinguish between medieval and Viking artefacts.

Although new results have been produced through this re-analysis of the Niðri á Toft site, it is clear that there are questions yet to be answered. These, however, cannot be addressed without a re-opening of the site. As an important starting point trial trenches should be dug across

the main structures in order to establish how much of the habitation layer has been left untouched.

This perspective was already mentioned by Dahl when he, in 1957, decided to end the excavation and restore the buildings on the top of the foundations he had uncovered. In one of his notes, he states that he had to make a priority as other necessary excavations were forcing him to abandon the site. But he emphasizes that he also found it important to leave parts of the site untouched for future researchers, whom he found, undoubtedly, would appear more qualified than he. He was quite aware that the western part of the section (boundary of the excavation) was containing a potential for future re-excavations. This clearly shows that Sverri Dahl was a skillful and responsible archeologist.

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Chapter 11

Faroese Runic Inscriptions

Marie Stoklund

In the middle of the 1950s, when the present lecturer as a young student took up the Kirkjubøur inscription for consideration at the request of my teacher, Erik Moltke, very few runic inscriptions from the Faroe Islands were known (Simonsen 1959). The whole basis for interpreting an inscription like Kirkjubøur has indeed been changed radically since the 50s. The number of inscriptions has increased amazingly not only in Norway but also in the Norse colonies in “The Realm of the Western Sea”. Important inscriptions from the excavations of the Greenland farmsteads ought to be mentioned, for instance the quite recent finds from *The Farm Beneath the Sand* and Ø 34 *Qorlortup Itinnera* (Stoklund 1998: 10f.; Stoklund 2003: 8f.). The fifth volume of *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* (NIyR), which was intended to give the final survey of and background for the runic inscriptions from the whole Norse area had not yet appeared; it came out in 1960. And by then the picture had already been radically changed because of the numerous Bergen inscriptions, found after the fire in 1955.

Now nine runic inscriptions are known from the Faroe Islands from the period down to c. 1500, but the only two proper runic inscriptions known at that time were the stone-inscriptions: Kirkjubøur and Sandavágur, which had been interpreted by Ludvig F.A. Wimmer and Johs. Brøndum-Nielsen respectively. The Sandavágur stone, according to Brøndum-Nielsen — and generally accepted — could be dated c. 1200 or a little later, whereas the Kirkjubøur-inscription belonged to the 9th century. However, other examples of supposed runic writings from the Faroe Islands had also been reported and sent to the National Museum in the 19th century, I shall return to this material, but, no doubt, these “inscriptions” are only rune-like scratching, owner’s marks and the like, although for instance O. Werner counts them as runic inscriptions in his short survey (Werner 1991: 129).

Most of these nine Faroese inscriptions are short and in a bad condition, damaged and fragmented, so that only a very small vocabulary could be scraped together on the basis of that material. Incidentally, it is not easy to get a general idea of it. Informations must be gathered from various sources, like *Nytt om runer* and *Mondul* (cf. the short survey with references, Arge 1982: 3-10). I shall give a survey of the material in connection with a table of the inscriptions numbered in accordance with the Uppsala database.

FR 1. The Kirkjubøur stone, Streymoy (Fig. 1). The little stone was found in 1832 and taken to the National Museum in Copenhagen (cf. Simonsen 1959) from where it was in 2002

fragment of an erected stone. Although Stephens' interpretation, "set me uik after uniru" was not convincing, in consideration of Stephens' comments and Magnus Petersen's excellent drawing (Stephens 1867-68: 728-30; 1884: 466f.), it ought to have been evident how problematic Wimmer's reading and dating were. Nevertheless, for a long period, Wimmer's view was generally accepted, for instance by Didrik Arup Seip, who dated the inscription even earlier than Wimmer: c. 700 (Seip 1955: 36,37). And of course Wimmer's reading and his early date were taken as arguments for an early Viking-Age settlement — in particular — at such an important site as Kirkjubøur.

My reading 1959 ...?????in/äuikuf(i)uniruā and my attempt at interpreting the inscription as ...Vigú(l)fi unni róa, "...grant Vigulfr peace" could be discussed — and it has been criticised for instance by Jón Helgason (in a personal letter 1957) and Ingrid Sanness Johnsen (Sanness Johnsen 1968: 212-14). But there is no doubt that the Kirkjubøur inscription belongs in a West Norse, probably Christian, context, although a certain doubt has been expressed (for instance by Schmeissner 1979: 116-121). It is written in a short-twig-futhark or in a mixed type of long-branch and short twig runes. The inscription has none of the significant runes, which would permit a closer, typological determination. My dating was partly based on my supposition that the stone was a Christian grave slab and dependent on the assumption that the christianisation of the islands took place c. 1000. Ingrid Sanness Johnsen, however, argued for an earlier dating to the beginning of the 10th century, even though Kirkjubøur is a Christian inscription (1968: 214).

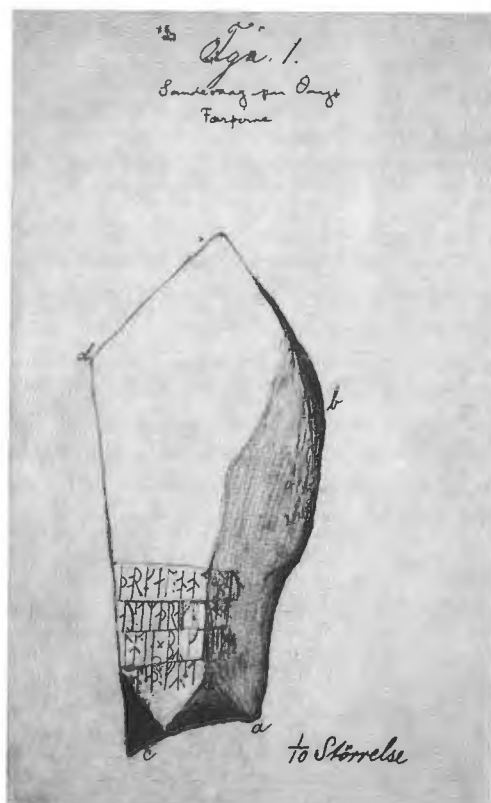


Fig. 2: The Sandavágur stone. The original drawing by Mikkjal d. á Ryggi with his first reading. Antikvarisk-topografisk Arkiv. The National Museum.

FR 2. The Sandavágur stone was found after a clearing of stones at í Eingjartoftum, Sandavágur (Vágar) in 1917, it is now situated in the parish church.

After the first nearly correct reading and interpretation by Mikkjal D. á Ryggi in a Faroese paper (1917), Johs.Brøndum-Nielsen, although he had not seen the inscription himself, published it in 1923, based on a photo and a report from Mikkjal D. á Ryggi 1919 together with excellent drawings (cf. Fig. 2) and further information concerning corrections to the original reading, which he readily obtained from him (Brøndum-Nielsen 1923: 116f.; Antikvarisk-Topografisk Arkiv in The National Museum).

**þorkæl: onondarsun
austmaþrafruha
landebygþe(:)þe(n)
a:sap:fyst**

The inscription (Fig. 3) has several bind-runes **or on ar un au ap an** and the division marks mostly consist of three dots. I have not myself seen the inscription, but in connection with the Viking Congress in 2000 the Swedish runologist Henrik Williams a. o. was able to make investigations, which in general confirmed the earlier reading. Williams, however, would read the last rune in the third line as a short-twig-s instead of **(n)** although **s** for linguistic reasons is rather problematic. However, the reading as **(:)þe(n)** was confirmed by Mikkjal D. á Ryggi after a new investigation in better light instead of his original reading of the end of the third line as **sþe** (Antikvarisk-Topografisk Arkiv in The National Museum; Brøndum-Nielsen 1923: 117). This supports the reading as **þe(n)la**.



Fig. 3: The Sandavágur stone. Detail. The inscription. Photo Føroya Fornminnisavnn.

The use of the reversed forms of rune 4, **ᚱ** and rune 13, **ᚹ**, seems to have had a rather strong position in the Western Realm (Seim 1998: 77). They and the original short-twig variant of **h** with a dot instead of crossing twigs are characteristic of the (early) Viking-Age inscriptions in Jæren in Norway and the Isle of Man (though generally we find a long-branch **m** in the Manx inscriptions) (Page 1983: 141). They are used for instance on the Iona stone, probably from the latter part of the tenth century — it has no **h** and **m** — (Liestøl 1983: 85-93). In the Greenland Narsaq futhark, which has long-branch variants of **h** and **m**, rune 4 is **ᚱ** and rune 13 **ᚱ**, probably around the millennium (Stoklund 1993: 47-50). A rather new ninth- or tenth-century find from northwest England, the Penrith penannular brooch, has a futhark with 'dotted **h**' and long branch **m** (Page 1990: 13).

FR 5. The Skúvoy cross-stone is no doubt a fragment of a Medieval grave-slab. In 1982 after road construction works, a fragment of a cross-slab of dark basalt (ca. 25 x ca. 17 x ca. 7 cm) was found on the beach of Skúvoy (Arge 1982: 3f.). It carried a fragmentary and very worn inscription with c. 3 cm tall runes in three lines, probably on the upper right side of a part of an outlined incised cross with slightly splayed arms (Fig. 6 and 7). I investigated the Skúvoy stone in 1990 and to my opinion it is impossible to tell how much of the inscription has been lost, the upper line might have started on the left side of the cross and the two other lines below might have been divided by the cross and perhaps the left half of them were lost. However, probably the upper top and the right side are more or less preserved so that the end of the lines is rather certain: ...**isli** | ...**gisl(a)** | ...**mer**.

The runes on the Skúvoy stone, which seem to include a dotted **i** (**e**) and **k** (**g**), are doubtless part of a longer Norse inscription. It has been dated to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, there is, however, no safe basis for an interpretation. Personal names like *Gísl(-)*, *Gísl* (perhaps *Gíslaug*) and *Ísleifr* or *Ísleikr* and a dative of the personal pronoun *mér* "me" (in a prayer for the deceased) have been proposed by Jóhan H. Winther Poulsen (cf. Fig. 7; Arge 1982: 4-8). Henrik Williams, however, set forth another tentative proposal after an investigation during the Viking Conference, reading **isli** | **gisl(a)**... | **mer**... taking *me[kti]/mer[ktu]* as a verb in the preterite "marked, wrote". *Ísli Gísla[son] mer[kti]* ... or *Ísli/Íslei[fr] <ok>? + Gísla/Gísla[son] + mer[kti]/mer[ktu]* — "... marked the cross/stone (after NN?)", cf. N154 *merkti* on a door fitting. If so, probably the lines should have continued to the right, which seems very unlikely, unless the cross is turned so that the lines are supposed to start under the right arm and run down parallel with the cross shaft. It is, however, impossible to reconstruct the original shape of the stone as well as the length of the inscription.

This find is interesting, because there has been much discussion about the Faroese cross slabs from the cemetery in Ólansgarður on Skúvoy and elsewhere. These cross stones have been considered possibly to bear witness of an early Celtic settlement. No doubt, however, the new find with its runic inscription belongs in a medieval Norse tradition. There are no inscriptions on the other Faroese cross stones. Owners' marks, however, on the one from Skúvoy, which was taken to the National Museum in 1842, have been interpreted as representing the names of *Brandr* and *Heri*, sons of *Sigmundur Brestisson* (Rafn 1843:7 with reference to Finn Magnúsen; cf. Amundsen 1970: 229; Werner 1991: 129 with references).

FR 6, The Kirkjubøur "bishop's throne" Streymoy. Johs. Sivesind from Borgarsýssel Mu-



Fig. 6: The Skúvoy fragment of a cross stone. Photo: Føroya Fornminnisav.

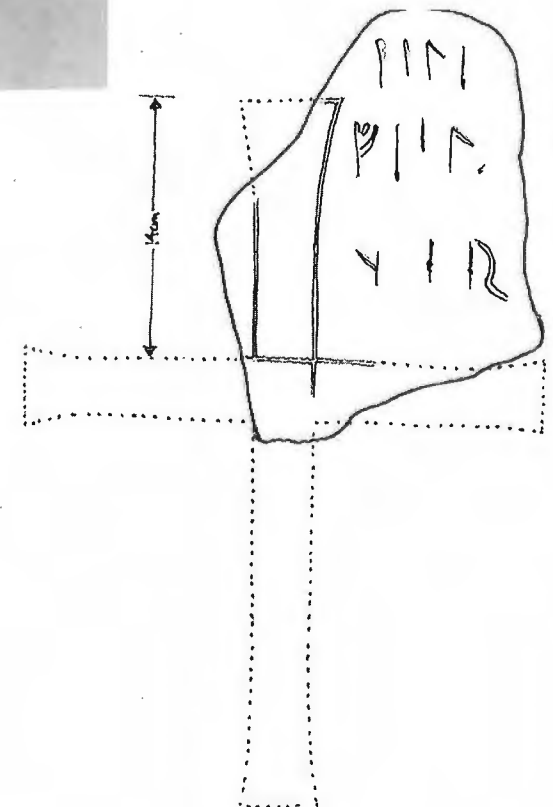


Fig. 7: The Skúvoy fragment. The reconstruction, proposed by Jóhan H. Winther Poulsen, drawing Símun V. Arge.

seum in Sarpsborg in 1980 drew attention to the inscription on the so-called Kirkjubøur 'prelate seat', when it was in the medieval exhibition of the National Museum. Actually, he had already discovered the inscription on the inner left side of the seat c. 20 years earlier. The fact that the runes nearly disappear behind some far more dominating owners' marks has probably caused the inscription to remain undiscovered for such a long time (Stoklund 1983: 3-6). 'The 'prelate seat' or 'bishop's seat' —for a while used as a confessional — and later as the seat for the parish clerk — had together with the famous so-called Kirkjubøur chairs been brought from the parish church, which was rebuilt in 1874, to the National Museum in Copenhagen in 1876, and returned to Føroya Fornminnisavni in 2002. The "Bishop's throne" might originally have been part of an older ciborium-side altar in one of the churches in Kirkjubøur, and its seat *etc* might be of later origin (Krogh 1988: 110f. 113-115). The inscription (Fig. 8), however, seems to be genuine medieval, although it might be discussed whether it is Norwegian or Faroese, how old it is and where it was made.



Fig. 8: The inscription on the Kirkjubøur "bishop's throne". Lennart Larsen photo, the National Museum.

The inscription (g)(e)fasamik seems to have the dotted runes **g**, **e** and **s** (short-twig, "(g)(e)fas owns me". Some more fortuitous scratches could be seen after the runes. Since a secular personal name **gefas** is quite unknown, probably the inscription on this seat from the supposed bishop's church should be interpreted as "Kefas owns me", i.e. "St. Peter owns me", with

a reference to St. John 1.43 where the Aramaic word *Cephas*, 'stone, rock', is used instead of *Petros*, our Peter, which is found in Mark 3.16 and Matth 16.18. The Aramaic form is generally used by St. Paul except in Gal 2.7f. The dotted **k**-runes (**g**) in *Cephas* for /k/ is remarkable, but parallel cases are known, e.g. *kirkia* spelled with two dotted k-runes in the Orphir I inscription, Orkney (Hagland 1993: 371). For many reasons it is very unlikely that (g)(e)fas should refer to Caifas, the high priest of the Jews — a possibility I have mentioned earlier — there could be no doubt that the inscription on the chair refers to St. Peter, the first head of the Roman Catholic church. Cf. inscription 1 in Sakshaug Church, probably consecrated to St. Peter: *Pétr á mik* (N526) (NIyR 5: 100) and the dedication to St. Mary on the key from Sunndal Church (N 447) ... *en María á mik*. (NIyR 4: 276f.).

FR 7. Leirvík stone (í Uppistovubeitinum), Eysturoy (Fig. 9). The little basalt stone was found during an archaeological investigation in 1989 (Arge 1997: 27-44), and investigated by me in 1990. The small, rather irregular, stone with the casual inscription after a little cross + **olafr** "+ Ólafr" might be a gravemarker or a building stone, referring to a deceased person or to St. Ólafr (Stoklund 1991: 4). It might originate from a medieval church site, "Bønhústoft", c. 80-90 m over the finding place (Simun V. Arge personal communication).



Fig. 9: The Leirvík stone from í Uppistovubeitinum. Photo Føroya Fornminnisavni.

FR 8. Leirvík stick (í Uppistovubeitinum), Eysturoy. Another inscription on a little four-sided rune stick was found in 1994 during the continued excavations at this place, quite close to the stone (FR 7), in the floor layers, preliminary dated to the 1100s-1200s. It was examined both before and after conservation (Stoklund 1996). The rather damaged stick with runes on three of its four sides has probably never been any longer (Fig. 10). While the 8.5 cm long inscrip-

tion on the A-side seems to be complete, the rest is only fragmentary. Only a Norse *harðr* could be identified, maybe in an otherwise unknown compound — *vígsharðr* — perhaps a personal name (?) if the inscription gives sense. The runes represent a mixed futhark-type. Most remarkable is the long *h*-rune, *s*, which in the West Norse inscriptions normally represents *c* or *z*. *h* only sporadically represents *s*. It is, however, quite common in Danish (and Swedish) inscriptions.



Fig. 10: The Leirvík rune stick from í Uppistovubeitinum. A-side after conservation. Photo The National Museum, Copenhagen.

A couple of Faroese examples of rune like inscriptions on wood and stone, bind runes or owners' marks combined with crosses, related to those which are very common in Greenland (and Iceland) have been sent to the National Museum in the course of the nineteenth century. An unprovenanced stone, according to Stephens and Brøndum-Nielsen a cross stone from Froðba, Suðuroy, in the National Museum had no inscription, "here and there, however, a later hand has scratcht-in a small rune or two or a bind-rune, within the arms of the rood." (Stephens 1868: 13). Two fragments (CMXXXVI) from the church in Froðba on closer examination obviously did not as expected carry whole inscriptions. A later hand in the Museum register has added: "De indeholde ej hele Indskrifter" (They do not have whole inscriptions). There is, however, a certain confusion concerning these Faroese stones. Apart from Kirkjubøur no rune stones could be found either after an investigation in The National Museum, according to a statement by Erik Moltke in a letter dating from 1967 (Amundsen 1970: 228f.) or in connection with research before the "Return to the Faroe Islands" in 2002. A rather big stone, however, was photographed in 1972, but it was a question whether it was

from the Faroe Islands although it has been thought to be identical with the stone from 1840: 5831 in the register. Luckily in the end of April 2003 the stone known from the photoes was discovered in a remote corner of a store (Fig. 11). According to my investigations it seems to be identical with the above-mentioned fragment CMXXXVI from the church in Froðba, Suðuroy, which was sent to the Museum of Northern Antiquities in 1823. The old measures and the description in the register agree fairly well with the real facts, whereas the shape and measures are quite different from the stone from „Frodebø“, i.e. Froðba, in the register 1840: 5831. According to its measurements, 5831 must have been a more regular stone (basalt or sandstone?), cf. the drawing (Magnusen 1841: 658, Tab. XIV Fig. 3). Probably the incisions on this stone were not runic, although Finn Magnusen considered that he was able to decipher some complicated bindrunes. These, he believed, were owners' marks or the names or of some of the most famous persons from the landnám-period (Magnusen 1841: 556-59), others have said „krimskrams“ (scrawl) (cf. Winther 1875: 155-157). According to Pløyen's original report of his search for rune stones in Froðba, he bought this stone, which was sitting in a byre. It was told, however, that it had been found in the earth (Magnusen 1841: 557).

FR 9. The in 2003 rediscovered Froðba stone, Suðuroy (Fig. 11) is no re-used rune stone. Its surface is full of incised graffito-like scratches, crosses and other symbols, owners' marks, rune-like scratches as well as a few runes, like *lini* in the upper part, *?arkr* and *(t)a(i)* in the lower right part of the surface, *fu* on the adjoining side. No interpretation could be given, it is quite obvious, however, that the incisions on this stone belong in a social context with a knowledge of runes, although they are rather impossible to date and very likely not medieval. Probably they were made during a rather long period while the stone was sitting in the churchwall near the entrance.



Fig. 11: Stone from Froðba. Photo John Lee. The National Museum 2003.

Sverri Dahl has published a late – or post medieval tombstone from Fámjín, Suðuroy, repeating the same initials in runes and letters, probably a result of a learned interest in runes as a kind of antiquarian object in the later part of the 1500s or c. 1600 (Dahl 1953: 36-44). On a little chest (kistil) from Sørvág (Vágar), now in Føroya Fornminnisavni, the alphabet (a-u) has been written in runes and dated Anno 1695 G.I.S. (Arge 1982: 29). The two runes **ak** (or rune-like signs) that some years ago were discovered on a stone in Sandavágur, I have preferred not to count among the proper inscriptions.

A mangle roller with a runic inscription has nothing to do with the genuine medieval Faroese tradition. It was washed ashore on the Faroe Islands, but is no doubt of Icelandic origin: a so-called *trafakestli* probably from the 18th century (cf. Bæksted 1942: 230f.).

However, a late medieval tradition of runic literacy ought to be mentioned. In connection with the attempted canonisation of the Faroese bishop Erlendr (bishop 1268-1308), according to a copy of a letter from the later bishop Johannes Teutonicus, which was discovered in *Archbishop Henrik Kalteisen's Letter Book* (Bugge 1899), a long Latin rune-legend of bishop Erlendr's life was found in his grave at the exhumation in 1420, originally written or engraved on a leaden tablet with *málrúnar*, but translated and rendered in Latin letters. No doubt, Brøndum-Nielsen is right in considering this to be "a pious fraud". It probably never existed ((Brøndum-Nielsen 1923: 111f.; Krogh 1988: 79-84). Although more runic inscriptions on lead have appeared since 1923, they generally belong to the religious/magic, apotropaic sphere, there are no examples of runic obituary lead plates. It is, however, a noteworthy fact that such a story could be told about a runic documentation in *málrúnar*. This testifies to the existence of a certain – probably learned – late medieval notion of runic literacy in the Northern world. A later learned runic tradition based on the printed works of Ole Worm can be traced in a letter from 1691 by the bailiff Peder Jessen (Amundsen 1997: 230f with references).

Closing remarks

Although we cannot tell which purposes the Leirvík stick and other loose objects with runes were meant to serve, the inscriptions document that the runes were known and used on the Faroe Islands, as is the case in the other areas west of the sea as well as in the Scandinavian homelands. The finds from the archaeological excavations during these recent years tell us that runes in different variants were written not only on stones but also on small implements of wood and bone. The Faroese rune finds show a continuing living tradition of this sort of writing, extending from the landnam period to medieval times. It corresponds to what we find in the Scandinavian homelands, mainly, generally in an urban context (cf. also Dublin), but we also meet with it in the Greenland farmsteads. In many ways the Greenland inscriptions could be looked upon as a sort of missing link in the discussion of the existence of a continued living runic tradition in the Norse colonies. Anders Bæksted for instance doubted that a strong old runic tradition had been handed down in Iceland. He would explain the rather late medieval Icelandic inscriptions as the result of a new, learned revival (Bæksted 1942: 20) (for a contrary view, see Hagland 1989: 100f.). Recently, Michael Barnes has also argued against the existence of a strong tradition of indigenous runic culture in Iceland and in the islands of the North Atlantic (Barnes 1994: 41, 155). This opinion seems to be contradicted by the many Greenland finds, which testify to such a tradition, currently influenced from outside, but also with local peculiarities such as the preference for the so-called Green-

land **r**-rune. The Faroese – as well as new Icelandic finds also tend to close the gap in the runic tradition.

In my opinion runic writing could be seen as a common cultural feature binding the communities in the Northern world together during a long period, developing in accordance with the changes in the homeland and elsewhere, taking up new ways of using the graphs and creating new variants. This applies to the Faroese development too. Presumably also new trends were taken over, such as a growing tendency to create complicated bindrunes for marking objects, or the use of runes in graffiti-like-inscriptions. In later time the Faroe Islands runes obviously might be used in particular for magical purposes, as met with in Iceland.

As already mentioned, it was noted about the stone from Froðba that it had been dug out from deep in the earth before it was placed in the wall of a byre, where it was found. This is well in accordance with a long and strong tradition in the islands about buried rune stones. They were said to have been hidden in the earth because the clergymen had told people to bury all rune stones as heathen abominations. There was a tradition linking runes and magic: rune-bound fields, runes in houses for protection, for instance against landslides (Arge 1982: 10). Obviously, during the nineteenth century there were great expectations of finding quite a lot of rune stones. Thus in 1821 the geologist J.G. Forchhammer visited Múla on Bordoy – which at that time was not easy because of the difficult landing place – to investigate the *Múla Runastein*. It turned out not to be a rune stone at all, merely weathered rune-like (Forchhammer 1927: 51). However, according to the records of Jóannes av Skarði in 1958 a living tradition of a buried serpent hiding gold under this stone still existed.

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Chapter 12

The Viking-Age Gold and Silver of the North Atlantic Region

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This survey of the non-numismatic finds of gold and silver artefacts, of Viking-age to Late Norse date (c.850-1200), found in the North Atlantic region is based on my catalogue of *The Viking-Age Gold and Silver of Scotland (AD 850-1100)*, published in 1995, but it extends its geographical scope from the Shetland Islands to Greenland and North America, by way of the Faroes and Iceland. It includes all the material known to me from hoards and graves, as well as both single-finds from settlement-sites and stray-finds, discovered up to the end of 2002. Firstly, however, it seems desirable to update the Scottish catalogue by reference to new finds, as also with information that has come to light concerning some old finds.

Scandinavian Scotland

In 1995, I discussed a total of thirty-four lost and surviving hoards, and twenty-five single-finds of silver and gold ornaments, found within the modern kingdom of Scotland, as well as eight gold finger-rings of Late Norse or uncertain date. There is, however, nothing very precise about these figures; for instance, it has been suggested by Mark Blackburn (*Numismatic Circular*, April 1996) that Michael Metcalf and myself were most probably wrong to have divided the 1780 Tíree hoard into two finds, one from 1780 and the other from 1782 (Graham-Campbell 1995: 97-9, nos. 4 & 7). Then there is the problem presented by the two mixed hoards from the parish of Dunrossness in Shetland (*ibid.*, 103, nos. 11 & 16); might they not also represent one find rather than two? Or perhaps there was just the one hoard (no. 11) and a stray-find of a single coin (no. 16), as has been suggested to me by Gareth Williams (but see below, for further discussion).

It remains possible that the two complete Hiberno-Scandinavian broad band arm-rings in the British Museum, with a presumed Scottish provenance, might have been found in Ireland (Graham-Campbell 1995: 105-7, no. 21, pl. 7). However, this matter has become more complicated since my recognition (previously unpublished) that one of the lead arm-ring copies in the National Museum of Ireland, which John Sheehan and myself suggested are of Hiberno-Scandinavian rings that might also have formed part of this coinless hoard (Graham-Campbell and Sheehan 1995: no. 14), is in fact a copy of an arm-ring in the Nelson Collection (Liverpool Museum) which has a nineteenth-century Oxfordshire provenance (Graham-Campbell 1992: 10).

On the other hand, I had overlooked the following report, in *The Scots Magazine* (for 1767), to a lost coin-hoard being 'dug up' on St Kilda:

Edinburgh, May 11. We hear from Glasgow, that some fishermen lately dug up on the island of St Kilda, two antique urns, containing a quantity of Danish silver coin, which by the inscription appears to have lain there upwards of 1800 years.

It has naturally to be assumed that '1800 years' is a misprint for '800', and an eighteenth-century description of the coins as being 'Danish' should not necessarily be taken literally (Graham-Campbell forthcoming, a), even though the coins in question might well have been of Cnut.

Turning to single-finds of ornaments: in 1999, a band-shaped silver arm-ring, with two rows of stamped decoration and twisted ends was found at Ardskenish, on the Hebridean island of Colonsay (Graham-Campbell forthcoming, b), while two relevant finds from the excavations of the monastic site at Whithorn, in south-west Scotland, have been published (Hill 1997). One is a terminal fragment of a plain penannular silver arm-ring in the form of a standard piece of Scottish 'ring-money' (Fig. 1); the other is a complete example (Fig. 2), except that it appears to be a contemporary fake, given that it is made of base metal with a silver coating (Graham-Campbell 2001a: 27-8, figs. 17-18).

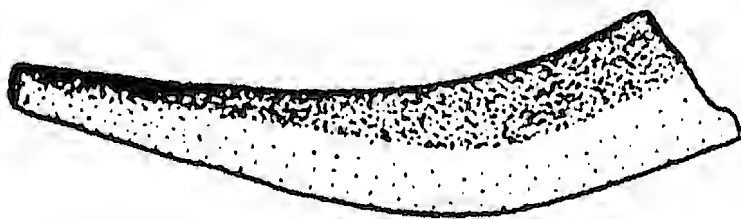


Fig. 1: Cut terminal fragment of silver 'ring-money' found at Whithorn, Galloway (after Hill 1997). (JGC-fig1.tif)

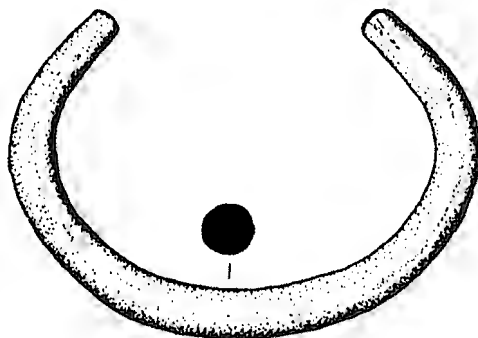


Fig. 2: Silver-plated 'ring-money' found at Whithorn, Galloway (after Hill 1997). (JGC-fig2.tif)

Returning to old finds, now lost, I have come across three further references to gold rings that I would have included in my catalogue had I known about them at the time, two of which are from Orkney. One of these rings was discovered shortly before 1796, when the original *Statistical Account of Scotland* (xvii, 237) was published. In this, the Revd George Barry reported that, in 'a subterraneous building of a singular nature' near Clifffdale, on Shapinsay, there had been found (as quoted in Kirkness 1928: 160):

a gold ring of an uncommon construction. The outside of that ring was broad and large, composed as it were of three cords twisted or plaited together; the inside was much narrower, and pretty well fitted for the use of the finger. No inscription whatever appeared on any part of it; and at the joining, instead of being soldered, it seemed to have been beaten together with a hammer.

This is a well-observed description of what was surely a Viking-age gold finger-ring, similar to the extant three-rod examples from both the 'Hebrides' and Stenness, Orkney, gold hoards (Graham-Campbell 1995: 127-9, 130-1, nos. 25 & 27, pl. 50).

There is also an eighteenth-century report, by the Revd George Low (1778), of 'a Gold ring encircling a thigh bone' in one of a number of burials recently uncovered 'on the Links at Trenaby', an area of Viking-age burial at Pierowall, on Westray (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 129-30, fig. 7.8). Even if one must take the reference to 'a thigh bone' with a pinch of salt, gold and silver rings are known from other graves in the Northern Isles: from Shetland, there is the well-known (if lost) silver arm-ring from a woman's grave at Clibberswick, on Unst; and, from Orkney, a (lost) gold ring is on record from a grave at Colli Ness, on Sanday (Graham-Campbell 1995: 154-5, no. S4, pl. 71,b, & 165, no. U1).

The last gold ring for mention is a lost finger-ring, 'dug up a few years since [pre-1846] on the field of Bannockburn', in central Scotland; it seemingly 'resembled' one that 'is reported to have been found on the field of Floddon', in northern England (*Archaeological Journal* iii (1846), 269). Given that the latter ring is from just over the modern border between Scotland and England – and is known from a nineteenth-century illustration (Fig. 3), it should at least have been mentioned in my catalogue because its form is close to that of the Late Norse gold finger-ring, of plaited rods, that formed part of the small coinless hoard found on Iona, in St Ronan's Church, in 1923 (Graham-Campbell 1995: 166-7, no. U7, pl. 73,k). The lost Bannockburn ring should therefore be attributed to an eleventh/twelfth-century date, given that such plaited/twisted-rings do not seem to have continued in fashion into the following century (*ibid.*, 55-6).



Fig. 3: Gold finger-ring 'reported to have been found' on Flodden Field, Northumberland (after *Archaeological Journal* 1846). (JGC-fig3.tif)

This is not the place to update the hand-list of single-finds of coins from Scotland prepared for me by Donal Bateson (Graham-Campbell 1995: 86-7),¹ but it is important to mention the recent finds of eleventh-century Hiberno-Norse pennies in the excavations of St Ronan's Church, Iona (O'Sullivan 1994: 340, no. 292), and at Whithorn (Hill 1997: 345, no. 65). These finds are particularly worthy of note as part of the gradually accumulating evidence for the presence of these coins in Scotland. When Michael Dolley published his pioneering study of the Hiberno-Norse coinage of Dublin, in 1966, there was only the one silver hoard with a Scottish provenance known to contain such coins: that from Inch Kenneth, off Mull (Graham-Campbell 1995: 100, no. 10). This contained coins of Phase I (c.995-1020) that demonstrate, in Michael Metcalf's words, 'an outflow towards the Hebrides at a very early stage in the Dublin series' (*ibid.*, 23).

Dolley interpreted this apparent lack of finds from Scotland as representing a severance, or at least a major diminution, of contacts between Dublin, Scotland and Norway (1966: 37, 40). This conclusion doubtless influenced Robert Stevenson in the preparation of his sylloge volume for Scotland (published in 1966), for he chose to omit from it an unprovenanced parcel of four Hiberno-Norse coins, which had been acquired by the National Museum of Antiquities at an unknown date (Graham-Campbell 1995: 85, no. E5), on the grounds that it was 'possibly not [a] Scottish' find (Stevenson 1966: xi). Since then, however, a further hoard containing Hiberno-Norse (Phase II) coins has been found in Scotland, at Dull in Perthshire (Graham-Campbell 1995: 152, no. 34), and an old find (1832) has been recognised from Fife, apparently consisting of Phase III coins (*ibid.*, 102, no. 13). In addition, there are now two coins known from Whithorn, an old find (Phase I) and the new one of Phase III (Elizabeth Pirie in Hill 1997: 335-6), as well as the new find from Iona, probably also of Phase III (c.1035-55). Thus, forty years on, the overall picture has come to look somewhat different than it did to Dolley.

At the same time, there exists the need to explain the seemingly large quantity of silver 'ring-money' circulating during the eleventh century in Scandinavian Scotland (Kruse 1993: 190), if the outflow of silver northwards had ceased – for a supply of coins would have been necessary for recycling as bullion in the form of these plain arm-rings. In addition, finds of 'ring-money' from both the Isle of Man and Ireland provide further evidence (in reverse) to support the notion of continuing economic contact between these two regions of Scandinavian settlement during the eleventh century (Graham-Campbell 1995: 57-9).

The Shetland and Faroe Islands

The nature and distribution of the Norse settlement of Shetland, with its mixed farming/fishing economy, has several times been compared with that of the Faroes (e.g. Small 1968; Manson 1978; MacGregor 1984; Hansen 1996), and so it seems worth pursuing this comparison, for the first time in print, with regard to the evidence of silver and gold finds. To summarise for Shetland (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 65):

There are no ninth- or tenth-century Viking-type silver hoards from Shetland, with the single late exception of that from Quendale, Mainland, which was deposited c.991-1000 [Graham-Campbell 1995: 100-1, no. 11, pl. 5]. All of its contents, other than half-a-dozen coins, are now lost, but it seems mainly to have consisted of 'ring-money' and hack-silver. A second hoard, of late eleventh-century date, has also been postulated from the same parish of Dunrossness [*ibid.*, 103, no. 16], but there is little enough for now to

demonstrate its former existence, other than a coin of King Harald Hardrada of Norway, which is now in Copenhagen.

Apart from this Norwegian coin (Skaare 1976: 178, no. 186), nothing else is known to have survived from this find (hence the suggestion, above, that it might have been a stray-find), even though it was said to have consisted of 'many similar [coins] and several cut-up arm-rings' (Graham-Campbell 1995: 103). Just recently, however, Jørgen Steen Jensen has proposed that three early medieval Norwegian coins in the trays of The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, in Copenhagen, might also have had their origins in this hoard (2004, 87-91). On the other hand, there are two single-finds known from Shetland, both of which are Anglo-Saxon pennies: a fragmentary coin of Æthelred II (979-85) from the settlement at Jarlshof (Graham-Campbell 1995: 86, no. A14); and a mid-tenth-century cut halfpenny of Athelstan, recently excavated from the settlement at Old Scatness (Bond 1998: 84-5, pl. 14).²

The contents of the Quendale hoard have been summarised as follows (Graham-Campbell 1995: 101):

A substantial mixed hoard comprising a small number of Anglo-Saxon coins (described both as 'some' and a 'few'), with six (or possibly seven) pieces of 'ring-money', as well as 'some' hack-silver, consisting in part (or all?) of 'ring-money' fragments. The six complete rings will have weighed together in the region of nine ounces (c250gm). Container: a cattle horn, wrapped in cloth.

In addition to these two mixed hoards and two single-finds of coins from Shetland:

There are two fine gold rings, an arm-ring from Oxna and a finger-ring from Whalsay, which are both single-finds, as is a once magnificent silver 'thistle-brooch', of the tenth-century type which is otherwise known only in Scotland from the Skaill [Orkney] hoard; this was found on the hill above Gulberwick Bay, on the Mainland. Amongst the rich and varied material from the multi-period settlement site of Jarlshof, by Sumburgh Head, there are [two further] single-finds of silver dating from the tenth to eleventh centuries: a large stick-pin (with Hiberno-Norse parallels), found in the ruined brooch, and a piece of 'ring-money' which appears to have been hidden in a drain belonging to House I (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998: 65).

This summary overlooks the presence of the plain silver arm-ring (now lost) in the female Norse grave from Clibberswick on Unst (as noted above).

No gold rings or silver dress-fasteners are known from the Faroes; in fact, there is not even a single stray-find, such as the few just listed from Shetland, but then Shetland itself is the poor relation to Orkney in terms of wealth measured in Viking-age silver and gold. Otherwise, however, the comparison holds good, given that one mixed hoard is known from the Faroes, as well as excavated finds of silver from both a settlement-site and a pagan Norse cemetery.

The one Faroese silver hoard was found, in 1863, by a grave-digger in the south-eastern corner of the churchyard at Sandur, on Sandoy (Steen Jensen 2004). Its larger part consists of a compact group of some eighty coins (mostly German and English, but including one Hiberno-Norse from c.1035), which were assembled in the mid-eleventh century, most probably in Norway. To this parcel was added a small group of seventeen Norwegian coins, dating from

the 1080s and 1090s; these provide a *terminus post quem* of c.1093 for the deposition of the hoard. On discovery, the ninety-eight coins formed 'en Klump Metal' (Herbst 1863: 377), together with a single piece of hack-silver in the form of a (lost) arm-ring fragment, described by Herbst (*ibid.*, 393-3) as follows:³

et eneste Stykke af et Smykke, nemlig et 7" langt Brudstykke af et ?" bredt Sölvbaand, paa hvis ene Side der langs begge Kanterne er indslaaet trekantede Stempler med tre Punkter i hver Trekant. Det har maaskee hørt til et Armbaand af lignende Slags som det fra Vaalse Fundet, der er afbildet i AnO. 1842-1843 Tab. II fig. 21. [reproduced here as Fig. 4].



Fig. 4: Silver arm-ring from the Vaalse hoard, Falster (after Aarbøger 1842-43). (JGC-fig4.tif)

The Vaalse hoard, from the Danish island of Falster, contained c.700 coins giving a *terminus post quem* for its deposition of c.991. A fragment of a similar narrow band arm-ring, but with simpler ornament (two rows of punched dots), is present in a Scottish hoard of approximately the same date (deposited c.990-1040), from Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis (Graham-Campbell 1995: 149-50, no. 33:27, pl. 70,c). On the other hand, the unpublished arm-ring of the same type from Colonsay (noted above) shares the use of a triangular stamp containing three pellets with the lost Sandur fragment and the Vaalse ring.

Attention must also be drawn to a fragment of this type of annular narrow-band arm-ring from the coinless hoard found at Miðhús, in Iceland, decorated with two rows of a heart-shaped stamp containing three pellets (Magnússon 1980: 12, no. 7, pl. 3). In addition, there is one such complete arm-ring known from Iceland, as a stray-find; in this case, the two rows of ornament are more elaborate, both consisting of a combination of two stamps: a ring-and-dot and a single pellet-in-triangle (Eldjárn 2000: 391, figs. 311-12).

On the other hand, had the Sandur hoard been assembled in Scandinavian Scotland during the eleventh century, rather than deriving from Norway as suggested by Jonsson, the type of arm-ring represented in the hoard would then, in all probability, have taken the form of a piece of 'ring-money', as in the Quendale hoard from Shetland (Graham-Campbell 1995: 57-

9), and as are known in Iceland from both the Sandmúli (Fig. 6) and Miðhús hoards (see below).

Excavation in Sandur churchyard in 1972, as described by Símon Arge and Niels Hartmann (1990: 6, and fig. 5),

uncovered the remains of a finely paved stone floor, interpreted by the excavator as the paved floor of a house of a Viking Age longhouse type. Furthermore, the excavator considers it likely that the coin hoard was originally buried beneath the same floor (Krogh 1975).

Arge and Hartmann, however, suggest (1990: 8-9) that this area of flagged paving might 'form part of another feature altogether' and needs further investigation.

The hoard-owning occupants of the eleventh-century settlement at Sandur were responsible for building the first church there, described by Arge and Hartmann (1990: 6) as 'a small single-aisled stave church, as we know them from Norway, and dated to the 11th century'. It will, however, have been their ancestors who, during the tenth century, buried their dead in an adjacent cemetery; this is of unknown size, although a dozen or so graves have been located of which seven were excavated in 1989/90 (*ibid.*, 9-20, figs. 8-13). For the most part, these are clothed burials, in stone-marked graves, of both men and women, although bone preservation was poor and not all the bodies could be aged or sexed. Three of these burials are of relevance for present purposes, given that they contained silver or silver ornamented artefacts.

Grave K5A contained the remains of a young woman, with a necklace consisting of three amber and two glass beads, a bone comb and a knife, together with 'what may be the remains of a piece of silver jewellery' (*ibid.*, 14). Be that as it may, her knife-handle certainly had an ornamental binding of silver wire, as did that in the burial of a young man (Grave J6B) who also had a leather purse containing lead weights and 'three small fragments of silver [wire] as well as a number of corroded bronze fragments' (*ibid.*, 11). More importantly, the woman in Grave K5A was buried with 'a clipped silver coin' (*ibid.*, 15, 17-18, fig. 14). This is now identified as a late ninth-century imitation of an Abbasid-style dirhem, from the lower Volga, which should have reached Denmark or Norway before 925 (see Blackburn, in this volume; cf. Arge & Hartmann 1990: 18). It is therefore suggestive of burial in the Faroes sometime during the mid-tenth century, as can be paralleled by the deposition of a cut halfpenny of Eadmund (939-46) in a male grave at Buckquoy, Orkney (Ritchie 1977: 190-1), and by fragmentary coins in two or three graves of this period from Iceland (see below).

A young person, most probably a woman, was buried (in Grave K5D) with a necklace of six beads (two amber, three bone and one blue glass), a knife and a silver band-shaped finger-ring, with twisted ends (Arge & Hartmann 1990: 15). This ring is well paralleled by that found in a female Icelandic burial (Grave no. 40:4), at Hafurbjarnarstaðir (Eldjárn 2000: fig. 313).

It is surely remarkable, when seen against the comparative evidence of the Viking-age burials of both Scotland and Iceland, that as many as three out of these seven Faroese graves, in a single cemetery, should have contained silver and/or silver ornamented artefacts, including one coin fragment, but then Sandur is demonstrably a high-status settlement-site.

The only other Faroese settlement-site to have produced silver find(s) is, somewhat unexpectedly, not a primary farm, but a ninth- to eleventh-century shieling at Argisbrekka, on

Eysturoy, excavated by Ditlev Mahler (1991; 1993). The relevant artefacts consist of a small ring of twisted silver wires, and an annular band finger-ring that is made from either silver or copper alloy, but which has yet to be analysed (1993: 494).

Iceland

Twelve Icelandic graves are known to have contained artefacts made from silver or gold out of a total of over 316 (as listed by Adolf Friðriksson, in his English contribution to *Eldjárn 2000*, where they are numbered as follows):

- 1:2 'twisted wire arm-ring of copper alloy (and possibly silver)'
- 3:3 'three silver wire buttons, gold thread' [with a 'gold wire button' recovered subsequently from the same eroding cemetery site; fig. 314] (Fig. 5)
- 37 'silver wire' [a small hank; fig. 28]
- 40:4 'silver finger-ring' [fig. 313]
- 45 'two Cufic coins (AD 917-18 and 926-27)' [= pendants; figs. 33 & 301]
- 54:1 'silver Thor's hammer ... fragment of Cufic coin (a dirhem [cut-down], probably c. 870-930 AD)' [= both pendants; fig. 44]
- 74:1-6 'a silver object (now lost)'
- 79:3 'fragment of silver ring'
- 84 'a silver needle or pin' [lost]
- 94 'a silver ring and a silver coin' [both now lost: coin = Æthelred, 924-40]
- 98:2 'two silver coin fragments [Cufic], silver-thread'
- 144 'coin (955-75 AD)' [= fragment of Eadwig, 955-59].



Fig. 5: Gold wire ball (11556) and three of silver (9089,a-c), from Iceland (NMI: ph. James Graham-Campbell). (JGC-fig5.tif)

Other than the coins, with their implications for the dating of the burials in question, the most important – because diagnostic – items in this list are the four balls of silver and gold wire (Fig. 5), identified as ‘buttons’, from the cemetery of which Grave 3:3 forms part, at Kápa á Almenningum, Vestur-Eyjafjallahreppur (Eldjárn 2000: 46-9, 392, fig. 314). There are two finds of these wire balls known from Ireland: a single-find from a tenth-century context in the Dublin excavations; with several larger, and more conical, examples forming part of an unpublished silver hoard found in Dunmore Cave, Co. Kilkenny, where it was deposited in the 970s.⁴ In addition, there are two tenth-century grave-finds (one containing a minimum of eighteen silver balls, and the other of four) in the cemetery on St Patrick’s Isle, Peel, Isle of Man; from their position in these two burials, they have been interpreted as cloak tassels (Graham-Campbell 2002: 88-9, Graves II & III, pl. 20, fig. 21; Grave II also contained a coin of Eadmund, 939-46). My discussion of these objects concluded with the suggestion (*ibid.*, 89) that:

the wire balls found in the Irish Sea area and Iceland, and possibly the garments to which they were attached, are most likely to be of English workmanship.

In addition to these grave-finds, seven stray-finds of gold and silver ornaments are known from Iceland (in Eldjárn 2000):

- Stóra-Sandfell: silver Borre-style disc brooch (*ibid.*, 369-70, figs. 264-5)
- unprovenanced: silver Borre-style cruciform pendant (*ibid.*, 382-3, figs. 295-6)
- Foss: silver cruciform ‘Thor’s hammer’ pendant (*ibid.*, 383-5, figs. 297-8)
- unprovenanced (?Skagafjörður): silver band arm-ring (*ibid.*, 391, figs. 311-12)
- Skarð: gold finger-ring (*ibid.*, 392: lost)
- Valþjófsstaðir: silver looped coin-pendant (*ibid.*, 426: see below for coin)
- Tröllaskógur: silver Urnes-style openwork brooch (*ibid.*, 461, figs. 382-3).

In addition to the seven coins or fragments from the five graves noted above, there are seven stray-finds of Viking-age silver coins on record from Iceland, including the one listed above as a looped pendant (*ibid.*, 423-6; Blackburn & Jonsson 1981: 229, Appendix V, nos. I6 & I8-9):

- Flagbjarnarholt (no. I6): Æthelred II (*t.p.q.* 997)
- Hrossatungur: Otto III/Adelheid (c.983-c.1002)
- Þingvellir (no. I8): Cnut (*t.p.q.* 1018)
- Þingvellir: Scandinavian Imitation (1065-80)
- Bessastaðir: Norwegian *Triquetra* penny (1080-95)
- Valþjófsstaðir (no. I9): Edward the Confessor (*t.p.q.* 1053) [= pendant]
- Þórarinsstaðir: Harthacnut (1035-42) or Magnus the Good (1042-47).

‘A somewhat uncertain find’ (Skaare 1976: 177) of three coins was made at Mosfell, in 1725 (Eldjárn 2000: 425-6; Blackburn & Jonsson 1981: 229, no. I2), of which one at least appears to be of Anlaf Guthfrithsson, Viking king of York (with a *terminus post quem* of 939), although Mark Blackburn suggested in his paper at the Congress (in this volume) that these might rather be dated to the eleventh century than earlier. There are, however, two certain eleventh-century coin hoards (both with mixed contents) from Iceland, as well as two coinless hoards (listed and illustrated in Eldjárn 2000: 423-6, figs. 354-7):

Gaulverjabær (wt. 495.81 g): this consisted of some 360 coins, the most numerous of which are Anglo-Saxon, from no particular region, with a clear cut-off date of c.1002/03, with slightly fewer coming from German mints that continue to c.1010 (see Anton Holt, in this volume). This suggests that this is another savings hoard of the type already encountered in the Faroes, at Sandur, that was assembled, initially at any rate, in Norway. The fact that there are also eight Scandinavian imitations of Anglo-Saxon coins, four coins of Olof of Sweden (994-1022) and five half-bracteates of Harald Bluetooth in this hoard supports this Scandinavian connection, despite the presence of two Hiberno-Norse coins (of Phase I); the remains of five Cufic coins are also known (with a date-range of 869/70 to 913/42). Nine of the coins are recorded as having been pierced for suspension, but none is fitted with a loop. In, addition, there are the cut and broken remains of three 'flans', or circular blanks, which show no signs of having been actual coins, as well as a broken fragment of a sheet silver ornament with zig-zag decoration. A deposition date of c.1010-15 has been suggested (Eldjárn 2000: 425).

Keta (wt. 135 g): this is a much smaller hoard, consisting for the most part of hack-silver together with the remains of five coins (Eldjárn 2000: 426); four of these are Cufic (one in two pieces) and one is German (Otto-Adelheid, c.1000). The latter indicates that the hoard would have been deposited in the eleventh century, and it is thus broadly contemporary with the *Gaulverjabær* hoard, just described. The obvious difference from the latter is, of course, the much greater hack-silver content of the *Keta* hoard, amounting to a total of thirty-five fragments (*ibid.*, fig. 355). These have yet to be published in detail, but they look most probably Scandinavian in origin, including a terminal fragment of a penannular brooch, with stamped decoration (cf. Stenberger 1947: pl. 146,3). The other major difference between these two hoards (as pointed out to me by Mark Blackburn) is that the Cufic coins in *Keta* (dating from 883/4 to 913/42) represent 80 per cent of the total, whereas in *Gaulverjabær* they represent only 1 per cent, a factor which needs to be kept in mind when the hack-silver from *Keta* comes to be fully assessed.

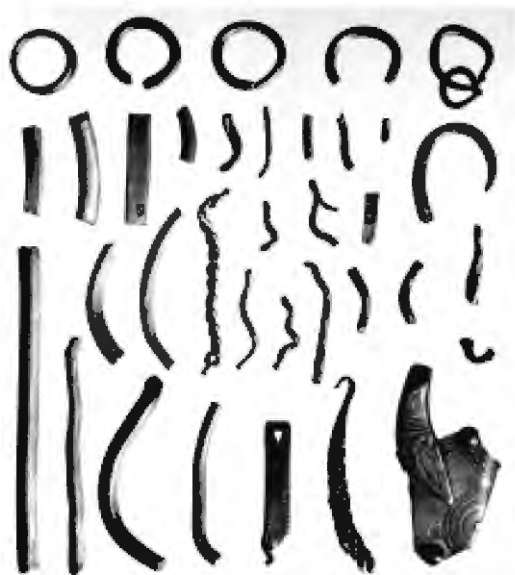


Fig. 6: The coinless silver hoard from Sandmúli, Iceland (NMI: ph. Gísli Gestsson). (JGC-fig6.tif)

Sandmúli (wt. 304 g): this is a coinless hoard (Fig. 6) that consists for the most part of hack-silver, but which also contains some plain finger-rings (Eldjárn 2000: 426, fig. 356; Roesdahl & Wilson 1992: no. 332). There are thirty-six pieces in all of which only one fragment, from a brooch terminal (Fig. 6, bottom right), has so far been subject to detailed discussion and, even so, its incorrect reconstruction in pseudo-penannular form (first published by Matthías Þórðarson in 1909) has recently been reproduced once again (Eldjárn 2000: fig. 272). In fact, as Shetelig correctly determined in the 1930s, the Sandmúli fragment is cut from the terminal of a 'bossed' penannular brooch of a type represented in the British Museum by an unprovenanced example from Ireland (1937: 215, & 219, note 15), which he illustrated on the occasion of his next discussion of this piece (1948: 75-6, fig. 4).⁵

Shetelig's interest in the Sandmúli brooch fragment, apart from highlighting Icelandic connections with the Irish Sea area, centred on the 'most elegant Jellinge animal, finely incised in the blank surface' on its reverse (*ibid.*, 76, fig. 26) which he likened to the 'most exquisite Jellinge ornaments' engraved on some of the 'ball-type' penannular brooches in the Skaill hoard from Orkney (*ibid.*, 98-100). The most recent discussion of this Insular ornament, attributing it to the Mammen style of Viking art, is that in my account of the Skaill hoard, which is accompanied by an enlarged photograph of the reverse of the Sandmúli fragment itself (Graham-Campbell 1995: 41-3, fig. 22).⁶

What has not so far been recognised in print is that there is also a small piece of a 'ball-type' brooch present in the Sandmúli hoard (Fig. 6, right, above the bossed brooch fragment), reduced to a mere 'collar' fragment – cut from a pin-head or terminal – with diagonal hatching on either side of a plain ridge (cf. the related hack-silver fragments in the Skaill hoard: Graham-Campbell 1995: pl. 22). In addition, a massive straight rod, broken at both ends (Fig. 6, bottom left), is most likely from the pin-shaft of another such penannular brooch (cf. that on one of the Skaill brooches: *ibid.*, pl. 17). A further important similarity between the Sandmúli and Skaill hoards is the prevalence of 'ring-money' in both. Further, the presence of an ingot fragment in Sandmúli (Fig. 6, row 2, third from left) is matched by the five fragments (and two complete ingots) in the far larger Skaill hoard (*ibid.*, pl. 47) that consisted of more than one hundred items of bullion and twenty-one coins, with a total weight of over 8 kg (*ibid.*, 34-48, 108-27, no. 24, pls. 8-49).

The deposition of the Skaill hoard is estimated by Metcalf (in Graham-Campbell 1995: 20) as having taken place c.950-70. There is every reason to suppose that the Sandmúli hoard was likewise deposited within these two decades, given the similarities in content between the two hoards and the close stylistic link between the secondary ornament on the bossed penannular brooch fragment and the primary ornament on the Skaill 'ball-type' brooches. Indeed, such a deposition date for the Sandmúli hoard represents a late survival in circulation for such a bossed brooch fragment as hack-silver, given that the latest examples known from coin-dated hoards form part of that deposited c.920 at Goldsborough, in Yorkshire (Graham-Campbell 2001b: 217-18, no. 2, with refs), and that deposited c.935-40 below the Storr Rock, on the Isle of Skye (Graham-Campbell 1995: 144-6, no. 30:3, pl. 67).

Miðhús (wt. 653.5 g): this is both the most recent silver hoard to have been found in Iceland (1980) and by far the largest in weight; it is, however, coinless. As published by Þór Magnússon (1980) it consists of over forty items, including some complete rings, but for the most part it consists of hack-silver, with close parallels to the Sandmúli hoard, including the presence of

twisted-rod rings (if only fragments in Sandmúli). The Miðhús hoard contains a complete example of a piece of 'ring-money' (*ibid.*, no. 6), together with both terminal and other fragments of the same type of plain arm-ring, as well as a couple of plain rod finger-ring fragments (nos. 23 & 24), and the terminal of a small ingot (no. 30).

Although there are no remains of bossed or 'ball-type' brooches in this hoard, it is possible to identify two simple penannular brooch hoops, one of which is complete, with plain terminals (no. 8); this is comparable to a penannular brooch hoop in the Skaill hoard (Graham-Campbell 1995: 113, no. 24:9, pl. 24). The other brooch hoop has stamped decoration, but the whole of one terminal and part of the other has been cut off (no. 9). Likewise so far unidentified is part of an Insular ringed-pin (no. 10), with a polyhedral head that is socketed to take the tapered ends of its (lost) penannular ring. Silver ringed-pins are rare indeed, but this fragment is exactly matched by a complete example in the Skaill hoard (*ibid.*, 117, no. 24:51, pl. 46,a-b), even to the faint remains of a diagonal step-pattern, lightly incised between contour lines, on one face of the flattened lower part its pin-shaft.

Taken as a whole therefore, it may be suggested that the Miðhús hoard is broadly contemporary with the Sandmúli hoard and thus, by reference to the Skaill hoard, may be dated to the second half of the tenth century. The problem remains, however, as to why one of the objects from the hoard, a twisted rod neck-ring (no. 3), is apparently made from three drawn rods of cylindrical form, with a consistent diameter (0.2 cm), the manufacture of which is generally considered to have been beyond the technical capability of a Viking-age silversmith.⁷

Greenland and North America

There are no coins, let alone hoards, known from the Norse settlements on Greenland and Newfoundland. It is, however, only natural to suppose that the perforated coin of the Norwegian king, Olaf Kyrre, from the period c.1065-80 (Skaare 1979), found in a midden on Naskeag Point, overlooking Penobscot and Blue Hill bays, on the central coast of Maine, had crossed the Atlantic to Greenland. It was then presumably carried to either Newfoundland or Labrador where it could have entered the native regional exchange network that also brought Ramah chert from northern Labrador to the occupants of what was a seasonal village of which the major period of occupation dates to the Late Ceramic Period (c.900-1500); there are, however, no other Norse artefacts amongst the many thousands of finds recovered from this site (Steven V. Cox in Fitzhugh & Ward 2000: 206-7).

The only artefact of gold or silver of Viking-age type so far known from the Norse settlements in Greenland is a standard twisted-rod gold finger-ring, found in the bishop's church at Gardar, of eleventh- or twelfth-century date (Roesdahl & Wilson 1992: 316, no. 343; Fitzhugh & Ward 2000: fig. 23.9).⁸

Conclusions

The scarcity of coin finds from the North Atlantic region leads inevitably to the conclusion that coins never served as currency there during the Viking Age (as Mark Blackburn, in this volume). It is clear, however, that silver was reaching Iceland in sufficient quantities during the tenth and eleventh centuries to have been utilised both for personal ornaments and as hack-silver, in the prevailing bullion economy that is better documented archaeologically (for now) in Scandinavian Scotland during these two centuries (Kruse 1993); that is, at least, until the contents of the Sandmúli and Miðhús coinless hoards have been fully published to mod-

ern standards. At any rate, it should be evident from the above review that these two hoards point firmly to tenth-century economic contacts between Iceland and Scandinavian Scotland and/or the Irish Sea region, whereas both the Icelandic coin-hoards – as well as that from the Faroes – demonstrate eleventh-century commercial contact with Norway.

The high quality of the half-dozen single-finds of silver and gold ornaments from the Shetland Isles rather overshadows the smaller number of such artefacts from the Faroes, but the latter are recent excavation finds and await proper appraisal in the full site-reports that have yet to be published. In any case, Shetland would have benefited economically from its ties to Orkney (and the trade in the products of its soapstone quarries), for Orkney has the richest concentration of gold and silver hoards from Scandinavian Scotland (including the two largest: Skaill and Burray), as well as of single-finds (cf. the distribution maps, together with the additional finds noted above, in Graham-Campbell 1995: figs. 10-11).

For the most part, the Norse settlements in Greenland imported economic necessities of life from Europe rather than prestige goods, and so it is scarcely surprising that the one relevant artefact of precious metal – a gold finger-ring from Gardar – should have been found in the bishop's church, located on the site of the largest Norse farm in Greenland.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Símon Arge for information and discussion, during the Congress, about the Viking-age grave-goods from Sandur churchyard, as also the three numismatists whose papers, published in this volume, are referred to above (Mark Blackburn, Anton Holt and Kenneth Jonsson). In addition, I am most grateful to Alison Sheridan for information about the unpublished silver arm-ring from Colonsay in Scotland (Graham-Campbell forthcoming, b).

Sir David Wilson has most kindly read a draft of this text to its advantage; any remaining errors – and all omissions – are my own responsibility.

Figs. 1-2 are reproduced from Peter Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian* (1997), but enlarged to full size (as in Graham-Campbell 2001, figs. 17-18); Fig. 3 from *The Archaeological Journal* iii (1846); and Fig. 4 from *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 1842-43. Figs. 5 and 6 are reproduced by permission of the National Museum of Iceland (Fig. 5: ph. James Graham-Campbell; Fig 6: ph. Gisli Gestsson).

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Notes

- ¹ I am grateful, however, to Mark Blackburn for pointing out to me that this list omits three

imitative solidi of Louis the Pious, one of which (from Elgin, Morayshire) is pierced twice for use as an ornament (Blackburn 2005, A12-14).

- ² The coin of Olaf Kyrre provenanced to Jarlshof by Skaare (1976: 178, no. 187) is in fact from the Brough of Birsay, Orkney (Bateson in Graham-Campbell 1995: 87, no. 22). In this context, it is of interest to note that another coin of Olaf Kyrre has recently been excavated at Bornais on South Uist (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999: 54; Williams & Sharples 2003). This brings the total of Norwegian coins now known from Scandinavian Scotland to four, the other two being both of Harald Hadrada (Skaare 1976: 178, nos. 186 & 188).
- ³ As stated by Steen Jensen (2004: 66), 'Dette lille sølvstykke lykkedes det ikke at identificere under inventariseringen af de færøske sager i slutningen af 1990'erne.'
- ⁴ I am most grateful to Andy Halpin and Ragnall Ó Floinn, of the National Museum of Ireland, for showing me photographs of these wire balls, and for discussing them with me, while they were still undergoing conservation (see now the illustration in Wallace & Ó Floinn 2002: 214, pl. 6:1).
- ⁵ The Sandmúli fragment is B3 in Olav Sverre Johansen's (1973: 121) classification of bossed penannular brooches (but see also Graham-Campbell 1975); the British Museum brooch from Ireland is Johansen B2 (1973: 120, fig. 50).
- ⁶ No completely accurate, full-size, drawing of this ornament has yet been published: that prepared by O'Meadhra from a photograph is inevitably inaccurate in detail (1987: fig. 79), and that newly drawn for *Eldjárn* 2000 was reproduced at such a small scale as to convey no detail at all (fig. 274).
- ⁷ 'Sølvskatten fra Midhus, Island. Analyser af metallegeringer, fremstillingsteknik og typologi' (Nationalmuseet, 1995).
- ⁸ There is a second gold finger-ring known from Gardar, found in an episcopal grave (from c.1200), but this is of medieval (post-Viking) type 'with an oval setting for a stone, now lost' (Jette Arneborg in Roesdahl & Wilson 1992: 61, 316, no. 344).

Chapter 13

Coinage and Contacts in the North Atlantic during the Seventh to Mid-Tenth Centuries

Mark Blackburn

The purpose of this paper is to survey the scarce numismatic evidence for early contacts around the North Atlantic as a contribution to the debate about the use of coins and sea routes before and during the early Viking Age. It will look at coin finds from Norway, Scotland, the Faroes and Iceland over the period of the seventh to mid-tenth centuries.

Seventh-Century Find

The earliest coin find from this area is a Merovingian gold tremissis of the mid-seventh century found at the *wic* of Kaupang, Norway in 2001 (*Kaupang Excavation Project Annual Report* 2001: 19; Rispling, Blackburn and Jonsson forthcoming). It is a coin of the prolific mint of Dorestad – one of the more stylised varieties in the name of the moneyer Madelinus. Only six other Merovingian gold tremisses have been found in Scandinavia, all from what was once Denmark. Five are from the west coast: two from the island of Sylt, one from nearby Föhr, one from Dankirke, near Ribe, and one from the north at Gadegård, near the Limfjord (Metcalf 1996, 400-1). The sixth is a recent find from Jelling in eastern Jutland (Moesgaard and Pol 2003). Three of these were of Dorestad Madelinus types similar to the Kaupang find, one was of Maastricht, one was of an unidentified Frisian mint and the sixth of Périgueux, Dordogne. The Kaupang find therefore fits neatly into a pattern of a coastal distribution up the North Sea littoral, dominated by issues from the Netherlands and in particular Dorestad. The Danish finds are thought to be contemporary, seventh-century deposits, and the same would appear to be the case for the Kaupang find (Blackburn forthcoming b; forthcoming c). It is not worn, nor has it been mounted as an ornament, and it is unlikely that a Merovingian tremissis would have remained in circulation until the Viking Age. Kaupang may only have been a landing point in the seventh century, for the settlement was not established until c.800, but nearby the hall at Huseby was already a high-status centre and the tremissis could have been connected with that. This solitary seventh-century find, then, testifies to coastal contacts to the south.

Eighth-Century Finds

For the eighth century, although there are a number of Umayyad and early Abbasid dirhams

from Norway, these as we shall see are almost certainly ninth-century losses. There is, however, just one coin that is likely to have been lost or deposited in Norway in the eighth century, and that is an Anglo-Saxon 'sceat' of Archbishop Ecgbert of York with the Northumbrian king Eadberht, dating from 737-58. This was a stray find from the shore at Ervik (Sogn og Fjordane), north of Bergen (Skaare 1975: 158, no. 118). It is significant that the coin should be Northumbrian, as these did not circulate in southern England or in the Low Countries to any significant extent (I know of only one find from the Low Countries), so that it is likely to have come directly from Northumbria. Eadberht's coins would probably not have remained in circulation in Northumbria after the Northumbrian coinage reform of c.790, so the Ervik find should have left Northumbria before then, and it is good evidence for some contact between Norway and Northumbria in the eighth century. Two late Anglo-Saxon pennies of Offa of Mercia (757-96) struck c.792-6 found in Norway are best discussed in the context of the early ninth-century coins.

Recent finds from Scotland – the earliest, most northerly pre-Viking coins from the British Isles – provide interesting counterparts to the Ervik coin. There is very little evidence for the presence of coinage in early medieval Scotland before the Viking Age. There are no recorded coin finds from the fifth to seventh centuries, and eighth-century coins are known from only a few sites, which form two distinct groups. In the south-west, at Whithorn (Wigtownshire) – a Northumbrian monastic settlement – excavations have yielded no fewer than 14 eighth-century 'sceattas': 13 of types attributed to York and one East Anglian coin of King Beonna (Pirie 1997; Pirie 2000: 49, 77-8). Nearby, at Barhobble, also an excavated monastic site, another York 'sceat' of the mid-eighth century was found (Pirie 2000: 49). These belong to the Irish Sea area, relating to finds from Carlisle, and with clear links to Northumbria and York in particular.

The second group is an east coast one with finds from Aberlady and Dunbar both on the southern shore of the Firth of Forth. The Aberlady find is a Northumbrian 'sceat' of King Eadbert (737-58) and relates to a similar find from Lindisfarne, some 70km to the south (Pirie 2000: 47). Coastal contact with Northumbria is evident. The Dunbar find is more unusual, for it is a 'sceat' of Series X (the so-called 'Wodan-Monster' type), a Danish issue probably from Ribe (Blackburn 2000). The critical question is whether this should be seen as evidence of direct contact between Scandinavia and lowland Scotland, or whether it came by some other route, e.g. via the east coast of England. The 'sceattas' were an international currency, circulating freely around the North Sea littoral, yet each of the many distinctive types has its own geographical distribution. Coins of Series X, the Dunbar type, have been found prolifically in Denmark and Frisia, and they are reasonably plentiful in southern England (Metcalf 1993-4, II: 291, map), but there are only two finds from north of the Humber (Bonser 1997: 43; Coin Register 1997: no. 81). We cannot rule out the possibility that the coin from Dunbar had circulated in southern England, or even in Northumbria, before travelling north up the east coast. However, on a statistical basis it is much more likely to have been a direct arrival from southern Scandinavia or Frisia, where Series X constitutes a much larger proportion of the coinage in circulation. Coins of Series X were produced c.710-40, and they would not have circulated in England beyond the mid-eighth century. The excavations at Ribe suggest that in Scandinavia they remained in use rather longer, and so if the Dunbar coin came directly across the North Sea it could have arrived during the second half of the eighth century.

More recently, in 1998 another eighth-century 'sceat' was discovered in Martin Carver's

excavations way up on the Tarbat Peninsula in north-east Scotland (Blackburn 1998). It was found next to St Colman's Church, Portmahomack, which appears to have been a sixth-century foundation exhibiting links to Northumbria by the eighth century. The Tarbat find is a good 220 km further north than Dunbar as the crow flies, or more than 300 km as one would sail around the coast. Like the Dunbar coin, the Tarbat find was not produced in England. In this case it comes from the Low Countries, in the area of the Lower Rhine. It is one of the very plentiful varieties of 'sceattas' known as the 'Porcupine' type, named after the enigmatic design on the obverse which summons up connotations of quills bristling from a curved back. Within the 'Porcupine' type (Series E), the Tarbat find belongs to the middle phase dated c. 715-35. As with the Wodan/Monster type, 'Porcupine' 'sceattas' reached England in fair numbers, yet they would not have constituted more than 10% of the currency at any one time (probably rather less), while in the Low Countries they would have been dominant. Statistically, then the chances weigh heavily in favour of the Dunbar and Tarbat coins having been shipped directly from the Continent. Had they been taken from circulation in Southern England, one would have expected to find some 18 English 'sceattas' for every two Continental ones.

It is another question whether the ships from Denmark and Frisia would have crossed the North Sea directly, as they did in the Viking Age, or taken a longer route going south and crossing by the English Channel, before turning north hugging the coast for safety.

Ninth-Century Finds

The late eighth or early ninth century traditionally marks the opening of the Viking Age. Arabic silver dirhams began arriving in Scandinavia from the East, but evidence from Kaupang suggests that they only reached western Scandinavia in any numbers from the mid-ninth century onwards (Blackburn forthcoming b; forthcoming c). The first half of the ninth century seems to be characterised as a period when the little coinage available was almost exclusively western pennies: Carolingian, Anglo-Saxon and Nordic half-bracteates from Hedeby and Ribe.

The discoveries at Kaupang in the 1950s and 1960s were sensational in demonstrating that coinage was available and used in ninth-century Norway; previously the evidence had been minimal. The 27 coin finds from Charlotte Blindheim's excavations were mostly dirhams, with just five Western pennies and one Roman bronze coin. Only nine of the dirhams were identifiable, and they were all of the Abbasid period (750-892). The recent campaign of excavations and surveys by Dagfinn Skre in 2000-2 has quadrupled the number of Viking-age coin finds from the site, and a much higher proportion of the coins are identifiable. There are now 78 identified dirhams of which 69 were struck in the eighth or ninth centuries and nine belong to the tenth century (Rispling, Blackburn and Jonsson forthcoming). There was evidently a significant downturn in commercial activity on the site after 900, and this seems to have more or less ceased by c. 980. There are just six Western coins from the site – three Carolingian, two Anglo-Saxon and one Nordic half-bracteate of the 'Wodan/Monster' type attributed by Metcalf to Ribe – all dating to the period 800-40. The composition of the eighth- and ninth-century dirhams is such that they could well have arrived at Kaupang and been deposited between the middle and the end of the ninth century, and this interpretation is supported by the excavation context. In the two main areas of excavation only the earliest phases survived intact, as the later layers had been ploughed out in medieval and modern times. It is significant that those early phases contained no dirhams at all, but they did yield

three Western coins. The implication is that during the first decades of the ninth century Western coins dominated the comparatively small stock of coinage, and were superseded in the mid-ninth century by a much larger importation of Islamic dirhams. This is supported by the chronology of Carolingian coins found in Scandinavia generally, among which the issues of Louis the Pious's *Christiana religio* issue of 822-40 are dominant (Skaare 1966; Coupland 1985-6: 12-13; Metcalf 1996: 422-8).

The Anglo-Saxon coins found in Norway also have a tight chronology. After the mid-eighth-century Northumbrian coin from Ervik mentioned above, there are eight silver pennies of southern England from the period c.792-823 (Skaare 1976: 43-7; Blackburn and Jonsson 1981: 149-51 and 255). They come from six different finds: three hoards, one grave, one chance find and Kaupang (Skaare 1976: nos. 85, 30, 33, 106, 96, 48). The three hoards also contained Carolingian coins of the first half of the ninth century. A high proportion of the coins had been mounted as ornaments, but their presence in hoards and at Kaupang indicate that they also had a role in the Norwegian bullion economy. The only other ninth-century English coins found in Norway – two base Northumbrian 'stycas' of Eanred, struck c.830-40, mounted on small lead cylinders from a grave at Vik (Aust-Agder) (Skaare 1976: no. 67; Pirie 2000: 25-6, nos. 1-2) – would have come to Norway as utilitarian items, not as coinage or bullion. Such composite pieces are now well documented from English finds and are regarded as Northumbrian or Anglo-Viking weights of the mid-ninth century (William 1999: 23-6; Pirie 2000: 25-9).

These early Anglo-Saxon coins are quite exceptional in a Scandinavian context, the only other one I am aware of being a recent find from Toftegård (Stroby parish, Zealand) of a penny of Coenwulf of Mercia, struck c.810-21 (Moesgaard and Tornbjerg 1999: 330, pl. 34.7). The distribution of these Anglo-Saxon coins is quite different from that of the Carolingian coins, which are found widely spread across Denmark and Southern Sweden (Metcalf 1996: 424, map 6). The Anglo-Saxon coins evidently arrived independently and directly from England to Norway in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. After the 820s there is a hiatus until the mid-tenth century, but after c.990 there is evidence once again of direct contact between Norway and England, since the Norwegian hoards contain a higher proportion of Anglo-Saxon coins than hoards from any other part of the Northern Lands (Blackburn and Jonsson 1981: 173-5).

If Arabic dirhams only started to be used in significant quantity at Kaupang in the mid-ninth century, could this be the same for Norway generally? There are a number of individual finds of Umayyad or early Abbasid dirhams (Skaare 1976: 40-3, 47-53), but they could have been deposited at any time down to the late ninth century, or even later. Pairs of coins, such as those from Lillevange (Sogn og Fjordane) dated 744 and 763 and Os (Østfold) dated 742 and 834 (Skaare 1976: nos. 113 and 5), do not offer any more secure dating either. The earliest Norwegian group of a size that one might begin to place some reliance on is seven dirhams from Torgård (Sør-Trøndelag) spanning the years 714-863 (Skaare 1976: no. 142), which were probably deposited during the later ninth century. There is then no positive evidence from Norway that dirhams were used before the mid-ninth century, though that possibility cannot be ruled out.

Skaare has pointed out that Western coins are rarely found in hoards in conjunction with Arabic coins, the single exception being the remarkable gold hoard from Hoen (Skaare 1976: 48, and no. 33; Fuglesang and Wilson forthcoming). This contained 20 gold and silver-gilt

coins, all mounted as pendants from one or more necklaces. They were of various types and had apparently been gathered and mounted piecemeal or in small groups rather than coming from a single source on one occasion (Blackburn forthcoming a). A late Roman and a Merovingian solidus, both very worn, had evidently been used as jewellery for generations. Two Byzantine solidi and nine Arabic dinars of the later eighth and ninth century could have been gathered from circulation either in Western Europe or Scandinavia at various times. The five Carolingian coins and one Anglo-Saxon coin appear to form a discrete group, since they were carefully selected from rare types with portraits. The Arabic coins run down to 849 and the latest Byzantine coin belongs to the early 850s, but based on the ornamental metalwork the hoard is thought to have been deposited in the late ninth century. It is significant, then that the Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon element forms a tightly dated group, c.810-30, that coincides with the period we have identified in which Western coins were present in Norway.

Moving on from Norway, the earliest Arabic coins found in the British Isles are three dirhams in the hoard from Croydon, to the south of London, deposited c.872 (Blackburn & Pagan 1986: no. 67), and at least 13 single-finds of dirham fragments from the site at Torksey (Lincolnshire), which probably date from the Viking army's occupation of a winter camp there in 872/3 (Blackburn 2002). From south-western Scotland, the Talnotry (Kirkcudbrightshire) hoard deposited in the mid 870s, provides comparable dating, since it contained Northumbrian copper-alloy 'stycas', four pennies of Burgred (one mounted as a brooch) and fragments of one Carolingian and two Islamic coins, together with some Anglo-Saxon metalwork, Viking lead weights, and pieces of agate, glass and wax (Blackburn and Pagan 1986: no. 46; Graham-Campbell 1995: 4; 2001: 20-6). The presence of two dirham fragments in this context does not imply direct contact between south-west Scotland and Scandinavia, for the assemblage is likely to have come as a group from the York region, though whether it belonged to a 'native Northumbrian metalworker' as Graham-Campbell (2001: 20) suggests or to a Northumbrian Viking, I have an open mind. The coin element is typical of that found in Torksey. The only other Scottish hoards with dirhams belong to the tenth century. From Ireland there are no ninth-century hoards containing dirhams, but a clutch of finds from the early tenth century show that dirhams were a minor but consistent element in the bullion stock then (Blackburn and Pagan 1986: nos. 88, 90, 91, 93 and 97). This does not necessarily mean that they were not also present in the Irish Sea area in the ninth century; the evidence is merely lacking.

The only other ninth-century coins from Scotland that might suggest contact with Scandinavia or the Continent are three gold solidi in the name of Louis the Pious (814-840), one of which is particularly interesting. This was found before 1864 at Elgin, on the Moray Firth, north-west of Inverness and is now in the collection of the British Museum (Dolley and Morrison 1966: no. 79; Blackburn forthcoming d: no. A12). It is not an official Carolingian coin but one of the imitations made in Frisia or England. To judge from its legends, which are particularly literate, the coin probably belongs early in the imitative sequence, perhaps to the 820s or '30s. What is interesting is that it is struck from the same obverse die as the two solidi in the Hoen hoard, one of which also has the same reverse as the Elgin find. A fourth die-linked coin exists but its provenance is unknown. More than one hundred imitative Louis the Pious solidi are known, and they are struck from many different dies. That the three most northerly finds from Europe should share one obverse and two reverse dies is unlikely to be a coincidence. Moreover, all three had been converted for use as jewellery, the Hoen coins being looped and

the Elgin specimen pierced twice for mounting as a brooch or in a necklace. In each case the mount is oriented to display the portrait rather than the cross side of the coin. We know that there was contact across the North Sea, but to appreciate how the Elgin and Hoen coins might be connected, we need to understand how the Hoen hoard was assembled. As indicated above, it now seems likely that the twenty gold and silver-gilt coins came from a variety of different sources, but the five Carolingian coins (including the two solidi) seem to have been painstakingly selected as a group, probably in Frisia, where the Anglo-Saxon coin may also have been acquired. The two die-linked solidi had surely remained together, although whether mounted in Frisia or Scandinavia we cannot tell (Blackburn forthcoming a). It would be an extraordinary coincidence of survival if the Elgin coin originally had been part of the same necklace, and in any event its method of mounting is different. What is more plausible is that it could have come from the same Frisian goldsmith's workshop, and been traded through the same network with strong contacts around the North Sea and North Atlantic. It is curious that a high proportion of ninth-century finds from Scotland have been double pierced, probably for mounting as brooches (Elgin; Croy, 2 coins; Burghead; Saevar Howe; Talnotry; Stephenson 1966: nos. 59, 60, 81, 82; Graham-Campbell 1996: 86, no. 2), perhaps suggesting that some of the coins had been worn as jewellery by the indigenous population in a pre-monetary era.

Two other solidi imitations in the French national collection, bought in Paris in 1841, were said by two contemporary sources to have been 'found in Scotland' (Pagan 1988, 72; Blackburn forthcoming d: nos. A13-14), a provenance which is plausible in view of the Elgin find. They have not been mounted and do not seem to be associated with the Elgin coin. Although we know no more than this, it is quite likely that Scandinavians were involved in their transportation to and/or loss in Scotland. The same may also be true of the solidus found in Maughold churchyard on the Isle of Man (Blackburn forthcoming d: no. A15), although its loss could pre-date the Viking settlement of the island, which is now thought to have occurred in the early or mid-tenth century (Bornholdt Collins 2003). If a Viking deposit, it would have been an heirloom already a century old.

Although the Faroes and Iceland were settled during the ninth century, the earliest coin finds date from the tenth century.

Finds of the First half of the Tenth-Century

Six Norwegian hoards of the first half of the tenth century show that the Samanid dirhams came to dominate the currency (Skaare 1976: 22-3, 47-53). However, the Rönnevik (Nordland) hoard (deposited c.950), with 39 dirhams and seven Anglo-Saxon coins, provides the first sign of renewed links with England (Skaare 1976: no. 171).

The evidence of dirhams from Scotland is both thin and more erratic. Of the two hoards from this period, one from Storr Rock, on the Isle of Skye (dep. c.935), contained 19 dirhams, along with 92 Anglo-Saxon coins and ornaments and ingots, while the shadowy hoard from Cockburnspath (Berwickshire), in south-east Scotland, had only an uncertain number of English coins (Blackburn and Pagan 1986: nos. 116, 123; Metcalf 1995: 19-20). The massive silver treasure from Skaill, on Orkney, with over 8 kg of bullion, deposited only slightly later (third quarter of the tenth century), had a tiny coin element, but 90 per cent of that was dirhams (19 out of 21 coins) (Blackburn and Pagan 1986: no. 129; Metcalf 1995: 20). In addition there is one single-find of an early tenth-century dirham from Ardeer (Ayrshire) (Stevenson 1966: no. 696). To lay against this there are just four single-finds of Anglo-Saxon coins of the first half of

the tenth century from Scotland, three of them from Orkney (Bateson 1995: nos. 5-8). Dirhams were present, then, in the Northern and Western Isles, just as they were around the Irish Sea during the first half of the tenth century, and these reflect links with western Scandinavia.

Finds from Shetland to some extent foreshadow those from the Faroes and Iceland. They are very few in number, and start in the second quarter of the tenth century with a single coin of Athelstan (924-39) found in excavations at Old Scatness (Bond 1998: 84-5; I am grateful to James Graham-Campbell for this reference).

From Iceland there are five finds that might potentially date from before 950 (Holt 2000). I am grateful to Anton Holt for help in listing these:

1. Mjóidalur, grave find before 1840. Two Samanid dirhams of AD 917/18 and AD 926/27, whole but pierced having been looped or mounted as jewellery (Eldjárn 1948: 41; Rafnsson 1976). These coins could have been taken from Scandinavia to Iceland at any time really between c.930 and c.990, and indeed having been converted into jewellery they would have gained a longer potential life.
2. Patreksfjörður, boat grave (information Anton Holt). Finds include small coin ornament, perhaps a dirham, and if so probably from the tenth century.
3. Mosfell, a small hoard found in 1725 (Eldjárn 1948: 42). Three silver pennies, one of which was read as reflecting the name of Anlaf. Eldjárn identified this as a York issue of Anlaf Guthfrithsson (939-41), but it could have been a coin of his successor Anlaf Sihtricsson (941-944/5, 950-2) or of Olaf Skötkonung of Sweden (c.995-1022). Another possibility is an Anglo-Saxon coin of the late tenth or eleventh century on which the final element of the obverse inscription ANGL(*orum*) was interpreted as the beginning of ANLAF. The dating of this find to the mid-tenth century must remain rather uncertain.
4. Möðruvellir, grave find, 1839 (Eldjárn 1948: 40). Fragment of a tenth-century English penny of the Two-line type, said to be of Athelstan (924-39). This coin was sent to Copenhagen for identification, but subsequently lost. If the attribution is correct, it is likely to represent direct contact with the British Isles, as English coins of the first half of the tenth century are unknown from Norway, and very rare in Denmark. They are, however, found in the Northern Isles and Ireland, as well as England.
5. Þjórsádalur, Hrossatunga farmstead, found 1965 by Eldjárn himself (Eldjárn 1979). A cut-down, worn and pierced coin, probably a dirham.

Apart from the one major coin hoard from Iceland, Gaulverjabær (deposited early eleventh century; see Holt in this volume), the small number of finds, mostly isolated coins and grave deposits show that some coinage came to Iceland during the later Viking Age, but not necessarily that it was actively used on the island. The Keta hoard of 1952 shows how static the currency could be, as this hoard, mainly of hack-silver, contained four fragmentary dirham dating from 883/4-913/32, with one German Otto-Adelheid coin, indicating a date of deposit c.1000 or later (Eldjárn 1954). The finds cited above suggest that some coins were arriving in Iceland by the second quarter of the tenth century, and that these came from the British Isles as well as Scandinavia.

From the Faroes, although we have only one find from our period, fortunately it is well-documented from an archaeological context. It was found in 1989 in one of the cist graves

(grave K5A) excavated at Sandur, on the island of Sandoy (Arge and Hartmann 1989-90: 14-15, 17-18); I am grateful to Simon Arge for his advice on this and other finds from Sandur. The coin is a copy of an early Abbasid dirham, made by the Kazars or Volgar Bulgars in the late ninth century; Gert Rispling suggests *c.*AD 883/4. It would have reached Scandinavia in the late ninth or first half of the tenth century, and may well have been passed on to the Faroes then too. What is particularly significant is that it is a cut fragment. Unlike the dirhams converted to ornaments in the Icelandic graves, the Sandur piece looks like real money. When preparing the grave of this young woman, someone added to the other grave goods (a necklace of beads, an iron knife, a bone comb and perhaps a silver ornament) a suitable piece of small change, suggesting that they recognised this dirham fragment as money in Sandur at that time. For the excavators the date of the burial was uncertain, though Graham-Campbell (in this volume) is confident that it belongs to the tenth century. The only other Viking-Age coin find from the Faroes – a hoard with a strong Norwegian element – also came from the settlement of Sandur, from close by in the churchyard (Steen Jensen 2004; Jonsson in this volume). Although, finally deposited *c.*1100, the hoard contained an earlier, mid-eleventh-century element, suggesting a tradition of coin use in Sandur over several decades. Indeed, even in the medieval period Sandur church is exceptional for yielding some 42 coins, mainly Norwegian, of *c.*1220-1300 (Krogh 1975). It remains to be seen whether this high-status site was unique within the Faroes in having access to coinage during the Viking Age.

Conclusions

The numismatic finds provide evidence for contact over the northern part of the North Sea before the traditional beginning of the Viking Age, *c.*790. The one seventh-century coin found in this area – a Merovingian gold tremissis from Kaupang – points to contact between southern Norway and western Denmark or Frisia. Then, looking across the North Sea, a series of Norwegian finds of English coins points to direct contact with Northumbria and with southern England between the mid-eighth and early ninth century, more or less ceasing after *c.*825. This close relationship between Norway and England is picked up again in the late Viking Age, after 950 and particularly during the first half of the eleventh century. In the opposite direction, again from the mid-eighth century, two Continental 'sceattas' found in eastern Scotland, one struck in Denmark and one in the Netherlands around the Rhine mouth, suggest direct contact across the North Sea. A similar link is implied about a hundred years later through the imitative gold solidus from Elgin in north-east Scotland, which is die-linked to those from the Hoen hoard.

Arabic dirhams may only have reached Norway in significant quantity after the mid-ninth century, but then they quite soon appear in a few finds from the Danelaw or with Danelaw connections. The first evidence of dirhams occurring in a Viking context elsewhere in the British Isles is series of early tenth-century finds from Ireland, which coincide with an increase in similar hoards in Northumbria and north-west England. There are only two significant Scottish finds with dirhams, one from Skye from the second quarter of the tenth century and one from Orkney from the third quarter, and these at least show that dirhams were present in the bullion economy of the Northern and Western Isles, even if they are too few to show reliably that their appearance came somewhat later than in the Irish Sea area.

In Shetland evidence for coin use is lacking before the mid-tenth century. From the Faroes the only coin find earlier than the famous hoard from the churchyard at Sandur, Sandoy (dep.

c.1100) is a late ninth-century dirham from a grave also at Sandur, while the fragmentary nature of the coin suggests it had a monetary use. There is more evidence for the presence of coins in Iceland, and the earliest finds appear to date from the second quarter of the tenth century, although they are poorly documented. These hint at links with the British Isles as much as western Scandinavia. So far as I am aware there have been no Viking-Age coins found in Greenland, but in any event its settlement falls after the period considered by this paper.

The numismatic evidence from the territories in and around the North Atlantic may be rather scarce, but when considered together it does form a consistent pattern. More finds would greatly enhance our knowledge, and we must be very wary of relying on negative evidence. Yet already the coins can point to contacts over the North Sea and North Atlantic in and even before the early Viking Age. What role these coins played in the North Atlantic is another matter. Some of them, particularly those found in graves, would have served as ornaments. Others found in hoards, sometimes with hack-silver, undoubtedly had an economic function when assembled, but whether they were actively used in transactions in the places where they were found, such as Iceland, must be open to question. They may have been retained principally as a store of wealth and an international currency, though in certain centres such as Sandur they might have had some limited local exchange function too. Evidence will never be plentiful, but even minor additions to the find record can change our perceptions of the role of silver in the early Viking Age.

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Chapter 14

Some new thoughts on personal names in the Viking colonies

Gillian Fellows-Jensen

On the post-Viking Congress excursion to York in 1997 I was asked by a Faroese delegate whether the place-name Ferrensby, borne by a village standing on the road between Knaresborough and Boroughbridge, might possibly be an indication of the presence of Faroese settlers in Yorkshire. I could say no more than that this was possibly so. The run of recorded forms for Ferrensby, of which the earliest one, that in Domesday Book of 1086, is an unfortunately erratic *Feresbi*, otherwise all suggest that the name is to be translated as ‘settlement of a man from the Faroe Islands (*færeyingr*)’ or perhaps of a man bearing this term as a by-name (Smith 1961: 92). I repeated this assertion in a brief article later that year (Fellows-Jensen 1997: 20-22), substantiating my claim with reference to the observation first made by Christian Matras that place-names containing the Gaelic loanword in early Scandinavian, *ærgi* n., denoting some kind of shieling, occur quite frequently both in the Faroe Islands and in northern England, a fact that suggests that the place-name generic *ærgi* was originally adopted by Scandinavian settlers in Gaelic-speaking areas such as the Hebrides or the western coast of mainland Scotland and then taken by these settlers to new homes in both the Faroes and England (Matras 1956; Fellows Jensen 1980). Most of the relevant place-names in England are found in the north-west, supporting the assumption that they were probably coined by settlers who had come down along the west coast of Scotland, but there are quite a number across the Pennines in Yorkshire (Fellows Jensen 1977-78; Higham 1977-78: 16). The presence of these names in England does not, of course, necessarily point to the presence of any settlers from the Faroe Islands but it does suggest that settlers of Scandinavian origin from the Western Isles and Scotland were taking up residence at more or less the same time in the Faroe Islands, which had probably been without human inhabitants when they arrived, and in England, which was certainly already rather densely settled. The new settlers in the two countries would presumably have borne basically the same types of personal name.

Two factors make it much easier to work on Scandinavian personal names in England in the Viking Age than on those in the Faroes at the same period. Firstly, while there is rich documentation for these personal names in English sources from the eleventh century onwards and for some of them even from the tenth century, the early documentation from the Faroe Islands is extremely sparse (Poulsen 1985: 59-61). Secondly, it is known that Scandinavian personal names were first introduced into England towards the end of the ninth century and

that while they flourished there for a couple of centuries, they had been completely ousted by names of Continental Germanic or Christian origin by soon after the year 1200. In the Faroes, on the other hand, to which the first Scandinavian names must have been brought at about the same time as to England, the names have never dropped entirely out of use, although here, too, they have had to struggle for survival against names of ecclesiastical origin. There is no way of knowing whether names of Nordic origin first recorded in the Faroes in the early nineteenth century, for example, had already been introduced to the islands in the Viking Age.

It was Anfinnur Johansen's M.A. thesis that first opened my eyes to the dearth of early sources for Faroese personal names and the problems connected with using *Færeyinga saga* as a source (Johansen 1990). I have therefore taken this thesis as my starting point and intend here to compare some of the names that Johansen would ascribe to the early period of settlement with Scandinavian personal names recorded in England.

There seems little doubt that Marie Ingerslev Simonsen (now Stoklund) is correct in her interpretation of the name on the Kirkjubøur-stone as *Vígulfr* and in her dating of the inscription to the early eleventh century (Simonsen 1959). The name *Vígulfr* is not of particularly common occurrence in the Scandinavian homelands but it is found in both Denmark and Norway. Its earliest recorded occurrences would seem to be in the Danelaw. A man called *Wiulf Sunta sune* is recorded as a surety for a land transaction in Northamptonshire in a mid-twelfth-century transcript of a document from between 963 and 992 and one or more tenants referred to as *Wicolfus* and *Wiulfus* are recorded in Domesday Book for Norfolk and Suffolk in 1065 (Feilitzen 1937: 404-05; Insley 1994: 443-44). The fact that these occurrences are in the southern Danelaw suggests that the Scandinavian settlers who introduced the name to England were Danes who had arrived from across the North Sea at the end of the ninth century. In the case of the runic inscription on the stone from Sandavágur, dated to about 1200, on the other hand, there is no doubt about the origin of the man commemorated, since the beginning of the inscription has been translated as 'Porkell Önundarson, a Norwegian from Rogaland' (*Norges Innskrifter med de Yngre Runer* 5: 232). There are a few other inscriptions which may contain personal names but on the whole the scanty runological evidence, some of uncertain date, points in different directions for the origin of the names.

The main written source of information about the Faroe Islands in the Viking Age is, of course, *Færeyinga saga* (Halldórsson 1987). This is not, however, a contemporary source and it does not survive in any single manuscript in its entirety. The version we know has been pieced together from passages incorporated in Icelandic compilations such as *Flateyjarbók* and *Heimskringla*. Detailed work on the saga by Ólafur Halldórson (1969; 1987) and Peter Foote (1993) and others has revealed that it must have been composed by an Icelander writing in the first quarter of the 13th century who exploited a wide variety of sources, including folklore motifs, to tell a story of rivalry between Faroese chieftains, their relationship with Norwegian kings and the conversion of the islanders to Christianity, the events recorded all taking place between the middle of the tenth century and the middle of the eleventh century but not all of them in the islands themselves. The author would seem to have been a man without personal acquaintance with the Faroe Islands but with access to some genuine Faroese traditional material. A pioneering critical examination of the personal names borne by the non-Faroese characters in the saga has been published by Peter Foote and I do not need to discuss these names (Foote 1973). I should, however, like to say a little about the names borne by the characters whom the saga records as being resident in the Faroe Islands. The

saga opens with a reference to *Grímr kambann*, who is also stated by other sources to be the first man to have settled in the islands after he had fled from the tyranny of Harald fairhair in Norway. The fact that his byname would seem to be of Gaelic origin suggests that he had spent some time in the Norse-speaking colonies in the Hebrides or western Scotland before settling in the Faroes. This by-name has been explained as a Gaelic adjective *cammán*, a derivative of *cam* 'lame, crippled', and hence referring to a bodily deformity (Lind 1920-21: 185) or as the name of a stick employed in the old Celtic ball-game *báire* that was rather like hockey, and pointing to his renown as a sportsman (Lockwood 1977). It is probably significant that the supposed first settler has a byname of Gaelic origin, for it is not unlikely that several of the settlers in the Faroes had spent some time in the Hebrides before arriving at their final destination. There is only one of the Faroese characters active in the saga, however, who bears a Gaelic name. This is *Gilli lögsögumaðr* (*Færeyinga saga* chap. 43), who is summoned to Norway by Olaf Tryggvason for discussions about the payment of tax by the islanders. The Old Celtic word *gillae* means 'young man, servant' and occurs occasionally alone as a personal name in Ireland but it is of more frequent occurrence there prefixed to the name of a saint, for example *Gilla Pátraic*, son of *Ímar*, who died in 982. It has been noted that such names do not occur in Ireland until after about 900 and that they would seem to have been particularly favoured by naturalised Danes, who are assumed to have taken names expressing devotion to a particular saint on their conversion to Christianity (O'Brien 1973: 229-30; Dineen 1927: 536; Ó Cuiv 1979: 40-51). That such names were also employed by the Gaels of western Scotland and carried by these to England is shown by their occurrence in these countries both independently and in place-names of Scandinavian origin. The simplex form *Gilli*, for example, occurs independently in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Norfolk and in place-names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, as well as in Dumfriesshire in south-west Scotland (Fellows Jensen 1968: 100-01; 1985: 31; Insley 1994: 139). No other personal names of Celtic origin occur in *Færeyinga saga* but there is at least one place-name in the islands that Christian Matras considered might contain a scandinavianised version of the old Celtic name *Colmán* (Matras 1965: 31). This is the name *Gálmansskor* in Tjørnuvík, whose specific he considered to be either this name in the form *Kalman*, which is borne by one of the first settlers in Iceland, who is stated in different versions of *Landnámabók* to be of Irish or Hebridean extraction (Benediktsson 1986: 61, 81), or a name *Galman*, which may be contained in the Icelandic place-name *Galmansvík* (Lind 1905-15: 294). I am somewhat sceptical about the possibility of the name *Kalman*'s being derived from Old Irish *Colmán*, for it would not seem to have been necessary for a Scandinavian-speaker to change the vowel in the first syllable of the Irish name, and I have a similar reservation about the name *Galman*, for which Lind does not, in fact offer an interpretation. This name may also be contained in a couple of now-lost place-names from near St Mary's Abbey in York: *Galmanhó* and *Galmonelid*, meaning *Galman*'s mound and gate respectively (Lindkvist 1926: 355). In 1927 Hugh Smith tentatively accepted the proposal which he ascribes to Guðbrandur Vigfússon that the name *Galman* is to be explained as meaning 'Irishman' but he noted in a footnote that E.V. Gordon had suggested to him that it might be from *Colmán* (Smith 1927: 48) and it is this interpretation that Smith puts forward ten years later (Smith 1937: 288). I have elsewhere, however, explained the personal name *Galman* in the two York place-names as being an originally Scandinavian by-name meaning 'madman', with reference to a number of occurrences in Denmark (Fellows Jensen 1968: 89; *Danmarks gamle Personnavne. Fornavne* I: 335). If it is this by-name that is found in the Faroese place-

name, it must be admitted that names of Celtic origin are of extremely rare occurrence in the Faroes.

The vast majority of the names recorded in *Færeyinga saga* are of Scandinavian origin and most of these are names that occur frequently and generally in the homelands of the Vikings. What is most striking about the two-element names of the type *Porbjörn* is the dominance of the heathen god's name *Pór-* as first element. Among the residents in the Faroes who appear in the saga are found *Póralfr Sigmundarson*, *Porbjörn götuskeggr*, *Pórðr lági Þorláksson*, *Þorgrímr illi*, *Þórhallr auðgi*, *Þórir Beinisson*, *Þorlákr Þorbjarnarson*, *Þorsteinn Þorgrímsson* and *Þorvaldr*. All these names are of fairly frequent occurrence in both Norway and Iceland and most of them in Denmark and the Danelaw as well, but *Póralfr*, *Þórhallr* and *Þorvaldr* are not recorded in these latter areas. It is not of course surprising that it is names of West Scandinavian origin that occur most frequently in the Faroes. Another feature of interest about the dithematic names here, however, is the number of occurrences of the name *Hafrímr*, namely *Hafrímr í Suðrey* (killed in about 970) and *Hafrímr Sigmundarson* (born about the middle of the eleventh century), as well as in the patronyms of *Einar* and *Skeggi*, the sons of the latter, and *Øssur*, the son of the former. There is also a Hebridean *Hafrímr Arnljótsson*, who is shipwrecked on Suðrey together with his two brothers *Bjarngrímr* and *Hergrímr*. The Hebridean trio might all be thought to be invented characters bearing invented names but the name *Hafrímr* is not unknown elsewhere. It occurs a few times in Iceland (Lind 1905-15: 20), while there is at least one recorded instance in Lincolnshire (Fellows Jensen 1968: 122). Peter Foote has noted that in the Danelaw there are also occurrences of the name *Sægrímr* (Fellows Jensen 1968: 284; Insley 1994: 364) and suggested that both *Hafrímr* and *Sægrímr* may have been "more at home in the Norse-British area, of which the Faroes must in many ways be counted the northern outpost" (Foote 1973: 103). Foote also noted that of the eleven names in *-grímr* recorded in Domesday Book as being borne by tenants of land in England in 1065, no less than five are unknown from Norse sources. My own studies of personal names in the Danelaw have confirmed that one of the methods used by Scandinavian settlers there for creating new names was to take a few of the elements used in Scandinavia to create dithematic names like *Porbjörn* and to use these to create a great variety of new compounds. Among the most striking instances in the Danelaw are the elements *-grím*, *-ketil* and *-ulf*, which all yielded several new names, e.g. *Alfgrím*, *Hafrím*, *Harðgrím*, *Hundigrím*, *Ketilgrím*, *Sægrím*, *Ulfgrím*, *Grímbjörn*, *Grímketil* and *Grímvarð*; *Húnketil*, *Oddketil*, *Ylfketil* and *Ketildag*; *Leiðulf*, *Leikulf*, *Liðulf*, *Ligulf*, *Liulf*, *Starkulf*, *Steinulf* and *Þornulf*. None of these names occurs in early sources from Denmark or Sweden and most of them are not found in West Scandinavian sources either. A few of the names did become popular in Iceland, however, and I have suggested that names such as *Oddketil* in the contracted form *Oddkel*, *Leiðulf* and *Steinulf* may well have been taken to Iceland from the British Isles rather than directly from Norway (Fellows-Jensen 1995: 25-26). The same may of course apply to the name *Hafrímr*. The main reason for the development of the many new names in the Danelaw would seem to have been that the settlers there had been released from the constraints imposed in Scandinavia by the long-standing traditions of naming, while the relative closeness of the two languages, Danish and English, and of the naming practices in Scandinavia and England produced a linguistic situation in which a revitalisation of the Scandinavian nomenclature could occur.

The last group of personal names represented in the Faroe Islands that I shall have time to touch upon today are the names of biblical or ecclesiastical origin, that is the names that

might be assumed to have been introduced to the Faroes at the time of the conversion to Christianity at the very end of the tenth century. There is just one example of such a name in *Færeyinga saga*. This is *Cecilia*, the name borne by the woman who is first introduced as the mistress of *Brestir* (chap. 3) but later as his wife (chap. 7). She is said to have been *norraen at ætt* and her name shows that she must have come from a region which had already been converted, presumably somewhere in the British Isles. This is because she must have taken up residence in the Faroes a good while before the introduction of Christianity there. It was her son, *Sigmundr Brestisson*, who, at the command of Olaf Tryggvason, first arranged for the preaching of Christianity in the islands (chap. 31). Jóhan Hendrik W. Poulsen has noted that *Cecilia* is the first woman in the Northern countries to have borne this name and that she must have come from the south (Poulsen 1985: 61).

The first converts to Christianity in England did not automatically receive a Christian name at their baptism and they continued to be known by their old pagan names. Such names remained in use for centuries and came to be looked upon as good Christian names. When King Alfred stood sponsor for the Danish King Guthrum at his baptism in the late tenth century, the latter was given the baptismal name *Athelstan* (Godrum se norþerna cyning...þæs fulluhtnama wæs Æpelstan) (Batley 1986: 54). As late as in 1002, when the Norman Christian princess *Imma* or *Emma* was married to King Ethelred, she adopted the Old English name *Ælfgifu* and she retained this name when she married King Knut the Great as her second husband (Campbell 1949: 55-61). It was not until after the ascension to the English throne of William the Conqueror in 1066 that names of Christian origin became immensely popular there, first in court circles. One of William's daughters, who was born before her father became King of England and who eventually became abbess of Holy Trinity in Caen, was called *Cecilia*. It is known that the name soon became a favourite in England (Douglas 1966, 393-95). It also became popular in courtly circles in Scandinavia and the Viking colonies. The earliest certain examples to be recorded are the name of the daughter of the Danish king St Knut, who was killed in 1086 (*Danmarks gamle Personnavne. Fornavne* I: 175-82), and that of the daughter of the Orkney jarl Erlend, who died in 1098 (Lind 1905-15: 187-89). Icelandic sources admittedly record two earlier examples. There is a record in the late-fourteenth-century compilation *Flateyjarbók* to the effect that Harald fairhair's grandson *Guðrøðr Bjarnarson* is said to have married a woman called *Cecilia* (*Flateyjarbók* II: 3). This woman and the *Cecilia* who appears in the early-thirteenth-century *Færeyinga saga* are the only two who are supposed to have borne the name *Cecilia* in Scandinavia before the conversion to Christianity and I must admit that I am inclined to believe the one to be as fictitious as the other and that they have both been inserted into narratives by Icelandic authors in later centuries when the name had become popular all over Scandinavia.

There is no doubt that the Faroe Islands shared in the same development as that in the Scandinavian homelands and in all the colonies except Iceland by which native names of Nordic origin tended to be ousted by names introduced by the church. The oldest surviving list of Faroese personal names is a small paper manuscript of nine pages that now forms ff. 238r-242r of MS AM 971b 4to in the Arnarnagðæan Collection in Copenhagen. It is entitled 'Nomina Virorum et Foeminarum. Mands og Qvindens Navne' and was compiled by the Faroese lexicographer and philologist Jens Christian Svabo (1746-1824) in connection with his collection of material for his Faroese dictionary. Anfinnur Johansen has noted that this list contains 121 names, of which only 36 are of Nordic origin (Jóhansen 1993: 16). The other names

are mainly of biblical or hagiographical origin, many of them the same names as are found in all the Scandinavian countries, but some of them are more unusual names, for example *Aanias* < *Ananias*, *Uisakur* < *Isaac*, and others have developed differently, for example *Grækarris* < *Gregorius*. *Cecilia* is not recorded in this list but this does not mean that the name had dropped out of use in the Faroe Islands. It has survived to the present day in the form *Sissal* (Poulsen 1989: 27), a form which may have been influenced by the form *Sissel* which has been in use in Denmark since about 1400 (*Danmarks gamle Personnavne. Fornavne* I, 182).

While I was studying Svabo's list of names, my eye was caught by another name of a female saint that has been popular in varying forms in the Scandinavian countries for almost as long as *Cecilia*. This is the name *Juliana*, which is supposed originally to have been borne by a legendary saint in the fourth century. Juliana is said to have refused to obey the wishes of her father and her suitor that she should marry a pagan man and eventually to have suffered martyrdom. The legend became the subject of a poem by the Anglo-Saxon poet Cynewulf. The main episode in both the legend and the poem is a long and boring verbal contest between Juliana and the Devil which is won by Juliana because she was not only a very fast talker but apparently also something of an Amazon. She is represented in stained glass windows in Norfolk with the exhausted devil lying at her feet (Farmer 1984: 227). The popularity of the name Juliana has fluctuated enormously in England, reaching peaks in the sixteenth century and the twentieth century. My justification for dragging it into this paper by the scruff of its neck, however, is the similarity of the development of the name in England and in the Faroe Islands. The modern English pronunciation of the name is ['dʒɪljən] or ['dʒɪliən], forms which in my experience are excruciatingly difficult to reproduce for all speakers of Nordic languages except the Faroese. Svabo's list helps to explain why the Faroese have no problems with the name. He employs the Latin form *Juliane* to gloss a Faroese form *Gjiljanna*. It is not, of course, only in personal names that the consonant *g* is palatalised before the front vowel *i* in English and Faroese and I cannot help wondering whether palatalisation in Faroese might not owe something to contacts with England in the Viking Age. Phonology is not my stamping-ground, however, and I must leave this question for others to answer and bring this paper to an end before the whole audience is lying exhausted at the feet of this latter-day *Juliana*.

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Chapter 15

Cross-currents in North Atlantic Sculpture

Ian Fisher

The Christian cross is widely spread along the Atlantic fringes of northern Europe, from Co. Kerry to Trondelag and out to the Faroes and Iceland. Early medieval cross-marked stones and crosses often provide the earliest physical evidence for Christian worship, and indicate cultural connections and influences. The recent corpus of sculpture from western Scotland includes about 460 examples, most being pillars or slabs bearing simple incised or outline crosses (Fisher 2001). Such carvings are found in remote eremitic sites such as North Rona and alongside the high crosses of the great monastery of Iona, which preserved the ascetic tradition of its founder Columba and became a focus of Norse Christianity.

Many carvings from the Atlantic islands exhibit simple cross-forms whose dating is fraught with difficulty despite the recent publication of several area surveys (*ibid.*, 6, 8). Plain crosses of the simplest form are roughly incised on two kerb-slabs of a late 9th-century male burial at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay (RCAHMS 1984: 150-1). The tall cross at Stavanger naming the murdered Erling Skjalgsson (d.1028) bears Greek crosslets with pitted terminals, paralleled by earlier carvings in Argyll (Birkeli 1973: 151-6; Fisher 2001: 30A,B; 2002: 57). Iona's 8th-century St Oran's Cross, with its wide curved arm pits, shares its outline with a 14th-century coffin-cross from Herjolfsnes in Greenland (Fisher 2001: 46-7, 131; Norlund 1924: 208).



Fig. 1: Stavanger (Rogaland): Cross of Erling Skjalgsson (d.1028).

The Northern Isles had contact with the Irish church as early as the 6th century through Cormac's search for 'a desert place in the ocean'. Carvings of western or Irish type in Orkney include the finely-incised cross-of-arcs from St Boniface's Chapel, Papa Westray, and the small lost stone with spiral terminals from Papa Stronsay (Fisher 2002: 46-7, 49). Other stones of probable pre-Norse date from sites named after *papar* or clerics (ibid; Crawford 2002) include two from a chapel-site on Noss (Shetland), close to an inlet named Papil Geo. A pillar discovered in 1995 bears on one face a sunken cross with barred terminals, defined by flat-bottomed grooves (Fisher 2001: 22E; 2002: 54-5). This uncommon technique occurs on Iona and Tiree, while the barred cross is found on Iona and elsewhere including Pabbay near Barra (Fisher 2001: 13, 32, 106). However, the Noss stone may show direct Irish contact, for its design and technique are combined on a slab beside a boat-landing at Kilcashed in Co. Donegal (Herity 1995: 28-9).

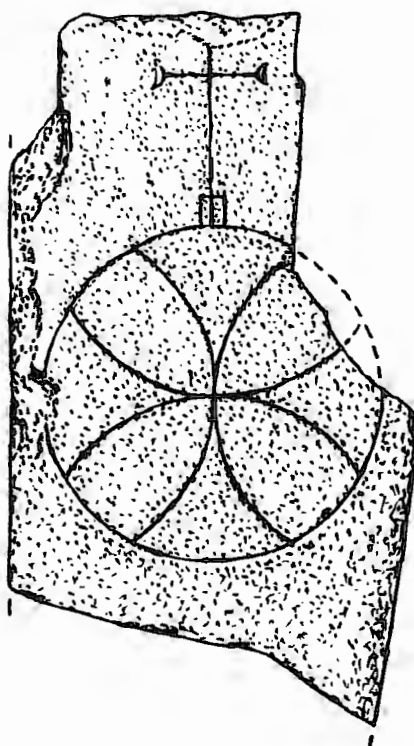


Fig. 2: Papa Westray (Orkney), Cross-of-arcs. (IF-fig8.tif)

Plain graffito crosses like those from Kiloran Bay are among the varied repertoire of linear and outline carvings in manmade caves in southern Iceland (Ahronson 2002). Without an illustrated record such as is now being made for the Seljaland caves it is difficult to make an armchair assessment, but a wide date-range seems likely. A shallow sunken cross with bar-terminals in Efri-Gegnishólum is a coarser version of those on Noss and in Donegal, and a

Northumbrian parallel is attributed to the 8th century (Holt and Guðmundsson 1980: 16-18; Cramp 1984: 164). Outline crosses with long narrow arms may be of the 11th century, and are found in medieval Greenland (Hjartarson *et al* 1991: 248; Kermode 1931: 376). Graffito crosses are carved in several natural caves in western Scotland, including some with eremitic traditions such as St Molaise's Cave (Arran) with its knife-cut pilgrims' crosses and runic inscriptions of 1263 (Fisher 2001: 60-9).

Whether or not any Icelandic carvings date from the pre-Norse *papar*, they suggest links with Britain and Ireland as do those in the Faroes. The stones in Føroya Fornminnisavni came from the southern island of Skúvoy (Kermode 1931; Arge 1991: 104-5). A ship's company of Viking Congress members visited the graveyard there and toasted the heroic Sigmund Brestisson, whose grave bears an outline cross. The collection at Hoyvik numbers a further twelve stones, including a rune-inscribed fragment, and an outline cross with triangular terminals is in Copenhagen. Jóannes Patursson provided Kermode with information about a cross at Kirkjubøur, probably the stone from the Líkhús that remains in the *roykstova* there (Kermode 1931: 373-5; Arge 1991: 104-5). A stylised drawing of 1828 records a stone from the north-eastern island of Svinoy (Kermode 1931: 378). The simplest of the carvings, an equal-armed linear cross, was found in 1972 during Knud Krogh's excavation in Sandur churchyard, re-used in the floor of a house (Krogh 1975: 49). However, Arne Thorsteinsson removed from the Faroese corpus a stone in Copenhagen whose encircled outline cross resembles one on Iona (Kermode 1931: 375; Fisher 2001: 22C, 33K). Since the material is not basalt as reported to Kermode but gneiss, a Hebridean origin is probable. Although the stone could have been an early import to the Faroes, it may have been collected in Scotland by a Scandinavian traveller.



Fig. 3: Skúvoy (Faroes): Graveyard and village from south.



Fig. 4: Sigmund Brestisson's gravestone.



Fig. 5: Encircled linear cross (FF 1818).

The Skúvoy stones are carved from basalts and reddish tuffs that outcrop near the graveyard where they were found, and they show interesting adaptations to these intractable materials.

Encircled linear crosses. One Skúvoy stone and that at Kirkjubøur bear equal-armed crosses whose terminals extend slightly beyond enclosing circles, while in two others the lowest arm is extended to form a short shaft. One of the latter, reconstructed from numerous fragments of orange tuff, has a disc-head of possible natural origin, while the 'circle' of the other is an irregular oval 0.46m high (Kermode 1931: 374, nos.1, 3-4; Arge 1991: 104).

Shallow sunken crosses. This group comprises three basalt slabs or boulders bearing very shallow sunken Latin crosses, and a fourth cross of the type, with circular terminals, on one face of a triangular pillar of basalt (Kermode 1931: 374 no.2). The technique, adapted to a coarse material full of gas-bubbles, began with an incised outline whose centre was then channelled with a rounded object, perhaps a pebble. The carving was defined by differences of colour and texture due to the polishing of the resultant round-bottomed grooves, rather than by light and shade.

Outline crosses. Outline Latin crosses are carved on a second face of the triangular pillar and on three slabs (ibid, nos.5-8; Arge 1991: 104), on Sigmund Brestisson's gravestone and on the rune-inscribed fragment (Stoklund, this volume). This preserves part of a cross with triangular terminals like those of the Copenhagen slab and the lost stone from Svinoy. Other

stones have square terminals and on Sigmund's memorial they are rounded. Its shaft extends to the broken base of the boulder, while in other stones the feet are tapered or open. Several outlines are formed by polished grooves, although on the triangular pillar they are of V-section. The most complex carving is represented by three fragments of red tuff which bore an outline cross with its shaft overlying tapered side-arms, and linear crosslets in at least the upper angles. An enigmatic fragment of the same material bears 'nests' of two and three L-plan mouldings flanking sunken bars which may have defined a cross.

The encircled crosses, also found on Skellig Michael and Iona, led Radford and Sverri Dahl to consider a pre-Norse date (Fisher 2001: 13, 22, 28; Dahl 1970: 62). The oval-ringed slab is a uniquely coarse example, but whatever the date of the group an 'Irish' link seems probable. The same is true of the outline crosses, for although those with narrow elongated arms are likely to date from 1000 or later, those with less extreme proportions have early parallels in Argyll (Fisher 2001: 33-4). However, the re-attribution of the Iona-type cross in Copenhagen removes the best sculptural evidence for pre-Norse *papar*. The shared technique of many of the stones and their concentration on the island that was the first base for the introduction of Norse Christianity suggest a limited date-range. I hope to prepare a catalogue of this fascinating collection, with reference to comparisons including the Danish carvings quoted by Arge (1991: 117). The provisional verdict on pre-Norse *papar* must be 'not proven', but a Hebridean contribution to the Norse conversion of the islands merits serious consideration.

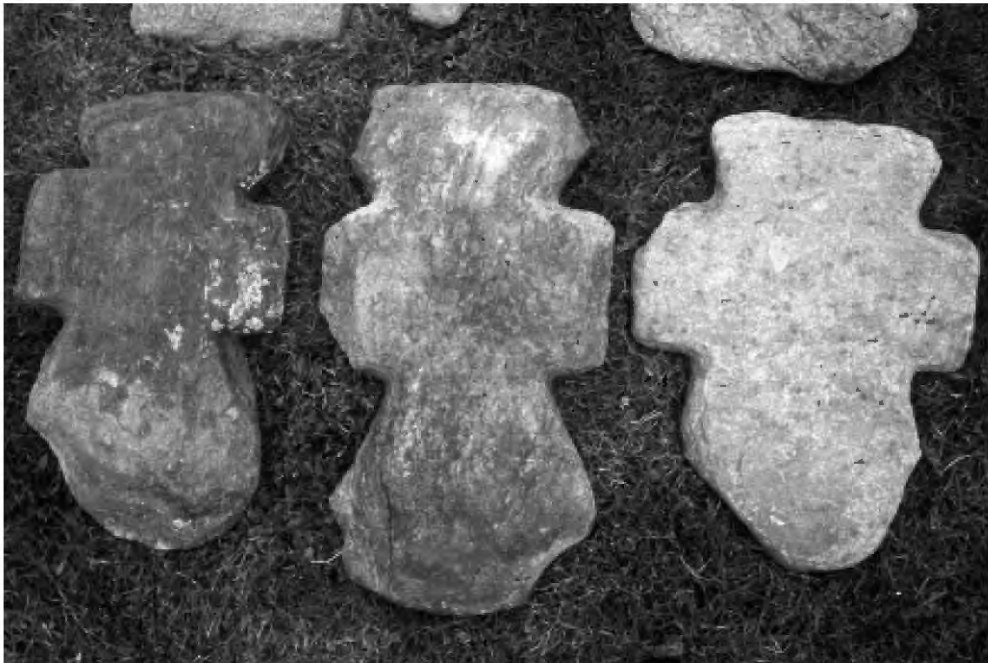
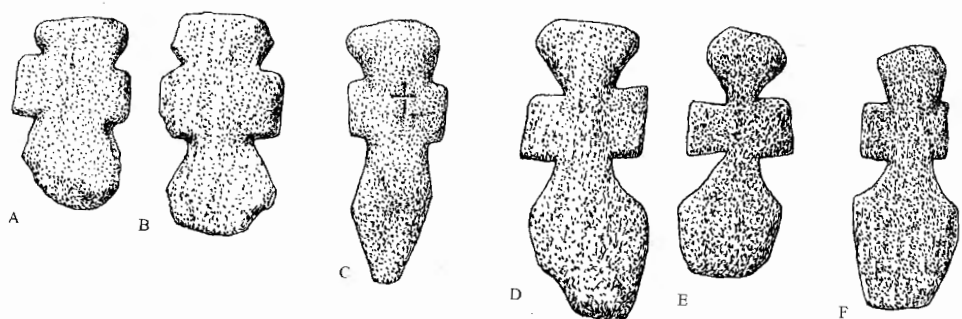


Fig. 6: North Kirk Geo, Yell, crosses.

Early influences on sculpture in Norse Shetland were discussed in Sverri Dahl's *heiðursrit* by Stevenson (1981). He emphasised the Norse aspect of well-known carvings at Papil, and in

2000 miniature slabs with plaited crosses were excavated in 11th-century graves on St Ninian's Isle (Rachel Barrowman, pers comm). One neglected group of small crosses, less than one metre high, is almost confined to the north-eastern islands of Yell and Unst, with their numerous chapel-sites and Norse buildings (Fisher 2002: 55-6). Including lost stones recorded in the 1920s there are 18 crosses on Yell and 21 on Unst, from five sites on each island, as well as two at North Roe on Mainland. All of the sites are present or former burial-grounds, most with chapels. On Unst they include Lundawick, with the 12th-century St Olaf's Chapel and eight crosses (three lost), facing across the *vík* to Underhoull with its broch and excavated Norse settlement. Framgord chapel, with four crosses, stands on a low headland bounding Sandwick Bay with its Norse settlements excavated by Bigelow and Stummann Hansen. Small cruciform grave-markers are widely distributed along the Atlantic fringe, with significant groups on Skellig Michael, Iona and North Rona (Fisher 2001: 17, 56-7, 168). The Shetland crosses include a few comparable simple examples, particularly on Yell, but several are more sophisticated. There is considerable variety of thickness and outline, but almost every cross has a wedge-shaped top arm and short straight side-arms. The most elegant, three at Norwick and one on Uyea (both Unst), have short concave-sided shafts expanding to rounded butts, and their top arms are asymmetrical. This feature, which at first seems accidental, is repeated in other stones along with expanded shafts, and two have central crosslets. These, and the expanded top-arms and curved shafts, may derive from crosses in the Stavanger area, including that of Erling Skjalgsson and three others on his estate of Sola (Birkeli 1973: 142-56). Birkeli's division of the corpus of about 60 Norwegian crosses into 'Celtic' and 'Anglian' types deserves reassessment, but the islands closest to Rogaland may have received in the 11th century influences which began in the Celtic west centuries earlier. Unst and Yell had their own explosion of sculpture patronage at that period, mirroring those of Govan, Mann and Northern England.



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Fig. 7: Crosses in Shetland. A-B: North Kirk Geo, Yell; C: Lundawick, Unst; D-E: Norwick, Unst; F: Uyea, Unst. (Scale 1:20; drawing Ian G Scott).

Nor did the explosion cease at Muckle Flugga. In 1998 three crosses were excavated in the yard of an early-11th-century stave-church at Þórarinsstaðir in Seydisfjörður, one of the principal harbours in eastern Iceland (Kristjánsdóttir 2001: 123-4). Except for the use of local tuff these stones, ranging from 35cm to 53cm in height, are almost identical with several on Yell. The archaeological context matches the dating offered by the Stavanger cross, to provide an apparent haven of certainty in a sea of chronological troubles. Yet even with this cross-type, Nordic conservatism can play tricks. In 1978 a damaged cross of similar form was excavated in an Iron Age burial-mound in Dalsfjorden (Sogn og Fjordane), but like others from western Norway this is a lead cross, 83mm high and covered in runic incantations of the 14th century (Knudsen 1995). These finds, and those from Greenland, are powerful warnings against underestimating the complexity of 'simple' crosses.

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Chapter 16

Archaeology and the Palaeoecology of the Norse Atlantic Islands : a Review

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Introduction

Palaeoecological research on the Atlantic islands has been seen as an essential part of many archaeological projects for over twenty years, and work has ranged from the immediate contexts of very particular archaeological environments (e.g. Buckland & Perry 1989) to the more regional off-site studies of human impact, from viewpoints which range from the sedimentological (e.g. Jakobsen 1991a & b; Amorosi *et al.* 1997; Simpson *et al.* 2001) to the palynological (e.g. Fredskild 1978; 1988; Hallsdóttir 1987; 1995; Jóhansen 1985). To these should also be added the remarkable framework of isochrones that tephrochronology has provided (cf. Buckland & Dugmore 1991; Dugmore & Newton 1998; Larsen *et al.* 1999; 2001), the sub-annual record of climate change that the new Greenland ice cores have yielded (Barlow *et al.* 1998; more generally, Mayewski & White 2002), increasingly detailed studies of animal bone assemblages (e.g. Barrett 1997; McGovern *et al.* 1996), and an ever improving understanding of the historical record, both from a purely historical approach (e.g. Vésteinsson 2000) and from that of teasing climatic and other data out from contemporary and near contemporary records (Ogilvie *et al.* 2000; Ogilvie & Jónsson 2001). In addition, knowledge of the archaeological record has been improved by the re-assessment and publication of old finds (e.g. Sveinbjarnardóttir 1996; Friðriksson & Vésteinsson 1997) and important new excavations, particularly that of the site of Gården under Sandet (GUS) in the Western Settlement of Norse Greenland, where palaeoecological sampling formed an integral part of the research design (Arneborg & Gulløv 1998). Most aspects have been brought together in the volume published to accompany the Smithsonian Museum exhibition on the Vikings in the North Atlantic (Fitzhugh & Ward 2000), and previous Viking Congress papers have examined various aspects of the Norse farm, which the palaeoecological, inevitably largely insect record, can elucidate (Buckland *et al.* 1993; 1994). This short contribution does not attempt an overall review, and probably poses more questions than provides answers. It does, however, indicate some of the directions in which palaeoecological research can make further contributions to the Norse and later North Atlantic, and should serve as a means of accessing the rather scattered literature on North Atlantic island human palaeoecology.

The Faroe Islands

Landnám in the Faroe Islands has been the subject of much discussion, stemming initially from the late Jóhannes Jóhansen's (1971; 1979) palynological research, in which he claimed to have evidence of significant pre-Viking impact on the vegetation of the islands, principally in the presence of cereal pollen. The data have been queried on both stratigraphic and historical grounds (Buckland 1992; Krogh 1986), and more recent work on one of his original sites, at Tjørnuvík on Streymoy, has produced opposing interpretations (Buckland & Dinnin 1997; Hannon & Bradshaw 2000). Similarly the site at Ulahlí? on Mykines, the most remote of the islands, has also produced divergent interpretations (Buckland *et al.* 1998; Jóhansen 1979). Part of the problem lies in the location of sites, the first at the base of a steep slope, and the latter at the edge of grassland which elsewhere shows extensive disturbance by puffin nest burrows. At Tjørnuvík, insect faunas show a significant taxonomic radiation as human impact provides a more diverse range of habitats, but the problem lies in dating a site where that same impact results in massive slope instability, as conversion from willow and juniper scrub on the basalt ledges to grassland allows soils of many hundred years development to erode into the valley bottom, taking with it . In addition, despite the proximity of a group of pagan burials (Dahl 1956), the palaeoecological evidence does not indicate the presence of any structures, and only the scarabaeid beetle, *Aphodius lapponum*, reliant on the dung of introduced grazing stock, provides an unimpeachable indication of human activity (Buckland & Dinnin 1998). It is interesting to note that several of the species which are often associated with farms and their middens occur in the Ulahlí? samples, the highly eutrophic nature of the puffinery providing very similar habitats (Buckland *et al.* 1998). Sites which are less likely to have been disturbed by natural and later man-made processes are therefore essential for sorting out Faroese Landnám, which if we are to believe the one near contemporary source, Dicuil (Tierney 1967, but see Thorsteinsson, this vol.), must have taken place before *ca.* AD 825. The site at Toftanes in Leirvík on Esturoy, excavated by Stefan Stumann Hansen (1989), largely fulfils these conditions. Lying just above sea level adjacent to a stream, its three buildings and associated deposits are partly preserved in anaerobic conditions and underlying deposits are also waterlogged. Whilst dating cannot yet be further defined, it is clearly a farm belonging to Norse Landnám, which was occupied for a relatively short period (Edwards *et al.* 1998). Underlying deposits consist of moss peat, with few identifiable insect or plant remains, similar to the pre-Landnám deposits at Tjørnuvík. The few samples in the original pilot study (*idem*) produced surprisingly few beetles associated with stored hay, a feature which is characteristic of all Norse and later sites examined across the North Atlantic region (*cf.* Amorosi *et al.* 1998), and this was taken to indicate that Faroese farmers at Landnám did not need to store winter fodder for their stock. More recent work (Burrows, pers. comm.), however, has yielded significant hay insect assemblages, and the faunas are similar to those from other medieval sites. In itself, this indicates the dangers of relying upon a small number of spot samples, rather than a detailed programme of sampling all suitable deposits, for palaeoenvironmental analysis on archaeological sites; the cost and time implications of this are considerable. Whilst assemblages from archaeological contexts may allow very detailed interpretation (e.g. Buckland & Perry 1989), outfield faunas from both Su?uroy and Sandoy show little change across Landnám, remaining dominated by small staphylinids and a few carabids. Only at Tjørnuvík is the change apparent, and this probably reflects the site's taphonomic catchment, the same which creates the problems over dating. It is curious that the relatively flat mire sites appear to show no change,

in that even exploitation by grazing is likely to have altered their trophic status. Plant macrofossils may possibly show more change in composition in the outfield sites than the beetles, whose faunas are beset by the low taxonomic diversity of island assemblages. Despite the excellent preservation of insects and plant macrofossils, the sediments at Toftanes are too acidic for the preservation of animal bone, and there is still no sizeable modern assemblage of bone published from the Islands to compare with the extensive material from similar sites in Iceland (Amorosi 1991) and Greenland (McGovern 1985; McGovern *et al.* 1996). It is simply not known, whether faced with a landscape of raised mires, juniper and willow scrub and a few tree birches in the more protected localities, the landnámsmen immediately modified their stocking regime accordingly, or whether, bringing a fixed North European pastoral mental model with them, modification of initial strategies was left to natural selection, which lead farms like Toftanes to be abandoned early. Processes leading to site abandonment have been examined in Iceland by Sveinbjarnardóttir (1992), and are critical to the study of Norse Greenland (e.g. Barlow *et al.* 1998), but suitable techniques have yet to be applied to the Faroes. This is an area where a more forensic approach to excavation, including more detailed palaeoecological sampling, would make a major contribution.

Iceland

Since the first tentative attempts at integrated study both on and off-site at Stóraborg in Eyjafjallasveit (Sveinbjarnardóttir *et al.* 1981) and Ketilsstaðir in Mýrdalur (Buckland *et al.* 1986), several lines of palaeoecological research, occasionally sufficiently integrated to be almost holoptic, have been pursued, in particular at Holt in Eyjafjallasveit (Buckland *et al.* 1991) and on the island of Papey, off Berufjörður, where the work suggested only Norse Landnám, and no pre-existing Culdees (Buckland *et al.* 1995). One major on-site study, however, that of Stóraborg, remains unpublished in detail. Whilst animal bone assemblages have been comprehensively reviewed (Amorosi 1996), and study of the timing and intensity of soil erosion examined to a fine degree (Dugmore & Buckland 1991; Dugmore & Erskine 1994; Olafsdóttir 2001; Simpson *et al.* 2001;), work on other aspects has been patchy, partly as a result of varying preservation of the archaeological record. Despite early promise (Buckland *et al.* 1992), the earlier deposits at Reykholt in Borgarfjörður have so far produced only the biased sample provided by charred plant remains and no insects (Sveinbjarnardóttir, this vol.). In Mývatnssveit, the important re-excavation of Hofstaðir has similarly produced no anaerobic sediments, essential for the overall preservation of organic materials, although application of soil thin section and biochemical techniques have provided important new data (Simpson *et al.* 1999). Molluscan and fish remains from the same deposit showed a surprising marine connection (McGovern 1998) for a site next to Icelandic best known salmon river (Laxá), and this serves to drive home the extended network of the early medieval Icelandic economy, a point which the palaeoecological record is also capable of adding to the Greenland story.

Despite an attempt to wring data from poorly preserved deposits at Svalbarð in Þingeyrar (Zutter 1999), where only bone preservation was good (Amorosi 1992), there are still no integrated studies from the North-East. In the North-West peninsula, the middens at Finnbogastaðir and Gjögur have good organic preservation, but whilst useful for an overview of activities on the farm through time, and regarded as ideal for sampling animal bone assemblages, recent palaeoecological research has moved towards the examination of use of indi-

vidual structures, rooms or activity areas (cf. Rowley-Conwy 1994) and effective spatial sampling across houses, as was carried out only intermittently at Stóraborg, and more recently at GUS, is needed in order to advance site interpretation. In post-medieval Reykholt, it was possible to localise one activity, delousing, by a high concentration of human lice, including the only North Atlantic record of the crab louse, *Pthirus pubis* (Buckland *et al.* 1992), and wool preparation could be inferred from high concentrations of sheep lice, *Damalinia ovis* and keds, *Melophagus ovinus* at Stóraborg (Buckland & Perry 1989). Preservation, however, may be problematic, for whilst keds may be the only recognisable material in poorly preserved samples, lice, and indeed fleas, are usually the first casualties in the sliding scale of preservation. At Bessastaðir, where the house floor material was recovered in one metre square units and sorted by Garðar Guðmundsson, preservation varied extensively across the floor, and no lice or fleas were recovered, although the Greenland palaeoecological evidence would suggest that both people and sheep carried heavy ectoparasite loads (cf. Buckland & Sadler 1989; Sveinbjarnardóttir & Buckland 1983); the presence of sheep parasites within structures otherwise regarded as primarily for human occupation is likely to reflect wool processing, rather than the actual animal. In the initial study of the Bessastaðir midden material (Amorosi *et al.* 1992), the possibility of examining settlement hierarchy based upon the palaeoecological was raised. The additional material includes two species, the blind flightless colydiid *Aglenus brunneus* and the golden spider beetle, *Niptus hololeucus*, with few modern casual records in Iceland, which are likely to have been accidentally introduced to this high status site.

Greenland

The presence of permafrost in the Western Settlement of Norse Greenland provides perhaps the most ideal of conditions for the preservation of the palaeoecological record, and preliminary work on several sites has been published (e.g. Buckland *et al.* 1983; McGovern *et al.* 1983). More recently, the evidence has been used in parallel with the climate data derived from the ice cores to examine the abandonment of the settlement *ca.* 1350 (Buckland *et al.* 1996; Barlow *et al.* 1998). The extensive excavation of the farm at GUS provided an opportunity to carry out an extensive sampling programme, with material being recovered from many of the house floors and related contexts. Interim reports on both the plant macrofossil and the insect data have been published (Buckland *et al.* 1998; Ross 1997). As on the other sites examined in the Western Settlement, house floors for rooms occupied by both humans and animals were equally foul, with animal faeces and the protein feeding flies, *Heleomyza borealis* and *Telemarina flavipes*, often occurring by the hundred in samples of the flooring material, a mix of twigs, moss and hay debris. Such floors have a long history for animal bedding in Scandinavia (cf. Göransson 2002), but their use for humans reflects the need to provide insulation from the permanently frozen ground (Buckland *et al.* 1994). Dissection of the five litre samples of flooring material over a graded series of sieves reinforces the picture of unhygienic conditions. As Tom McGovern (e.g. 1985a & b) long ago noted, fragments of walrus maxilla, the debris from chipping out the valuable ivory tusks, are frequent (pl. 1a), but there is much other bone, a few clearly having passed through the gut of the farm's dog (pl. 1c), but most in sharp, angular fragments (pl. 1b). Based on the paucity of carrion flies, Calliphoridae, and marrow-feeding Diptera, Piophilidae, Skidmore and McGovern (in Buckland *et al.* 1996) have suggested that the degree of bone fragmentation reflects a potential fat deficit in the diet of the Norse farmers, and Skidmore has contrasted the fly fauna (pl. 2) with that of the Palaeoeskimo

site at Qeqetarssuaq, where the carrion fauna is extensive, and Outram (1999) in a re-examination of the bone material from earlier excavations on Norse sites has been able to show that domestic animals show a higher degree of fragmentation than the seals in the same assemblages. The need for sufficient fat to metabolise proteins is a common problem in cultures where the seasonal round lead to a potentially disastrous lean meat diet during the late winter and spring (Speth 1983), but it should be noted that this pattern of bone fragmentation is apparent throughout the occupation of sites in the Western Settlement and does not represent a late response to a dietary crisis. Similar fly faunas and degrees of bone fragmentation are apparent in late and post-medieval deposits at Stóraborg in Iceland, and the assemblages perhaps reflect an inevitable cultural adaptation amongst the more marginal environments occupied by farmers. In addition, there is also a taphonomic problem in comparing the permanently occupied Norse farm with the gluts in abundance, and inevitable wastage, that a Palaeoeskimo kill-site represents. What the tentative conclusion serves to stress most is the need to sieve the bulk of excavated material down to 5mm, subsample for invertebrate and plant macrofossils to at least five litres, and to quantify the scale of bone fragmentation with some agreed index of identifiable against unidentifiable fragments (Outram 2001). With over one hundred additional five litre samples processed, largely from GUS, the virtual absence of fish bone is again apparent, with a few more small vertebrae to fill a guillemot's gullet and little more than a few palatal teeth. It should be stressed that sieving is down to 300µm, and fishbone would easily be recovered at this level. The contrast with Iceland (McGovern & Perdikaris 2001), the Northern Isles (Barrett *et al.* 1999) and even Arctic Norway (Perdikaris 1999) remains, yet study of nitrogen and carbon isotope ratios in bone from Norse Greenlandic cemeteries (Arneborg *et al.* 1999) confirms a significant and increasing marine component in the human diet. The most likely pathway for this is via seal meat, but there remains the possibility that fish were taken from outer fiord stations, gutted and beheaded there, and returned as fillets. The absence of fishing gear in the artifact assemblages, to the extent that Vebæk had to use fishhooks from Lofoten to illustrate Norse Greenland fishing, may merely reflect its storage in remote nausts, now lost to rising sea level. Even if the bulk of fish were returned to the farms for consumption, it is possible that both the feeding of residues to cattle and the grinding of bones to make a palatable mush for domestic animals, and occasionally humans, would have left little trace. This would certainly explain the present of rotary querns on sites in Greenland, but the contrast with sites in Iceland, where bones of marine fish are abundant from the earliest deposits even on sites far inland, like Hofstaðir in Mývatnssveit (McGovern 1998), must be significant; Norse Greenlanders balanced their diet in different ways from the Icelanders. Continuing with the dissection of the floor sample, much of the material consists of twigs (pl. 1d). These often retain their buds and bud scales are frequent amongst the plant macrofossils. Whilst the net of birch and willow twigs, mixed with wood chips, almost entirely of conifer driftwood (pl. 1e), whose ultimate origin is likely to have been largely Siberian (Eggertsson 1993; 1994) provided the bulk of floor insulation (Buckland *et al.* 1994), the twigs also had another use, that as fodder for animals. Use of leaf fodder extends back to the Neolithic (Troels-Smith 1984), and has many ethnographic parallels, a North Atlantic example being provided by Jón Jónsson's diary (1887), where in desperation in an attempt to keep his overwintered stock alive in a year when summer arrived late in Mývatnssveit, he went out and cut every exposed new growth of twigs he could find. In Norse Greenland, gathering of twig fodder is likely to have been the norm (Amorosi *et al.* 1998), a

point indicated by pollen from ovicaprid dung pellets, which shows >98% *Betula* (birch) (Craigie & Edwards, pers. comm.). This should not, however, be taken to indicate stress or marginality. McGovern (pers. comm.) has indicated the greater frequency of goats over sheep in Greenland compared with Iceland, and these are better able to metabolise woody tissue. Wear patterns on the teeth of both Norse and modern Greenlandic sheep have been studied by Mainland (2000).

Further exploitation of marine resources, as animal food, is also evident in the sample. The fragments of large mussel, *Mytilus edulis*, shell (pl. 1f) have fractures which would be consistent with breakage by large herbivore teeth, and it seems probable that these were collected up and fed to cattle, whose long annual stalling regime could easily have led to calcium deficiency. Seaweed also turns up on both coastal and inland farms (pl. 1g), indicated either by the charred bladders of *Fucus* sp., fragments of the hydroid *Dynamena pumila*, which lives attached to seaweed, and is almost ubiquitous on sites across the Norse Atlantic (Buckland *et al.* 1993), or occasional members of the wrack fauna, either the Coleoptera in *Micralymma marina* or the numerous flies which breed along the strandline. Both sheep and cattle will freely graze among the heaps of seaweed cast up on the shore (pl. 3), but there are other uses for the material, and charred debris is unlikely to reflect fodder. In balancing a diet, a frequent limiting factor is salt, and in the internal subsistence economy of the farms there was no place for its import from Europe. Whilst additional salt is unlikely to have been essential in a diet where meat was eaten either air-dried in skemma or smoked rather than boiled, it may have been used in the preservation of some foods such as seal meat and seabirds. Martin Martin (1695) in his account of the Western Isles off the Scottish coast, refers to meat preservation in seaweed ash as a particular delicacy. At GUS, the contents of a soapstone pot consisted of charred seaweed and large numbers of the puparia of the fly *Heleomyza borealis*, a species which Skidmore (1996) has dubbed the Viking Housefly; it seems probable that these were feeding on meat preserved in the pot in seaweed ash.

The end of the Norse farms in Greenland never ceases to fascinate (see most recently, Seaver 1996; Lynnerup 1998). Explanations have ranged from abduction by pirates to 'it got cold so they died' (with apologies to Tom McGovern). Having refined the models of landscape exploitation, from stocking models to input from wild plant and animal sources (*cf.* McGovern, in Barlow *et al.* 1998), it is here that the palaeoecological record might be expected to provide the answers. In fact, the evidence is often enigmatic. Despite Vebæk's (1992, 108) conviction that the scattered fragments of human bone in the passage at Ø167 represent the last Norse inhabitant, countered by Lynnerup *et al.*'s (1992) study of the bones, no site has yet yielded its last occupants. At Nipaitsoq (V54), however, Skidmore (1996) was convinced that the fly faunas indicate not only the cooling down of the farm in its final phase of occupation, but also that the presence of a carrion fauna in the room interpreted as the sleeping quarters indicates that the last inhabitants died there, although if that is the case, there were still people around to bury the dead. Across the river at GUS, there is no clear evidence of any terminal decay, although there is some support for Schweger's (1998) suggestion, based on geomorphological mapping that the farm's grazing and hayfield were being damaged by the river in its later phases. It is curious that the complete goat in Room 22, an animal which apparently crawled into the room and died, has neither a carrion fauna nor evidence of other activities at the farm. The animal belongs to Phase VI of the farm, dated to 1250-60 by the excavators (Arneborg, pers. comm.), and the room is reused in a subsequent phase, although not the terminal one.

Is there a suggestion here that the site was abandoned for time before being rebuilt? The insect faunas from over the burnt long house of phase I-II would also suggest a significant gap before the site was re-occupied. The palaeoecological record is hinting at the dynamics of site occupation and desertion, something well known from the better documented medieval to post-medieval record in Iceland (Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992), but there remain serious sampling and taphonomic problems, as well as financial ones; detailed palaeoecological research is time intensive, requires specialists to be on site for much of the time, informing the sampling strategy, and individual samples may take a person-week to process and identify, employing specialists from several fields – such a fully integrated programme has yet to be carried out, or rather funded. The terminal phase of GUS is instructive. In pools, which developed in the collapsed depressions of the turf roof, there is no trace of the fauna, which was able to thrive in the artificially warm rooms of the farm, in its stored fodder and flooring materials, but there are still sheep, curiously indicated by large numbers of their lice but no keds. The picture is of the animals using the shelter of the abandoned buildings after its inhabitants had long gone, but were the sheep animals of another farm still occupied, or perhaps some of those seen by Ivar Barðarsson (Halldórsson 1978)? Lynnerup's (1998) model of gradual attrition of the communities and a final abandonment by the last families, moving first to the Eastern Settlement, and perhaps finally to Iceland, gains some support from the palaeoecological research – “This is the way the World ends, not with a bang but a whimper”.

The Lofoten Islands, Norway

Despite lying north of the Arctic Circle, the Lofoten group of islands, from Andøya in the north to Rust in the south enjoy a cool temperate climate. In the medieval period, their abundant fisheries, largely for cod, underpinned urbanisation further south by providing stockfish, and the foundation of the first town in the Arctic, Vågan on Vågøya, reflected the king's need to exercise his monopoly of violence (*sensu* Skovgaard-Petersen 1981) in the North in collecting taxes on this product (Bertelsen 1985). Although it is possible to ripen barley this far north, the fishing connection made the balance, cereals in and stockfish out a more viable option, and it is not surprising that amongst the few insects remains recovered from the earliest deposits at Vågan is the grain weevil *Sitophilus granarius*. Further north, at Langenes, on the north end of Vesturoy, extensive organic sediments remain from a fishing station which was finally abandoned for a nearby deeper harbour site at Stø in the middle of the last century. Two series of samples have been examined, one adjacent to the beach where the fishing boats were drawn up and another closer to the church where any associated farm might be expected (Buckland *et al.* in press). A previous study of soil micromorphology (Simpson *et al.* 2000) had suggested that neither site included substantial evidence for permanent occupation as a farm, and the insect faunas similarly indicate no evidence of farming, and the site is interpreted as a fishing station. In addition, the occurrence of the grain fauna again showed the importation of cereals from the south, and a number of elements in the beetle faunas imply origins either in England or the southern Baltic. In addition, the successions, through separate middens include elements which may indicate the medieval warm period and the subsequent decline in temperatures into the Little Ice Age (Buckland & Wagner 2001), although more work on the modern faunas is required to substantiate this.

Faunal Connections

The origins of Atlantic island biota have been much discussed (e.g. Buckland & Dugmore 1991; Buckland *et al.* 1998; Rundgren & Ingólfsson 1999), and a baseline established for the nature, if not the detail of landscapes at Landnám. The scale of human introductions in the recent past to both flora (e.g. Davíðsson 1967; Pedersen 1972) and fauna (e.g. Böcher 1988; Ólafsson & Richter 1985), and the fossil record from archaeological sites has shown how much of this extends back, often to Landnám (e.g. Buckland *et al.* 1991). In terms of insects, the ectoparasite and fodder faunas are all early immigrants (Sadler & Skidmore 1995; Amorosi *et al.* 1998), the former inevitable uninvited guests and the latter an inevitable consequence of transporting domestic stock by sea. Cleaning out of thin-skinned clinker-built boats on arrival explains the initial arrival of many species, from the relatively thermophilic fly *Teleomarina flavipes* to the slime mould feeding plaster beetle *Lathridius pseudominutus*, and other species, like the stored grain fauna at Bessastaðir (Amorosi *et al.* 1992), came in with commodities, but differences between the synanthropic insect communities of the islands is interesting, and not merely a reflection of the stochastic nature of hitchhiker success, or the differing scale of research, although both the Faroes and Greenland's Eastern Settlement are so far poorly served. The dung beetle, *Aphodius lapponum*, is introduced at Landnám in both the Faroes and Iceland, but seems to fail to establish itself in Greenland, despite the presence of indigenous caribou, and their dung. It is unlikely that it failed to obtain a lift – several species of the same genus later make it to North America (Buckland *et al.* 1995b), and it is widespread north of the Arctic Circle in Scandinavia (Landin 1961). Is the answer relevant to archaeological interpretation? Whilst there is much well preserved dung from the farm sites, was most dung in the fields assiduously collected up either for fuel or manure, and therefore denied as habitat to the insect population? The grain fauna, particularly the weevil *Sitophilus granarius* and the saw-toothed grain beetle *Oryzaephilus surinamensis* are a useful indicator of imported cereals in Iceland, but have yet to be found in Greenlandic samples. Considering the ubiquity of these pests elsewhere (Buckland 1991), Greenland's rotary querns were not for imported barley. In the few samples examined from two midden succession at Ø34 in the Eastern Settlement, the range of imported insect pests is significantly greater than in the numerous samples from sites in the Western Settlement. Does this indicate more regular contacts with either Iceland or Europe in the Eastern Settlement, is it merely stochastic, or were there differences in the resource base of the farmers, something which the animal bone data has already suggested (McGovern 1992)? It should also be noted that the speed with which the hay fauna disperses to inland sites implies slightly more than a few casual travellers on the pack horses of the landsnámsmen, but an integrated community in which hay, as well as the results of the communal hunt or in the case of Iceland, fish, could be shared; both historical records and animal bone data support this point (Amorosi *et al.* 1998).

Interpretation of the palaeoecological record relies heavily upon ecological information, and extensive pitfall trapping of the modern fauna has been carried out on all the islands (Bengtson 1981; Buckland *et al.* 1991; 1998), as well as higher in the Arctic on Ellesmere Island (Godfrey & Skidmore 1997). Inevitably this has added new species to the lists. In trapping around GUS, the small staphylinids *Mycetoporus nigrans* was found to be common; its presence in a sample from the site shows that it is not a recent introduction. The fossil record from sites has also confirmed the native status of several species. The flightless Nearctic moss beetle, *Arctobyrrhus subcanus* is known from the Rockies and SW Canada, and the

Narssarsuaq region of Greenland. Given the close connection of the former airbase there with the US, an accidental recent introduction seemed possible; it appears in a sample from GUS. For those given to flights of fancy, much could be made of this, but the probability is that it is native to Greenland and not a Norse accidental traveller from North America. Similarly the rare omaliine staphylinids *Orochares angustatus* also from GUS, with only two records from SE England (Lott 2002) and a few from southern Scandinavia and Holstein, is probably part of the native fauna. These examples serve to emphasise the point that palaeoecological research is a process which leads in many directions, informing biogeographic and ecological questions, as well as archaeological ones.

Acknowledgements

This research attempts to summarise a few of the results from two on-going Leverhulme Trust funded projects, the one in the University of Sheffield examining the use of true flies (Diptera) in archaeological interpretation carried out by one of the authors (EP), and the other, to examine the impact of Norse Landnám on the Atlantic islands, directed by Kevin Edwards of the University of Aberdeen. Primary acknowledgement must go to the Trustees for enabling this important work. None of this would have been possible without the ready cooperation of numerous archaeologists, in particular, Claus Andreassen, Jette Arneborg and Joel Berglund (Greenland), Guðmundur Ólafsson, Mjöll Snæsdóttir, Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir and Orri Vésteinsson (Iceland), Símun Arge and Stefan Stumman Hansen (Faroes), and Reidar Bertelsen (Norway). In addition, as multidisciplinary projects, acknowledgements are due to other specialists who gave freely of their data, Phil Buckland and Kim Burrows (palaeoentomology), Andy Dugmore and Guðrún Larsen (tephrochronology), Kevin Edwards (palynology), Bent Fredskild (botany), Garðar Guðmundsson and Julie Ross (plant macrofossils), Tom McGovern and Sophia Perdikaris (archaeozoology), Charlie Schweger (geomorphology), and Peter Skidmore (Diptera).

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Chapter 17

Walrus ivory – demand, supply, workshops, and Greenland

Else Roesdahl

There was always in Europe, and elsewhere, a solid demand for rare, good-looking and exotic materials to be worked into objects of beauty for use in religious institutions and by the aristocracy for display. Indeed, there was always a demand for *exotica* as such. In the Viking Age, as both long before and after, the most valuable materials were naturally gold, silver and precious stones – but also ivory (from elephant or walrus, or even hippopotamus and mammoth). Other serious *exotica* would include rare furs and skins, of polar bear, lion and the like, and, indeed, rare live animals, such as the elephant presented to Charlemagne by Harun al Rashid and the polar bear given (according to the Icelandic chronicle *Hungrvaka*) to the German emperor Henry the Third by the Icelander Isleif c.1055. *Exotica* came to include the narwhal tusk, which during the Middle Ages was believed to be the horn of the unicorn. Such tusks were exceedingly valuable, and examples are known from many of the great medieval treasuries of Europe; examples from the Viking Age seem, however, unknown (refs. in Roesdahl 1995; 1998a; 2003).

Rare materials came from the far South or East – from Africa or Asia – but they also came from the far North – from the seas around Greenland, north Norway and Russia. Such northern rarities were polar bears and their skins, narwhal tusks and walrus ivory. From an economic point of view walrus ivory must have been by far the most important of these, particularly from c.1000 until the mid-thirteenth century. Objects made from this material are widely spread – surviving in some quantity in Britain (including a few in Ireland), the western and central parts of continental Europe, and in Scandinavia (Goldschmidt 1914-26; Gaborit-Chopin 1978; *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, 1984: cat.nos. 112-32; Liebgott 1985). The Arab world also appreciated walrus ivory (Tegengren 1962).

The study of walrus ivory

Walrus ivory has mainly been studied by art historians, who, naturally, concentrate on artistic and aesthetic features of the finished art works, of which an amazing number, mostly unprovenanced, is preserved in the major museums of Scandinavia, Western Europe and the United States. Until fairly recently publications commonly did not distinguish between elephant and walrus ivory, or indeed distinguish either from bone. The word 'bone' has often been used as a common descriptor of all these materials.

In this paper walrus ivory will be discussed from an archaeological point of view, and mainly in relation to its economic importance to the Norse in Greenland and to its use in Western Europe. An archaeological approach is now possible because excavations provide ever-increasing numbers of provenanced and often quite well-dated finds of this material. Further, the material found ranges from finished artefacts of good artistic quality, to rather simple objects. The finds include offcuts and other workshop waste, as well as the frontals of walrus skulls (in which the tusks sat) and – especially from the farms of Greenland – numerous finds of fragments of skulls and the roots of tusks, produced while working tusks free from the skull. A few complete, unworked tusks are also known from archaeological contexts (fig. 1).

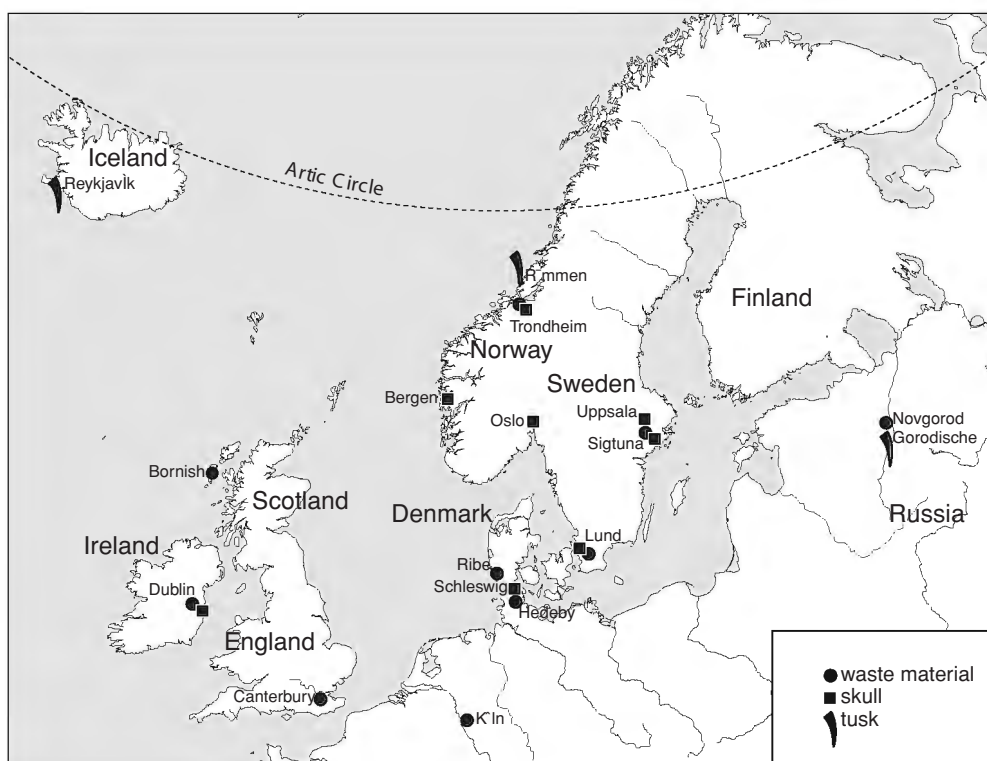


Fig. 1: Finds of Viking Age and Medieval walrus tusks, walrus ivory waste material and walrus skull fragments in Europe, as known to the author in 2003. Each signature indicates one or more objects. The skull frontal with tusks now in Le Mans is not shown, as it was almost certainly acquired from elsewhere. Drawing: Louise Hilmar 2003.

The increasing number of identifications of walrus ivory is naturally due to the increasing amount of specialist work on 'bone' material from excavations. Many walrus ivory fragments have easily recognisable characteristics in relation to bone and elephant ivory (MacGregor

1985: 14ff.) and any archaeologist should, with very little training, be able to recognise it, or at least pick out problematic pieces for further inspection.

On walrus and elephant ivory, access to the materials and chronology

Walrus is a circumpolar species. These huge mammals live exclusively in Greenland and Canadian waters and in the waters along the northern coasts of Norway, Russia and Alaska. In the Viking Age there also was a population of walrus along the western and northern coasts of Iceland. The ivory itself comes from two overgrown teeth which are found in both male and female. Male tusks are the larger, as much as 60cm in length (to which must be added the hollow at the base (Muus et al. 1981: 405-8; Kristjánsson 1986: 93-97). They are, therefore, not nearly as large as their nearest equivalent – elephant tusks. Unlike elephant ivory, they have a yellowish grainy core, which may be seen on deeply-carved objects, as, for example, some of the twelfth-century Lewis chessmen. On the other hand walrus ivory has a smoother and shinier surface than elephant ivory and is more pleasant to the touch (MacGregor 1985: 14ff.).

Elephant ivory had been known and used in Europe since antiquity for objects of very high status. From the mid-ninth century, however, if not before, access to this ivory became difficult in Western Europe, and it was not until the thirteenth century that elephant ivory again became more readily available to craftsmen (Gaborit-Chopin 1997; 1992). The closest substitute, despite the fact that the tusks were smaller, was walrus ivory.

Walrus ivory was known and occasionally used for decorated objects in western Europe before the supplies of elephant ivory ceased. A small number of pre-Viking Age objects of this material are known, among them a finely carved belt-buckle from a Cologne grave of c. AD600 and the late eighth-century Gandersheim casket of Anglo-Saxon workmanship, now in Brunswick (*Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen*, 2000). Walrus ivory began to be used in Scandinavia and western Europe in the Viking Age; at first on a small scale in the second half of the ninth century – at the main period of the Viking raids. Examples include some fine religious carvings attributed to the court of the Frankish king Charles the Bald around 870-80 (fig. 2). Interestingly, walrus tusks are also mentioned around 890, in Ohthere's unique account to Alfred the Great of his economic base in northern Norway and his long-distance travels. He stated that one of his journeys, which went to lands east of North Cape – usually identified with the White Sea region – was undertaken mainly in order to acquire walrus tusks. On a further journey he went south to Sciringesheal (almost certainly Kaupang in Vestfold), and on to Hedeby; on another he sailed west to Wessex, where he presented King Alfred with some tusks. Other riches from the North mentioned in his account included particularly good-quality ropes for ships made of walrus hide, as well as various sorts of animals' skin and fur, and eiderdown (literally birds' feathers). It appears that Ohthere obtained such goods from the Saami (Lund (ed.) 1983).

Excavations reveal more and more walrus ivory. In Reykjavík in 2001, for example, three complete tusks were found on the floor of a house dated c. 925-75 (Orri Vésteinsson: pers. comm.; McGovern 2001), while in 1999 the excavations in Gorodische, near Novgorod, revealed another complete – albeit small – tusk from a tenth century context (Evgenij Nosov: pers. comm.). We may surmise that this latter tusk from a high status site came from the waters north of Russia and demonstrates that this material was also valued in the eastern part of the Viking world in the early to mid-Viking Age. But it is impossible to say whether the



Fig. 2: Two walrus ivory panels with representations of Apostles, from a casket or portable altar. Height 4.8 cm. Carved in Francia c. 870-80. Photo: Musée du Louvre.

Gorodische tusk was destined for western Europe, as such ivory was much valued also by Arab rulers to the south, where tusks were known as 'fish teeth' (Tegengren 1962).

In the early to mid-Viking Age walrus ivory must, then, have come from the waters off both northern Norway and Russia. Most of this would have been acquired from Saami or other northern peoples, or have come from hunting expeditions to the north. After the settlement of Iceland, from c. 870 onwards, some tusks would also come thence. This was a period of exploration and expansion to the north – one of the reasons for which would have been the quest for valuable trade goods.

The use of walrus ivory in southern Scandinavia and Western Europe, however, first really gained momentum by the late tenth century or c.1000 – at the time of the discovery and settlement of Greenland. Here walrus was plentiful and there were at that time no competitors in the hunt for them. Henceforward, and increasingly until the early thirteenth century, objects of walrus ivory are, as we have seen, well known in large parts of northern and western Europe. One of the earliest surviving artefacts produced in Scandinavia and embellished with

walrus ivory plaques is the Bamberg casket, which is decorated in the Mammen style (Muhl 1990). The walrus ivory hilt of the so-called St. Stephen's sword, now in Prague, is of the same date (Roesdahl 1998b: 551f.), while fine walrus ivory carvings in the Winchester style (fig. 3) were produced in the Channel region c.1000 (Gaborit-Chopin 1978; *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, 1984, cat. nos. 112-32; Roesdahl 1995; 1998a).



*Fig. 3: The Baptism of Christ on a walrus ivory panel, perhaps from a book cover. Height 9.1 cm. Unknown provenance. Carved in the late Anglo-Saxon Winchester style in the last quarter of the tenth century. After *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, cat. no. 117. Photo: The British Museum.*

No trace element analyses have yet been carried out on finished objects in order to determine scientifically whether the ivory itself normally came from Greenland waters, or from north Norwegian/Russian waters. Hopefully such examination will be possible in the not too distant future.

Walrus ivory and Greenland

It seems extremely probable that the Norse in Greenland supplied the main bulk of ivory to Scandinavia, the British Isles and continental western Europe from around 1000 until the demand for walrus ivory declined in the 13th century (the demand for all types of ivory temporarily collapsed c.1400).

It is thought that, when the Norse arrived in Greenland, there was probably a small population of walrus around the Western Settlement, but the main hunting grounds were about 800 km to the north, in Disko Bay. Regular hunting expeditions must thus have been organised in order to acquire the valuable tusks. As we have seen, many years of excavation in Norse farms in Greenland have produced many offcuts of walrus tusks and fragments of the frontals of walrus, particularly in older levels and on more important farms. Other bones from walrus are rare, thus demonstrating that tusks were frequently brought from the hunting grounds while still in place in the frontal – a part of the otherwise very solid skull that can be broken or cut off without too much difficulty. The tusks themselves could then be carefully removed from the skull at the farms to make them ready for the market (McGovern 1985: Table 11, Appendix B et passim; Vebæk 1993: 66ff.; Buckland et al. 1994; survey in Arneborg 1999). Skull fragments found in Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe show, however, that some tusks were exported while still attached to the frontal.

In some cases tusks were deliberately left in the skull frontal and the whole was sold, bartered or used as grand gifts. Such products would have been *exotica* used for display, and were clearly much valued in Scandinavia and western Europe. Króka-Refs saga, for example, tells of a precious gift from a Greenland chieftain to King Haraldr Hardruler in Norway of such a walrus skull with tusks much carved and inlaid with gold (Roesdahl 1995: 16; 1998a: 22). Further, in many early towns in Scandinavia – Trondheim, Bergen, Oslo, Sigtuna, Uppsala, Lund and Schleswig, and Dublin – complete or large fragments of the frontal part of walrus skulls have been found, some of them with decoration and runic inscriptions (Roesdahl 1995: 16; 1998a: 21f.). Naturally the tusks had usually been removed before the skulls were eventually discarded (figs. 1 and 4), but in the Musée Vert at Le Mans a complete front part of a decorated skull is preserved in which both tusks survive. A runic inscription on one of the tusks dates them to the medieval period (Stoklund 2001). It is interesting, incidentally, that the idea of using the tusks and frontals of walrus skulls as prestigious gifts seems to be universal in time and culture. Such formal gifts from modern Greenland are, for example, displayed in the Town Hall of Copenhagen. Thus it is tempting to think that the tusks brought by Ohthere to king Alfred in about 890 consisted of a finely ornamented frontal with its tusks.

Only a few decorated ivory objects have been found in Greenland, the most important being the late twelfth-century bishop's crozier head from Gardar/Igaliko and a chess queen found in an Inuit camp (*From Viking to Crusader*, 1992, cat. no. 344; Arneborg 1999: 359). Other objects found there include belt-buckles, gaming pieces and some miniature animal sculpture (Roussel 1936: 118-23; Arneborg 1999: passim). Recent excavations in the Eastern settlement have shown that ivory belt buckles were indeed carved there (Georg Nyegaard: pers. comm.).

The export of tusks (and skulls with tusks) from Greenland must have been highly organised, probably from the great farms (Arneborg 1999; 2000), and the ivory must have passed through a number of hands before a European customer saw a finished product. Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century written sources tell of vast quantities of Greenland tusks paid to the



Fig. 4: Walrus skull (frontal) from excavations at Christchurch Place, Dublin, 12th-13th century. The tusks and all other teeth had been removed. Also shown is the sawn-off and discarded hollow root end of a tusk from the excavations at Fishamble Street, Dublin, c. AD1000. This was here been placed in the skull. Photo: National Museum of Ireland.

Church. In 1327 – at a time when elephant ivory was again easily available – a delivery was received by the archbishop in Trondheim and sold on in Bergen to a merchant from Flanders (Roesdahl 1995: 33; 1998a: 43f.). But Viking and early medieval trade routes were rather different. One went by way of Iceland or Norway, to the north of Scotland and so to Dublin, and perhaps further to southern England and France. Another route must have gone south from Norway to Denmark (one of Ohthere's journeys) and from there to western Europe. And some ivory may well have been paid as tribute by Norwegian chieftains to Danish Viking kings, when they held power in Norway.

Europe

Carved ivory came to many places in Europe during the late Viking Age and even more frequently in the early Middle Ages, and some art centres of manufacture have long ago been identified by art historians. The picture can now be further illuminated by archaeology. Workshop waste shows that walrus ivory was also worked in other places (figs. 1 and 4). The evidence consists sometimes of just a few cut-offs – often fragments of the hollow base of the tusk, which could not easily be used. Dates for such manufacture, when available, range from the late Viking Age to around 1200.

At present I know of such waste material (from publications and from information given by kind colleagues) at the following sites in Scandinavia: Hedeby, Ribe, Lund, Sigtuna and Trondheim; and in other parts of western Europe, from Cologne, Canterbury, Dublin (Roesdahl 1995: 19-28; 1998a: 26-40; Morten Søvsø: pers. comm. on the Ribe find) and from Bornish in South Uist (Sharples 2000: 14). In eastern Europe waste material is known from Novgorod and a few other north Russian towns (Smirnova 1997; 2001). In Cologne and Canterbury workshops have been identified for some time by art historian (*Ornamenta Ecclesiae*: 427-39; Beckwith 1972: 103-7). The Canterbury workshop well reflects the story, recorded in *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, that an Icelander presented walrus tusks to the shrine of St Thomas there in the late 12th century, at precisely the period when this workshop is thought to have been active (Roesdahl 1998a: 36, note 37). It is also interesting that Dublin, which has provided relatively much waste material of late Viking-Age date, does not seem to have produced much art. There is ample evidence here, however, for the production of pins and simple gaming pieces (*From Viking to Crusader*, 1992, cat. nos. 593-95). It is conceivable that tusks were mainly simply redistributed from Dublin. This is also possibly true of Schleswig, where some 35 small pieces of walrus skull have been found, probably broken off when tusks were removed.

Objects of walrus ivory of high quality were carved both for the Church and for the lay aristocracy, as is clear from the wide range of surviving objects. These include reliquaries, mounts for book bindings, crucifixes, crozier-heads, seals, gaming-pieces, belt-buckles, belt mounts, pins, mounts for boxes, sword hilts and much more. They would have been pleasing to the eye, by reason of their delicate carving, and to the hand, by reason of their smooth surface. Religious objects also conveyed the worship of God, and all signalled wealth and status. At the same time skulls with tusks of this huge, exotic, almost legendary, animal were much valued for display purposes.

Conclusions

But the meaning of walrus ivory to the Norse in distant Greenland was very different. It was probably their most important and, certainly their most valuable, export. Together with other goods mentioned in medieval written sources, it allowed for the many necessary imports and ensured a solid interest from, and contact with, the outside world. Tusks were, as has been shown, much appreciated in Scandinavia and western Europe during the first two and a half centuries of Norse settlement in Greenland. Then, as elephant ivory became once more available, the value of walrus ivory declined, as did the prosperity of Norse settlements. Before c.1350 the Western Settlement had been abandoned. By 1400 all ivory had become unfashionable in Europe, and the Norse settlement in Greenland soon died (Roesdahl 1995; 1998a; cf. Arneborg 1999; 2000).

Awareness of this inter-relation between the demand for elephant and walrus ivory – dependent on world trade routes, of changing views concerning fine materials and of access to them – is crucial to an understanding of the history of the Norse in Greenland. Further, the example of the study of walrus ivory points to the fact that even small societies in 'remote' parts of the World must be studied (if we wish to understand their development) within wider contexts. No society is, or was, an 'island'.

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Chapter 18

Between Rök and Skagafjörður – Icelandic runes and their connection with the Scandinavian runes of the Viking period.

Pórgunnur Snædal

Some year at the beginning of the ninth-century a man named *Varinn* erected a rune stone in memory of his late son *Væmóðr*. This memorial was to become the most famous of all rune stones, the Rök stone. Now it stands in its own rather cute little shelter just outside the churchyard of Rök in Östergötland in southeast Sweden (fig. 1). Clearly *Varinn* wanted to show off his runic skills and so did not make it easy for the readers of the long inscription. He used both the older Primitive Norse 24-rune futhark and the younger short-twig 16-rune futhark. Furthermore, he used at least four kinds of cipher or cryptic runes. This is one reason why the Rök stone is unique. It is also unique as a literary document of the early Viking age with its allusions to now lost legends and the magnificent stanza in the metre *fornyrðislag* about Theoderic the Great, thirdly it's unique as it shows that the art of making different types of cryptic runes based on the division of the futhark into three *ættir* 'groups of eight', and the place of each rune within its group, was already well established. In this divided futhark the groups are (usually) numbered backwards and in Icelandic its name is *þríðeilir*¹ (fig. 2).

Cryptic runes based on the same principle as the Rök stone runes are quite common in Scandinavian runic inscriptions up to the end of the fourteenth-century, or presumably as long as the runes were in use in the Scandinavian countries. They appear on Swedish rune stones from the eleventh-century and were known in Bergen and other Norwegian towns in the middle ages.² I am convinced that many of the future settlers of Iceland were acquainted with this widespread tradition and brought it with them to the new country in the late ninth-century and consequently that runes of this kind were known in Iceland from the beginning of the settlement.

It is fascinating, given the almost infinite possibilities of creating new ciphers based on the *þríðeilir*, that the varieties seen on the Rök stone seem to have been known in Iceland for more than 700 years. We know this because we meet them again in Icelandic manuscripts from the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries and from these manuscripts we also learn the names of the different types of cryptic runes used in the Rök stone inscription and elsewhere. I am convinced that these names are as old as the cryptic runes themselves and helped the users to remember what each kind of cipher looked like. Therefore I also believe that already



Fig. 1: The Rök stone with the *hialm-rún* (helmet-rune) in the bottom row and the *tiald* or (weaving tablet) runes at the top. Photo: Bengt A. Lundberg.

Fig. 2: The futharks and the system of *þrídeilur*.

ÞRÍDEILUR

The primitive Norse futhark with 24 runes:

3. Fés ætt:	ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ
	f u þ æ r k g w
2. Hagals ætt:	h t l s c j y z
	h n i j p e r s
1. Týs ætt:	ṭ Ḅ Ṁ Ṁ Ṁ Ṁ Ṁ
	t b e m l n g d o

The two types of Viking Age 16 rune futhark: Normal runes and short-twig runes:

3. ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ	2. * † † † † †	1. ṭ Ḅ Ṁ Ṁ Ṁ Ṁ
ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ	† † † † † †	† † † † †
f u þ æ r k	h n i a s	t b m l n/y
3:1 3:2 3:3 3:4 3:5 3:6	2:1 2:2 2:3 2:4 2:5	1:1 1:2 1:3 1:4 1:5

In *Haugbúaletr* each rune is replaced by the next one following in the 16 rune futhark, *h t l s* would be written *ṭ Ṁ Ṁ Ṁ* **pskai**

at Varinn's time there existed some kind of runic lore, either carved down on wooden sticks or entirely oral, from which Varinn could choose the appropriate cryptic runes for his son's memorial. The oldest Icelandic manuscript with cryptic runes, from around the year 1500 (AM 687 4:to), even shows the ciphers from the top of the Rök stone (fig. 3), the *tiald*- or *spiald*-runes, at the very beginning of a list of such cryptic runes.³

More detailed information about the names and use of such cryptic runes in Iceland is provided from Björn Jónsson. He lived at the end of the 16th and the first half of the seventeenth-century (1574-1655) in *Skagafjörður* in northern Iceland on his farm *Skarðsá*, not very far from the episcopal seat, Hólar. Björn was not an educated man, although he was a *lögréttumaður* (a kind of judge), but just like *Varinn* in Östergötland 800 years before, he was a historian, a genealogist and a fair poet. In short he was a typical Icelandic *fræðimaður* (local historian) and wrote several treatises on different topics. In 1642 Björn wrote a treatise on runes: *Nokkuð lítið samtak um rúnir* (A short treatise on runes), which remains unprinted but is an important and often quoted work.

Björn was a sensible man and it's evident that he knew much about the Icelandic runic tradition. He knew many different types of cryptic runes mainly based on the *þrídeilur*, each with its own name, and in his treatise he states that their names are of three different types:

X Solrunes † Kvistrunes
 Y Helmar Y Miskelmar Gofn
 Hagn af Gialme. X Spiallrunes.
 N uppLendkar Runes

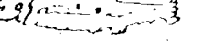
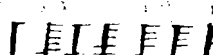
 Siphonius
 Stas
 Karla Letur
 pels^u mynd^u fleiri vil ec her ec fetid, þa
 eni flúgnu rún tvenar ec Safa þessar

Fig. 3: Cryptic runes in Björn Jónsson's runic treatise in the manuscript Papp. Fol. 38 in Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm, including: The *helmur* (helmet-runes). The *tiald-* or *spiald*-runes (tent- or (weaving) tablet runes), termed *spjall*-runes by Björn, and the *stafkallaletur* (beggars' letters, shaped as walking sticks).

Firstly the cryptic runes are named after their shape, secondly after the country or landscape where they came from or have been used and thirdly after their function or purpose. At the very beginning of Björns list of cryptic runes we see the varieties of the Rök stone (fig. 3):

The *helmur* (helmet-runes).

The *stafkallaletur* (beggars' letters, shaped as walking sticks), these are of the same type as the runes on the side of the Rök-stone (fig. 4). Later Björn explains the *haugbúaletur*, (mound-dweller runes); the cipher runes found in the bottom line of the Rök stone on each side of the helmet-rune.



Fig. 4: *Stafkarlaletur*, *beggars' letters*, on the side of the *Rök* stone. Photo: Bengt A. Lundberg.

It is evident from *Björn's* words that the knowledge of cryptic runes and *Þríðeilur* was in no way exclusive in Iceland in the seventeenth-century. Such knowledge was closely connected with poetry writing, as he states that everybody who wants to be a poet and be renowned for poetic skills has to master the cryptic runes, the names of the runes and the runic poem.

We get further help in reconstructing the runic lore of Iceland in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries from the work of the well known antiquarian *Jón Ólafsson* (1705- 1779), or *Grunnavíkur Jón* as he is often called, after his birthplace in western Iceland. Jón was a man of many interests and among his works is *Rúnareidsla* (*Runologia*), completed in 1752. This has never been printed although it contains much interesting material. Here Jón explains the manifold types of cryptic runes with the help of some now lost manuscripts. As in *Björn's* treatise, the *Rök* type of cryptic runes is found at the very beginning of Jón's list: *Híælm-Rwnir* (helmet runes) and then *Spelld-Rwnir* (*Runologia* p. 163,169) (fig. 5).

The oldest of Jón's cited manuscripts was, according to him, written in the middle of the sixteenth-century.⁵ It contains a collection of 24 different cryptic runes, and the manuscript writer maintains that this collection is called *Fjölnir*. *Fjölnir* is one of Odin's many names and means 'the very wise' or 'one who can appear in many shapes', an appropriate name for a book of cryptic runes. Odin was of course the creator of the runes and the number 24 is the same as the number of runes in the older futhark. This can hardly be a mere coincidence.⁶

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Fig. 5: *Hjælm-Rwnir* (helmet-runes) and *Spelld-Rwnir* (weaving) tablet runes) at the beginning of Jón Ólafsson's list of chipher runes in his *Rúnareiðsla* (*Runologia*).

The number 24 does seem to go back to an old tradition connected with Skagafjörður and Hólar, because Jón also quotes Arngrímur Jónsson the learned, who maintains that *Póroddur rúnameistari*, the rune-master, knew and used 24 types of cryptic runes. This *Póroddur* is said to have revised the Icelandic futhark together with Ari Þorkelsson the learned (1068-1148),

Fig. 6: The cupboard made by Hjalmar Jónsson with runes and "Viking Age" ornamentation. Photo: Þjóðminjasafn Íslands.



the writer of the Book of the Icelanders,⁷ and is presumably the same person as Þóroddur Gamlason who lived at the episcopal seat of Hólar at the beginning of the twelfth-century.⁸ Arngrímur Jónsson the learned (1568-1648) is also connected with Hólar where he was a priest and principal of the school. He is also very much connected with the preservation of the Icelandic runic tradition. His work *Crymogæa* (1609) made the Icelandic sagas known in Europe and there the Icelandic runes were printed for the first time. Arngrímur also gave the famous Danish antiquarian Ole Worm valuable information about the use of runes in Iceland.

It is no coincidence that all three of them: Þóroddur, Arngrímur and Björn lived in *Skagafjörður* and were connected with the episcopal seat, which constituted a link with Scandinavia and Europe. In Þóroddur the rune-master's time, the twelfth-century, foreign learning was rapidly making headway in Iceland and the Latin alphabet, written on parchment, was coming into use for recording historical events, laws etc. (Halldór Hermannsson 1930 p. 23). It was natural to compare the new writing system with the runes and to discuss how to preserve the runes and runic lore. 500 years later Arngrímur Jónsson who had studied in Denmark and was aware of the new interest in old history and runes in Scandinavia at the beginning of the seventeenth-century decided to make the Icelandic historical tradition known outside Iceland.

Björn Jónsson knew about Ole Worm's interest in Icelandic runes through his connection with the Hólar bishop Þorlákur Skúlason (1597-1656). Although Björn was not able to read Worm's works it is evident from his treatise that he was inspired by Worm to record his own knowledge of the Icelandic runic tradition.

The Icelanders continued to be interested in the runic tradition, writing down old types and making up new types of cryptic runes right up to the beginning of the twentieth-century, although it must be admitted that by that time not much was left of the old tradition of the *þrúðr* and the cryptic runes. It is in *Skagafjörður*, whose inhabitants are still renowned for their interest in history, literature and poetry, that we encounter some of the youngest examples of the long-lived Icelandic runic tradition both in manuscripts and on household articles of various kinds. In the second half of the nineteenth-century Gísli Konráðsson (1768-1877), a well-known local historian and poet, wrote at least two runic manuscripts. At the same time his contemporary and neighbour, the poet, historian and skilled carver, Hjalmar Jónsson (1796-

1875) applied runes to his beautifully carved cupboard. Its ribbon- and plant-shaped roman-style ornamentation testifies to the fact that not only the runes but also the ornamental style of the Viking age was still a living tradition in Iceland at the end of the nineteenth-century (fig. 6).

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Notes

- ¹ The term *ñrideilur* is also used as a name for the Icelandic Runic Poem (Page 1999 p. 1).
- ² A key to this kind of chipher runes appears on a rib from the eleventh-century found in Schleswig 1974. The rib is inscribed with the 16-rune futhark and the three *ættir* are indicated with one, two and three dots respectively. In front of each rune there are one two three etc. dots indicating the position of the rune in each group (Stoklund 1997 p. 111ff., Stoklund & Düwel 2001 p. 150f.).
- ³ See Page 1999 p. 6, plate 1.
- ⁴ The name for these kinds of cryptic runes varies between *tiald-rúnir*, *spiald-rúnir* or *speld-rúnir*. They seem to have got their name either from their likeness to (crossed) tent-poles or the small square weaving-tablets (cf. *spialdvefnaðr* 'weaving in squares').
- ⁵ In his description of the manuscript Jón says (*Rúnareidsla* p. 159): "ñad er á *Membrana*, sem skrifud mun eitthwad um 1550. edur nockru fyr; ñwí Skriftarlaged er mjög lijkt Hende Síra Ñorleifs Biörnssonar, sem lifde umm ñá Tijma, og var á Reykhoolum, en _etta *Pergament* er komed frá Flatey á Breidafirde."
- ⁶ Neither the older futhark nor its number of runes was known at this time.
- ⁷ This information stems from the anonymous writer of the prologue to the four grammatical treatises in Codex Wormianus from around the middle of the 14th century. According to Sigurður Nordal (1931 p. 8) the attempt to reform the runic alphabet must have been made c. 1120–1130.
- ⁸ In the saga of bishop Jón Ögmundsson (1052–1121) this ñóroddur is said to have been very skilled in Latin (*Byskupa sögur* 2 p. 35): "Við kirkjusmíð á Hólum var ñá sá maður, er hagastur var í ñann tíma á Íslandi, er ñóroddur hét og var Gamlason. ñat er sagt frá ñessum manni, at hann hafði svá hvasst næmi, at ñá er hann var at smíð sinni ok hann heyrði, at klerkum var kennd grammatika, en ñat er látínulist, loddí honum ñat svá í eyrum, at hann varð hinn mesti íñróttarmaður í sagðri list."

The connection between being a skilled craftsman and skilled in runes seems to go back to the very beginning of runic history, from the armourers and bracteates-makers of the Migration Period through the stonemasons of the eleventh-century Sweden right up to the wood-carvers of nineteenth-century Iceland. The most famous of the Gotlandic stonemasons of the twelfth-century, Sigrav, seems to have made an effort to reform the Gotlandic rune-row, bringing its sound-system closer to Latin orthography (Snædal 2002 p. 116.)

Chapter 19

New Evidence for the Dating of Iceland's Settlement. A Viking-age discovery in the cave Víðgelmir

Guðmundur Ólafsson

Introduction

Traditionally, the permanent settlement of Iceland is dated to the year 874, when the first settler, Ingólfur Arnarson, is regarded as having settled in Reykjavík. According to the Icelandic sagas, the land was previously uninhabited, apart from some Irish anchorites who left the country once the Nordic settlers arrived. No written sources mention an earlier permanent settlement.

Archaeological artefacts, such as objects, ornaments, buildings, graves and grave goods, also indicate a very substantial immigration during the latter half of the 800s and would appear to provide fairly convincing support for the testimony of written sources on Iceland's colonisation. This is also true of geological aids such as stratigraphy, pollen diagrams and tephrochronology.

There was only one problem: that ^{14}C datings taken in an archaeological context from the period of settlement sometimes indicated a considerably greater age than the archaeological/geological context suggested. They suggested that the trees could have died about 150-200 years earlier than the traditional settlement. Since some people were of the opinion that the native birch trees could not live to such an age, the datings gave rise to discussion on the reliability of Icelandic ^{14}C datings and whether the country had been colonised far earlier than reported by the written sources, or if there were some special conditions in Iceland which led to ^{14}C tests showing too great an age.

An earlier settlement – in the 8th century?

In 1989 a hypothesis was advanced that an earlier Norse colonisation took place around 700. This hypothesis was based primarily on the results of ^{14}C datings of charcoal from the settlement period. It assumed that no special circumstances could be presumed to have existed in Iceland which justified ignoring these earlier datings. Therefore, all the Icelandic ^{14}C datings should be just as reliable as those in other countries. Datings from the settlement period, indicating an age 100-200 years older than could have been expected from their archaeological context, were now regarded as proof of the actual time of settlement. As support for this

hypotheses, it was claimed for instance that birch trees could not become so old that their own age could affect the ^{14}C age to such an extent and that if the Icelandic sagas had not existed, no one would have doubted the earlier ^{14}C datings. This hypothesis has been hotly disputed, but until now it has not been possible to support it either archaeologically or geologically, since conclusive evidence to prove or disprove it has been lacking.

Critics of the above-mentioned hypothesis have argued that the evidence was insufficient. Thus, neither archaeological, geological or historical evidence gave definitive support for an earlier permanent settlement and most of the ^{14}C tests which indicated an early dating came from samples which were taken above the so-called Settlement Layer – a layer of tephra which has been dated to 871 ± 2 years in a Greenland ice core.

In Iceland the first traces of anthropogenic activity are found directly under the Settlement Layer, for instance in Reykjavík and in the Westman Islands. No definite traces of buildings have yet been found under the Settlement Layer.

This dispute had not been resolved due to a lack of conclusive evidence. Not until now, when a unique discovery in the cave Viðgelmir provides us with a convincing solution to the ^{14}C dating problematics concerning the time of Iceland's settlement.

The cave Viðgelmir in the lava field Hallmundarhraun

Several of Iceland's largest lava caves are found in the lava field Hallmundarhraun in West Iceland. The best known are Surtshellir, approx. 3.5 km in length, and Viðgelmir, which is about 1.6 km long and 16 m high, with an imposing total volume of some 148,000 m³. Hallmundarhraun has been dated by geologists to the beginning of the 10th century. This dating is based on the fact that the lava field lies about 2-3 cm above the Settlement Layer. That would mean that the lava field was at least 30-50 years younger than the tephra layer.



Fig. 1: An overview map showing where the cave Viðgelmir is located.

An unexpected discovery in 1993

When members of the Speleology Club investigated the cave in 1993, they discovered an open hearth on a ledge in the cave wall some 3 m above the floor, about 100 m inside the cave. The discovery was reported to the National Museum of Iceland, which examined the site in December of 1993.

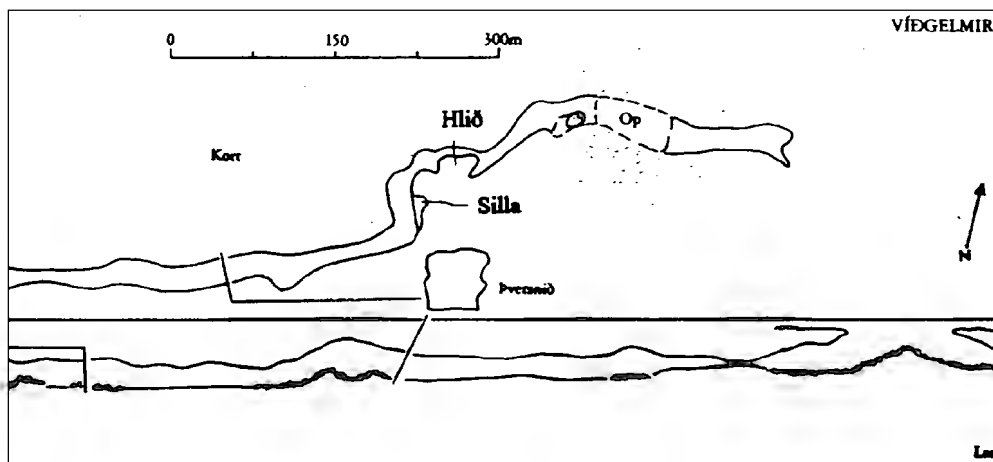


Fig. 2: The illustration shows part of the cave Viðgelmir from above and one side. A ledge in the cave wall (indicated by “Silla”) was discovered in 1983, where Viking-age remains were found.

The cave had been closed for a large part of the 20th century by ice formations outside the cave entrance.

It turned out that on this ledge there were remains of an *open hearth*, several *stones* in a row, together with discoveries of six small *glass beads* and one large glass bead which were found in cracks in the floor or in the open hearth. The beads are of a common Viking-age type which can be dated to the 10th-11th centuries. A *leather object*, possibly a purse, was one of the discoveries. It folded three times and sewn along the edges. There were also several *fragments of jasper* and one small *bronze fragment* which may have been part of a necklace chain. A number of unburned *animal bones* were found, both on the floor and in the hearth, and a small pile of burnt bones were found in the hearth itself. The small amounts of bone and charcoal in the cave indicate that only a very few meals were prepared on the site. Probably meals were only cooked in one or two instances. Apart from these bone fragments and a few pieces of charcoal in cracks, the floor showed almost no signs of habitation, indicating that residence on the ledge had only lasted a very short time.

The cave is completely dark inside and the floor in the main cave is very rough, making it difficult to proceed. It was therefore hard to imagine why anyone should wish to go so far into the cave and there go to the effort of climbing up on a ledge to start a fire and cook dinner. There was also the question of when this had happened.

Few food remains

An analysis of the bones showed that this was the remains of a young cow. The bones were parts of the ribs, hind leg, hooves and head, parts which people usually do not choose to eat, if they can be avoided. They are likely the least meaty parts of an animal, and probably the remains of a slaughtered cow after the best pieces had been taken care of.

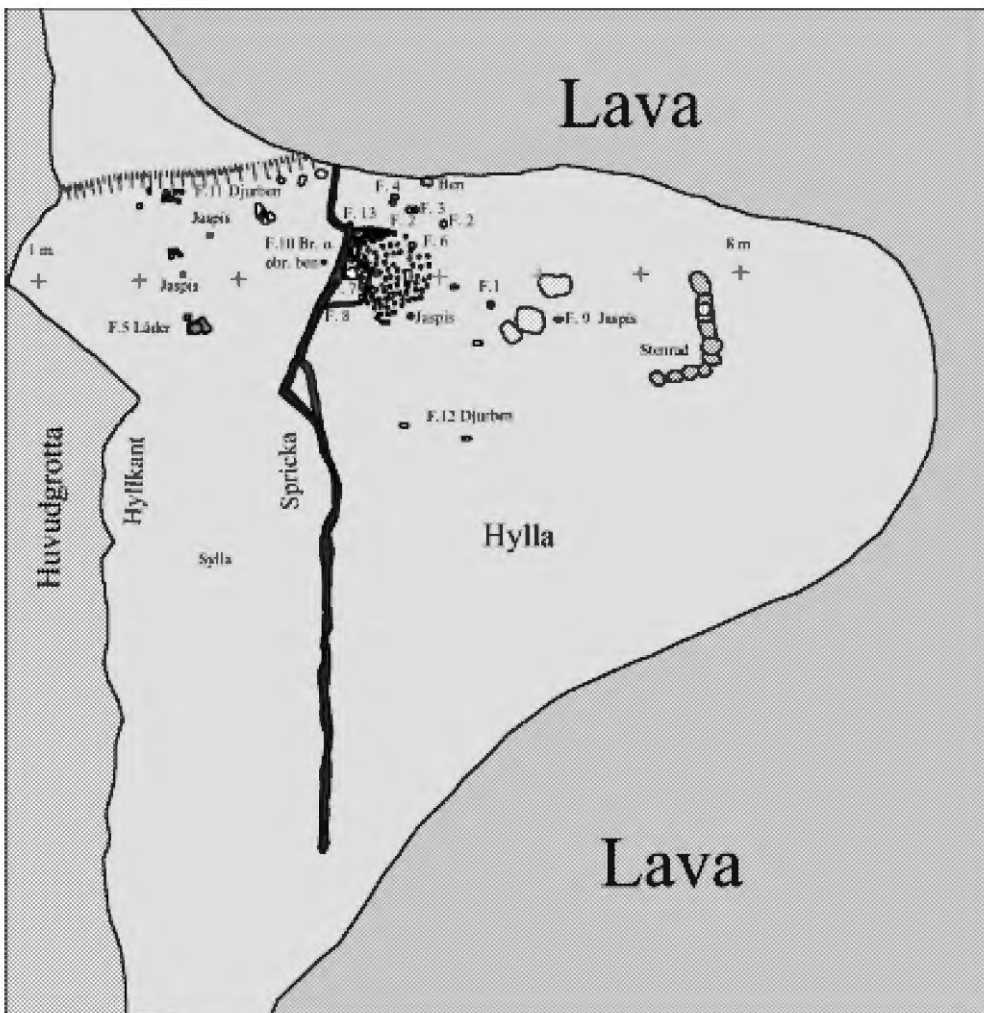


Fig. 3: The drawing shows a floor plan of the ledge. The main cave can be seen to the left of the ledge, the hearth is in the middle and a row of stones placed to form an angle is on the right. A leather object, a few scattered beads, bones and a bronze fragment lie spread around the hearth.

When was the fire started?

Due to the unusual circumstances it was very exciting to find out when the hearth had been in use. Because the cave lies in a lava field which is dated to the beginning of the 10th century, the discovery could not be earlier than the late 900s, by which time the lava would have cooled enough to enable people to make their way into the cave. It was also evident that the discovery could not be new, since the cave had been sealed for decades and had not been explored until the 18th century. There are legends that outlaws roamed in these areas around the year 1000. The beads are of Viking-age type, indicating a dating of 10th or 11th century, which as a result was assumed to be the most probable age for this discovery.

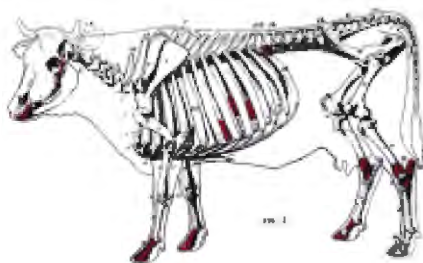


Fig. 4: Drawing of a cow. Those parts of the animal found in the cave are coloured red.

14C dating

Two samples were sent to the ¹⁴C laboratory in Aarhus/Reykjavik for analysis and the results were recently returned by the laboratory. It turned out that the charcoal in the hearth indicates a date between 690 and 890. If these datings were reliable the fire was started at least 20-30 years before the lava flowed and the cave was formed. If the oldest limit is regarded as credible, the fire would be almost 300 years older than the cave!

The cow bone, on the other hand, turned out to agree well with the presumed age of the hearth.

AAR No.	Type of sample	Place and reason for sampling	¹⁴ C Age ± 1 st.dev. (68.2%)	Calibrated age	δ ¹³ C (‰) PIB
AAR-3962 (S-1)	Charcoal	Cave Viðgelmir Assumed hideout from 10 th -11 th century	1225 ± 303BP	720AD (0.15) 740AD 770AD (0.85) 880AD 95.4% probability 690AD (1.00) 890AD	-27.0
AAR 4249.1 F-10	Cow bone	Cave Viðgelmir Assumed hideout from 10 th -11 th century	1089 ± 313BP	895AD (0.38) 920AD 955AD (0.62) 995AD 95.4% probability 890AD (1.00) 1020AD	-20.6
AAR 4249.2 F-10	Cow bone	Cave Viðgelmir Assumed hideout from 10 th -11 th century	1088 ± 273BP	895AD (0.37) 920AD 955AD (0.63) 995AD 95.4% probability 890AD (1.00) 1020AD	-20.6
AAR 4249 F-10	Cow bone (average)	Cave Viðgelmir Assumed hideout from 10 th -11 th century	1088 ± 203BP	900AD (0.41) 920AD 960AD (0.59) 990AD 95.4% probability 890AD (1.00) 1020AD	-20.6

Fig. 5: Table showing the results of the ¹⁴C analyses. AAR 4249.1 was taken from the surface of the bone, AAR 4249.2 is from a previously unexposed part. (GO-fig5.doc)

The average difference between the dating of charcoal and bones in the cave is about 180 years. Since this discrepancy is about the same as people were arguing over in the debate concerning an earlier colonisation, it is difficult to ignore these datings. Can the discrepancy be explained by the Viðgelmir find?

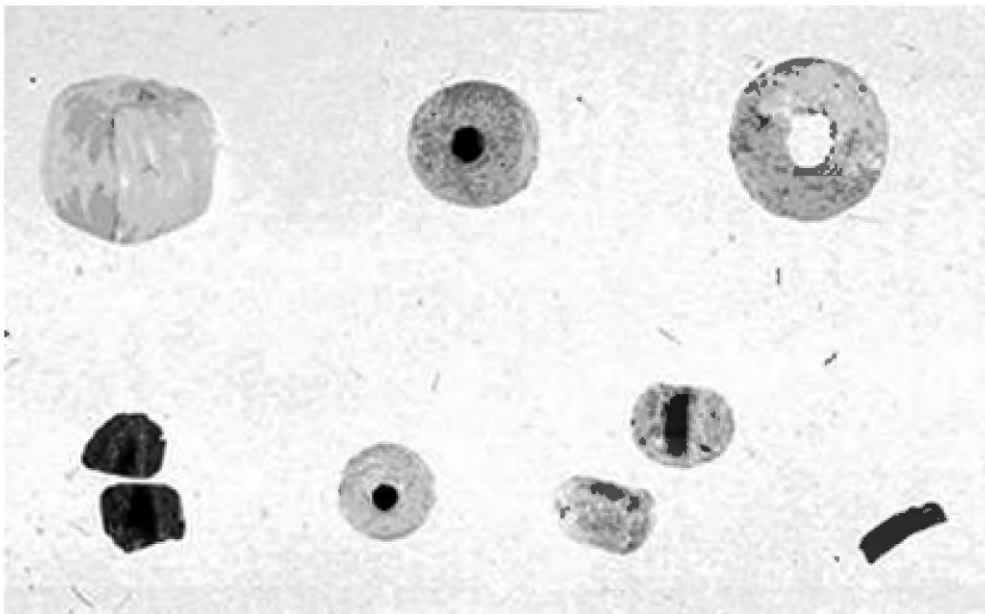


Fig. 6: Beads and bronze fragment found around the hearth. (GO-fig6.doc)

Did Iceland differ from other countries during the Age of Settlement?

The discovery in Viðgelmir shows that something is not right concerning the interpretations of ^{14}C datings from the colonisation period. It shows that trees which were burned during the settlement period can be up to 200 years older than the site where they are discovered. If one believes in ^{14}C datings, a new explanation has to be found for this discrepancy. Was there something different about Iceland during that time which can explain the high age of the charcoal?

The answer is yes – what was unique about Iceland was that this country was unsettled prior to the arrival of settlers during the latter part of the 9th century. Therefore, there must have been large amounts of accumulated dead, dry firewood lying around the country. This wood was likely used as firewood to begin with, until it was used up after several decades. It was a process which may have taken a longer time in the scantily populated areas. Once the old wood had been burned up, the discrepancy between ^{14}C datings of charcoal and bones disappears.

Significance of the Viðgelmir discovery

- It shows that charcoal samples from the Age of Settlement can give an age of up to 200 years older than the site they are to date.

- It shows that ^{14}C datings from the Age of Settlement must be viewed with a degree of reservation.
- It shows that the situation in Iceland differed from that in other countries during the Age of Settlement.
- It shows that the principal argument for the earlier settlement of Iceland is not valid.

What happened in the cave?

Naturally, no one knows what happened in the cave some 1000 years ago. The material and the circumstances of the discovery undeniably set one's imagination in motion. There can be many different explanations for the discovery in Viðgelmir. Very possibly a fugitive or an outlaw sought refuge in the cave for a brief period around the year 1000, possibly for only a day or two, when the cave was still warm from the lava which flowed after 900.

A fascinating discovery – unique evidence

The discovery in Viðgelmir gives us a brief glimpse into the ancient times, since the cave has preserved the remains of a 1000-year-old event – intact.

Due to the special geological circumstances, we have a unique opportunity to prove that burned wood from the time of settlement can be much older than the hearth where it is found.

The conclusion is that ^{14}C datings of charcoal from the Age of Settlement cannot be used uncritically, which means that there still continues to be no archaeological evidence for an earlier settlement in Iceland – not even by Irish anchorites.

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Chapter 20

The use of geothermal resources at Reykholt in Borgarfjörður in the medieval period

Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir

Introduction

Archaeological investigations at the farm-site Reykholt in western Iceland have revealed some impressive structural remains, so far not matched by finds elsewhere in Iceland. Reykholt is best known for its 13th century occupant, the writer and chieftain Snorri Sturluson who lived there between c. 1206 and 1241. Snorri was a cunning politician who amassed a considerable amount of wealth during his lifetime. He had friends in Norway which he visited frequently, but also enemies, and his disobedience to King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway, while the King was preparing to add Iceland to his realm, led to his dramatic slaying at Reykholt in 1241. These events, together with descriptions of buildings and other details on Reykholt during Snorri's time, are recounted in *Sturlunga saga*, a collection of contemporary sagas describing events in the 12th and 13th centuries. According to this source, Snorri initiated a number of constructions at Reykholt, including a fort (*virki*) (SS I: 456) and a living-room (*stofa*), which he had built in 1233 (SS I: 362). In view of Snorri's stature and foreign contacts, the discovery of impressive constructions at the site is not unexpected. This article discusses unique evidence of harnessing of the geothermal resources at the site in the medieval period.

Written sources on the use of geothermal resources in Iceland

Hot and warm springs were attractive to and made use of by the early settlers of Iceland. Indications of this include farm-names that contain elements referring to geothermal activity (*laug*, *varm*- or *reyk*-) (Thorarinsson 1975). Medieval sources contain a number of references to baths and bathing, and to both natural and steam baths (Lárusson 1956). Among the former is a reference in *Landnámabók* (ÍF 1: 192-193) to the warm bath at Reykholt, used by inhabitants of the neighbouring settlement farm *Breiðabólstaður* before Reykholt itself was settled. There are also references to the use of warm springs for clothes washing (SS II: 152), and one source gives an account of women bringing hot water to the farm-house at Reykholt in a kettle so large they had to carry it between them on a pole (Byskupa sögur: 134-5). On the other hand, the author has found no references to the channeling of either hot water or steam into a house for the purpose of bathing, heating or cooking in the medieval period. Nor has



Fig. 1: Location map of Reykholt.

there been archaeological evidence for such practice before it became common in the 20th century.

More recent sources indicate that hot springs were regarded as a nuisance. Thus, for example, the early 18th century land survey *Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar* reports that hot-spring vapours and heat spoil the home fields at Sturlureykir, a farm near to Reykholt. It further reports that Reykholt was obliged to rely on the hot-spring for its water (*Jarðabók*: 235, 231). Both remarks suggest that this resource was not regarded as an asset.

The archaeological remains at Reykholt

Although we know about discoveries of archaeological remains at Reykholt as early as the 19th century (Jónsson 1842), proper recording of what has been found is much more recent. The first archaeological investigation took place in 1941 when the excavation and reconstruction was carried out of the southernmost part of the subterranean passageway leading from the warm bath known as Snorralaug in the direction of the old farmsite (Fig. 2) (Þórðarson 1947). The passageway was discovered during building activities in 1931 when it seems to have been out of use for a long time.

The passageway was obviously not visible when Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson visited Reykholt in the mid 18th century. The wording in Ólafsson's (1943:75) journal does, however, suggest that they knew about its existence. This may well be as a result of the mention in *Sturlunga saga* of a *forskáli frá laugu*, referring to one means of entering the farm from the pool (SS I: 388). The term *forskáli* seems to refer to the subterranean passageway. Recent investiga-

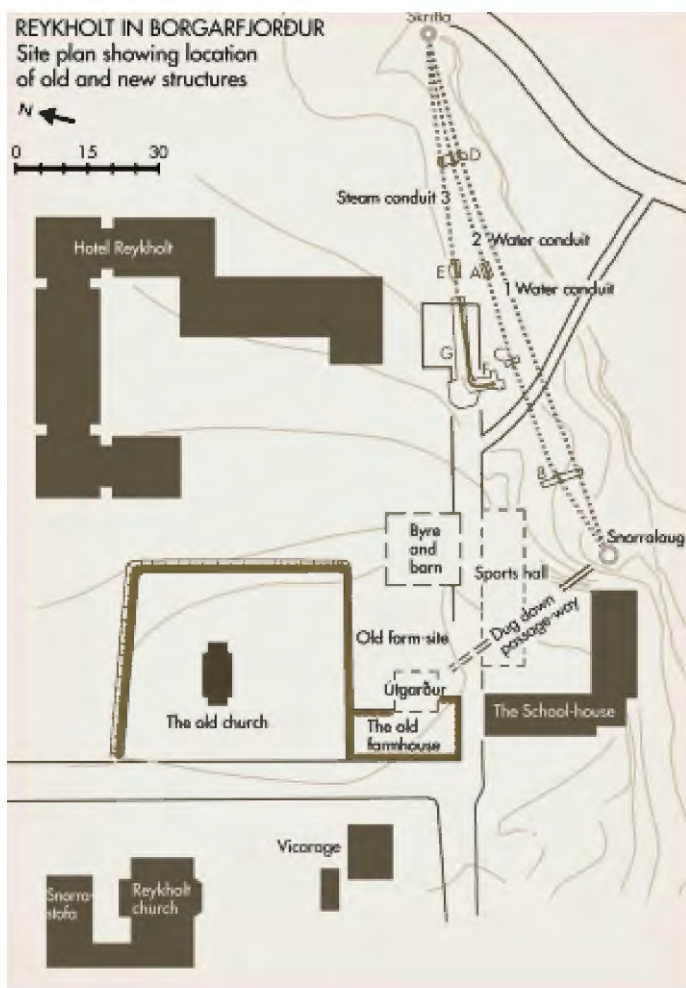


Fig. 2: Plan of Reykholt showing the remains discussed in the article. (GS-fig2.jpg ella GS-fig2.psd)

tions show that it was built into a trench that was 2,5 m wide at the top and then dug down in steps into undisturbed subsoil. Into the narrowest part of the trench drystone walls were set, preserved up to a height of c. 1,8 m in places, backed with a fill of mixed turf. The passage was only about 70 cm wide at the bottom and had a natural clay floor. A roof resting on a wooden frame was erected over it in 1941, but the investigation produced no indication of the original roof-cover.

The passage-way runs in a north-westerly direction, rising from the pool. Just before it joins the farm-houses the land rises markedly where it contains a number of stone steps, and it makes a sharp bend to the east where it joins a rectangular, sunken building (Fig. 3). Samples of wood found in the fill of the passage-way have been radiocarbon dated, yielding a



Fig. 3: Stone steps in subterranean passageway.

rather wide range of dates between the 11th and early 15th centuries (Sveinbjarnardóttir 2001:13-14).¹

Similar passageways are known at other sites in Iceland, where they are sometimes interpreted as the escape routes mentioned in the saga literature. One such passageway was recently investigated at Keldur in Rangárvellir (Hjaltalín 2000). The passageway at Reykholt may well have served such a function, in addition to being a comfort measure, providing a covered route between farm and pool. The ease with which it could be used to enter the farm in times of unrest, according to *Sturlunga saga* (SS I: 388), does, however, rather speak against it having been an escape route.

In the 1960s and 1980s some limited rescue excavations revealed remains of conduits, two of which lead from the hot spring Skrifla to Snorralaug and one towards the farmsite (Fig. 2). These conduits were interpreted as carrying geothermal water and steam respectively, the latter largely on account of the conduit running uphill towards the farmsite and the fact that steam emitted from it when it was opened during the investigation (Grímsson and Ólafsson 1988).

The fact that water from the hot spring Skrifla was led by a conduit into Snorralaug has been known for some time. This is described in the previously mentioned 18th century travel journal by Ólafsson (1943: 75), where the mechanism by which the water flow to the pool is controlled is also described in some detail. Mackenzie, who visited Iceland in 1810, also mentions this in his travel journal, as does Henderson, who visited in 1815 (Grímsson 1960:

23, 26). According to their accounts, the original conduit was damaged as a result of an earthquake in 1733 and replaced by the one which is still in use. This is the reason for the presence of two conduits leading to the pool.

Further indications of the exploitation of geothermal activity have been provided by the recent excavations. A substance was discovered in the sunken rectangular building into which corner the passageway from the pool leads, which suggests that the building may have been subjected to steam or geothermal water. There is even a possibility that there may have been geothermal activity within the building. And in 2002 remains of still another conduit, running into a building at the farmsite, were investigated (Fig. 2).

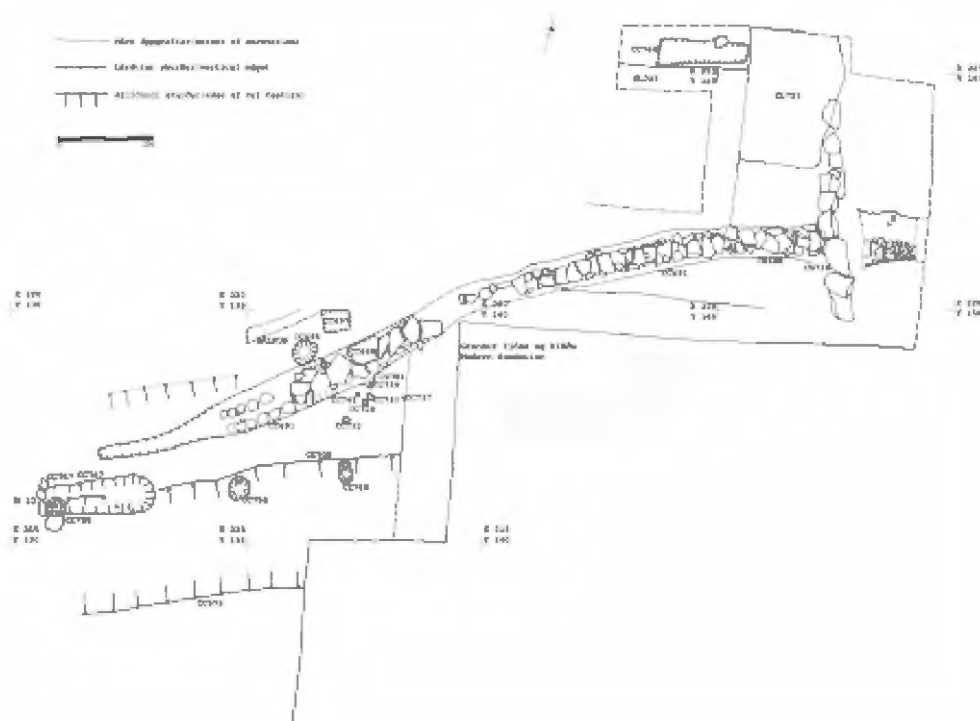


Fig. 4: Part of the conduit excavated in 2002, showing the turf covering.

The latter conduit was discovered during the building of a combined byre and barn due north of Snorralaus in 1929. At the northwest corner of its foundation, which borders the present excavation area on the east side, remains were detected of what the priest at Reykholt at the time interpreted as a conduit running southwest-northeast. The priest described it in a letter to the Director of the National Museum of Iceland on 16 November 1929. He also sent a 44 cm long stone of geysirite into which a 15 cm wide groove had been carved, which he interpreted as part of the conduit. Unfortunately he did not report on any other discoveries.

The excavation of this conduit revealed that a 0,6 - 0,8 m wide trench was dug into undisturbed subsoil, lined with stones, on top of which flat stones were placed, creating a 17

x 25 cm conduit. Analysis of the fill revealed hydrocarbons which are characteristic of geothermal water (information from Alfred Geptner). Unfortunately it has not been possible to establish its connection with the hot-spring because of later disturbances. The construction is very similar to that of the other conduits found at the site. Clay was used for insulation at the sides and turf on the top (Fig. 4). The trench runs towards a small paved building, 6,8 m long and 3,5 m wide, with a 1,15 x 1,25 m and 0,5 m deep pit in the pavement just off the centre (Figs. 2 and 5). The bottom of the pit is lined with stones, but not the sides. The walls of the building were constructed in an unusual way, with stone piles erected on the inside of the stone-built walls at 1 m intervals. Remains of sulphur were found on several stones within the building.



Fig. 5: Assumed bath-house, looking east.

A likely interpretation for the building is that of a bath-house. Bath-houses are known in the medieval period, e.g. in Norway and Greenland (Roussell 1936: 74-81, Figs. 47, 53-6). They have wooden platforms and an oven in which hot stones were doused with water to create steam. At Reykholt the same effect would have been achieved by making use of the natural geothermal resource.

No artefacts were found inside the building and there is as yet no exact dating for it. It is contemporary with the rectangular building into which south-west corner the passageway from Snorralaug runs (Fig. 2). Stratigraphically both buildings belong to the medieval period

(Sveinbjarnardóttir 2002: 32). They could well be contemporary with Snorri Sturluson's occupation, but confirmation of this awaits further analysis on samples and other remains discovered during the excavation.

When the excavation reached the bottom of the sunken rectangular building to where it was dug into the undisturbed subsoil, the light colour of the clayey material lining the inside of it was striking. The substance was restricted to the inside of the building, which suggested that it might be a hot spring surface deposit, formed as a result of geothermal activity. A soil sample was collected and sent for analysis to the National Energy Authority. The results did not support the hypothesis, but Sigurður Sveinn Jónsson (in Sveinbjarnardóttir 2001:56), who carried out the analysis, thought it possible that the surface could have been affected by water or steam coming from a hot spring. More tests are needed to establish this hypothesis. Another geologist who visited the site has suggested that geothermal activity may have occurred in the area within the building at some time in the past. If this was so during the occupation of the building, this would have provided a remarkable and unusual heating-system. It remains to be seen whether this hypothesis can be tested further.

Comparative material

The conduits discovered at Reykholt are a unique find in Iceland. Two of them carried water into Snorralaug, a third carried steam towards the farm-site and now remains have been discovered which suggest that a fourth conduit ran into a building at the farmsite. Although a likely interpretation for this latter conduit is that it carried steam for bathing purposes, heating or cooking are also a possibility.

Heating ducts, so-called *hypocaust*, influenced by Roman heating systems, are known in Denmark where they were common in monasteries and the dwellings of the upper classes, dated to between the 12th and the beginning of the 16th centuries. In Norway such ducts have been found in the floor of the 13th century Archbishop's Palace in Trondheim. The heating systems operated on the basis of wood-fuelled fires, which heated up stones, generating warm air that passed through a system of flues into the rooms (Hertz 1976).

At Chaudes-Aigue in Southern France there is evidence of geothermal water being used from at least as early as the 14th century for house-heating and other purposes (Gilbert 1999). Here the hot water was led into the houses through hollowed-out pinewood pipes. There are also references to houses in this place being built on the spring field itself, using the hot water directly below the floors for heating, similar to what has been suggested at Reykholt. There are examples of such practice in the Reykholtisdalur valley. According to an early 20th century source (Porsteinsson 1938: 44), a steam-bath long existed at Sturlureykir, a farm further down valley. It is described as being sunken, entered by stone steps, with a floor paved with flagstones and walls made of stone on the inside and turf on the outside. This description corresponds remarkably well to the building excavated at Reykholt.

The bath-house at Sturlureykir was used for health treatment. Geothermal water was evidently used at Chaudes-Aigues in the medieval period for the same purpose, a practice which goes back to the Etruscans and Romans.

Icelandic written sources also refer to the use of baths for health purposes. In *Þórðarrím*, compiled by Bishop Þórður Þorláksson at Skálholt in the late 17th century, two kinds of baths are described: wet and dry. Wet baths, or *laugar*, are said to be good for those who do heavy work, dry baths, or *baðstofur*, are good for those who do little work, have a varied diet and

consume alcoholic drinks, such as wine and beer, since these create bodily fluids that should be expelled (Steffensen 1990: 182).

Baðstofur are referred to much earlier than that. For example, they appear frequently in *Sturlunga saga*, from which it can be inferred that they usually formed part of the dwelling complex. Ólafsdóttir (1974) has suggested that the word *baðstofa*, used for the main dwelling space on the farm in later centuries, had already acquired that meaning in the 13th and 14th centuries and was never used for a bath-house in Iceland. The assumed bath-house at Reykholt is closely associated with other buildings at the farm-site. If the present interpretation is correct and it was a dry bath, then both dry and wet baths seem to have been in use at Reykholt in the medieval period.

Conclusion

The archaeological investigations at Reykholt have produced evidence of wide-ranging exploitation of geothermal resources in the medieval period. The constructions associated with this activity are a sign of sophistication, and where more appropriate to find it than at Reykholt, the seat of the chieftain Snorri Sturluson? He had frequent contacts with Norway and was thus well placed to adopt ideas on construction from abroad. For example, one of his trips to Norway, described in *Sturlunga saga*, tells of his stay with Earl Skúli in Niðarós (present day Trondheim) during the winter 1238-9 (SS I: 444). He may well have become acquainted with heating ducts known to have been in use in Trondheim at the time. As mentioned, the same source identifies Snorri as the mastermind of building activities at Reykholt, and there are several references to his use of the warm bath at Reykholt.

The water and steam conduits and the sunterranean passageway leading from the pool to the farm are similar in construction. All are built of stones placed into trenches dug in steps into the undisturbed subsoil. All these constructions appear to be of a similar date. On the basis of stratigraphic relations and C-14 dating, Snorri could well have had them built. A next step for him could easily have been to engineer central heating into his dwelling. One of the aims of the present excavation programme at Reykholt is to throw further light on this aspect of the site, an area of study which has so far remained unexplored within Icelandic archaeology.

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Notes

- ¹ Both samples are calibrated according to Stuiver et al. 1998.
 RKH-99-SW34 Lab.no.: Beta-137997
 Birch branch found on top step of passageway.
 Conventional radiocarbon age: 870±60 BP
 2 sigma calibrated results: Cal AD 1025 – 1275 (Cal BP 925 – 675)
 (95% probability)
 (Variables: C13/C12=-28.7 o/oo)

RKH-00-SC15 Lab.no.: Beta-147802
 Charred willow from fill of passageway.
 Conventional radiocarbon age: 650±40BP
 2 sigma calibrated results: Cal AD 1290-1410
 (Cal BP 660-540)
 (95% probability)
 (Variables: C13/C12=-26.4 o/oo)

Chapter 21

Gaulverjabæjarsjóðurinn

Anton Holt

Introduction

The need to revise the work of Dr. Kristján Eldjárn carried out in 1948, in no way casts a shadow upon his work and publication: his work remains the foundation upon which this revision is based. However, the wealth of newly published material on work with major Swedish hoards has made the study of Anglo-Saxon and other Viking period coins much more approachable than ever before. Also, the assistance and support of all the staff of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, together with the help of the Library of the Department of Coins and Medals, made this project possible.

The Gaulverjabær hoard

In the summer of 1930, two parish workers were extending the perimeter of the churchyard at Gaulverjabær church, on the south coast of Iceland. One of them lifted his spade to find he had stuck it through a hoard of silver coins. The hoard consisted in all of about 350 coins, according to contemporary newspaper reports (Brynjúlfsson, 1930). The over-enthusiastic labourers were more interested in salvaging each and every coin than in paying any attention to the area of the find site itself. Neither scientific investigation nor recording for posterity of the site information was carried out methodically. The local sheriff was notified and then the Director of the National Museum, but by the time the museum Director arrived, most traces of the receptacles that had held the coins were long obliterated.

Circular forms could be seen at the location of the find, but their state of preservation was such that it could only be presumed that they had been of wood. The site of the find was a few metres south of the church wall, at a place where there had been a rise in the terrain. The coins and their container were at a depth of about one metre. The surrounding area was excavated by the then Director of the National Museum, Matthías Þórðarson. His investigations confirmed that there were remains of a smithy to be found between the church and the find location. This very small structure had left only a small dispersal of stones and floor traces as evidence of its existence. Whether it has any relevance at all to the coins found there is much harder to establish. A connection between the smithy and the silver coins cannot be ruled out, though there is no substantive proof, the smithy being younger than the hoard's depositing.

Well worth mentioning is the fact that a number of coin hoards from the Viking period found in the British Isles have been found around churches or cemeteries, as in this case. The

sanctity of the area, as well as the security of the church, would have appealed to depositors (Bornholdt, 2001).

When found, the hoard consisted of some 360 pieces, all in silver, of which 356 could be called coins, or fragments of coins, the remaining pieces being three coin-like flans and one engraved fragment of decorated jewellery. The coins originate from various places, and four appear to have been lost since the hoard was first recorded (see Table 1).

Table 1. Geographical origin of coins in Gaulverjabær hoard

Source	No. in hoard	%	Current status
England	172	49	2 missing
Germany	160	45	1 missing
Scandinavian Imitations	8	2	–
Denmark	5	1	–
Sweden	4	1	
Islamic	4	1	1 missing
Ireland	2	0.5	–
Bohemia	1	0.25	–
Total	356 coins	100%	4 missing

Fig. 1: (Table 1).

The geographical distribution of the coins is typical of a Scandinavian hoard, containing 49% Anglo-Saxon coins, which in fact makes the hoard more like a Norwegian hoard than one of any other comparative origin. It is therefore unlikely that the Gaulverjabær hoard was added to after it arrived in Iceland (Blackburn and Jonsson, 1981: 175). The German coins in the hoard will traditionally have made their way to the east coast of Jutland and from there to Norway, before joining the hoard destined for Iceland (Jammer, 1952: 83). The German coins constitute 45% of the hoard, which is a higher average than is usual for finds from this period in either Denmark or Sweden, where the respective averages are 42% and 41%, but the number of German coins tends to increase after 990 (Jonsson, 1990: 139-140). An increase in the numbers of German coins in circulation occurred after the opening of the Rammelsberg silver mine. A marked boom resulted after 990, at the same time as Anglo-Saxon coins also started to flow into Scandinavia in great numbers (Ilisch, 1981: 135). The Islamic coins in the hoard are also consistent in number with Norwegian finds of the early 11th century. In Norway, Islamic coins practically vanish from hoards after 1000, from ca. 5% in hoards deposited in the latter half of the 10th century, to 1% or even less after 1020 (Skaare, 1995: 33), so 5 (1.4%) Islamic coins in this hoard matches Norwegian material.

Pecking, bending, piercing and cutting

The Gaulverjabær hoard is a typical Viking hoard in every respect, and the pecking and bending of the coins is no exception. Of the 352 coins examined, 298 (85%) show peck marks or similar test marks, and 104 (30%) coins have edge pecks. The pecks vary greatly in number from coin to coin, but are constant in their style and the raising of a small sliver of silver in order to see into the material. Apart from cutting with the point of a knife or burin on the field

of a coin or on the edge, it has been suggested that a test could be carried out with a stick (Archibald, 1990: 15). In this hoard, at least 23 coins have small dents and it is suggested that they are bite marks, but whether they are from metal testing or as part of the bending process of the coin is impossible to say. In total, some 71 coins have been bent once, but, in all, 240 coins show that they have been bent several times, some having been practically rolled up. This is apart from signs of cutting, clipping or piercing. Of the entire hoard, only 18 coins are in no way defaced, neither pecked, cut nor bent: they are 16 Long-Cross pennies of Æthelred II, the Edgar penny, and one Otto-Adelheid denar.



Fig. 2: A bent pecked coin of the Otto-Adelheid type (coin #202).

The custom of pecking and testing silver was well known to the merchants and those who handled and dealt with money or metals in Iceland, as elsewhere. The indication of this, although from a somewhat later source, the Law Book Grágás, written down in the early 12th century, is far too important to ignore. For example, in the section on money lending, Grágás states that “good silver should have upon it the colour of silver [rather] than that of brass, and should withstand gouging, be the same outside and inside.” [... enda lögsilfr þat er meire litr se silfrs á en messingar oc þole scor oc se iafnt utan oc inan.] (Finsen, 1852: 141).

Apart from the above-mentioned methods of testing coins, and thus defacing them, the cutting and breaking of coins was widely practised. This was in order to make up smaller amounts, be they halves or other fractions. Most of the transactions involving these coins will have been based on the weight of silver, and so will have had nothing to do with any face value. Thus, by cutting or breaking off parts of a coin, a fraction was created. In the Gaulverjabær hoard there are 12 coins approximately halved, with the other part missing. Only two of them (one Anglo-Saxon and one Islamic) are cut, leaving a smooth edge; all the others are crudely broken or hacked apart. A further 11 coins have either a small part missing or only a small part is extant. In all, 9 coins are pierced: 3 Anglo-Saxon, 1 Swedish and 5 German. Some of the coins are obviously pierced for purposes of wearing the coin as jewellery. Coins #206¹ and #264 have signs of wear, as the holes are oblong in shape from being suspended for a long time. Both these coins are of German origin, making it quite possible that at one time they may have belonged to one and the same necklace. Some coins are pierced by being pecked to such an extent that it resulted in a distinctive hole in the coin.

The importance of the study of the pecking on coins from the 10th and 11th centuries is

significant to the geographical location of hoards as well as of individual coins. The fact that some peoples were more likely to peck or chop a coin than others tells a story of its own. On the one hand, some coins in the Gaulverjabær hoard have progressed all the way to Iceland and into the ground without as much as a single bend or peck. On the other hand, there are coins of similar age with multiple pecks, bends and gouges. The explanation must lie in the route the coins travelled in getting to their final destination, as well as the people through whose hands they passed along the way. Those who knew and trusted the coinage would have had less need to test them; only those who either did not know the coins or had reason to mistrust them would deem it necessary.

When could the hoard have been buried?

The time of when the coins were deposited is of course one of the fundamental points of interest concerning this hoard, the t.p.q. (*terminus post quem*, or the earliest date for the latest coin type) for the Gaulverjabær hoard has been suggested as 1002 by Mark Blackburn, based on coins of Henry II of Saxony (1002-1024) being present (Blackburn and Jonsson, 1981: 175). However, Jammer points out that the coin of Vreden puts the t.p.q. at 1010 to 1015 (Jammer, 1952: 109). There is no new evidence to change these dates: the coins themselves and the hoard's composition support these dates. However evidence from numerous Swedish finds, containing a large number of similar later German coins, points towards a t.p.q. of around 1003. The portrait coin of Henry II for Strasbourg is of the second issue for the location, thus issued after 1005-7. If anything, from Malmer's work, the evidence derived from peck marks supports a later date (t.p.q. of 1036). The geographical distribution within the German coins points to a rather earlier date (t.p.q. of 1002) (Malmer, 1981: 397-401). This of course applies to the accumulation no less than the burying of the hoard. It is impossible to estimate how long the hoard remained above ground from the time of its accumulation, subsequent journey to Iceland, and until its eventual burial. It is unlikely that many coins, if any, were added to the hoard after it came together; single items could have been added, but scarcely more than single items. The possibility of this hoard being an amalgamation of smaller entities must neither be ignored nor dismissed. An alternative explanation is that this hoard in fact is composed of two hoards that came together some time before being deposited. The fact that the Anglo-Saxon coins end with the Long Cross penny (ca. 1003) but the German coins seem to continue for a few years confuses the actual t.p.q. for this hoard. An amalgamation of material seems plausible in light of the date inconsistency for the hoard.

The Anglo-Saxon coins

The Anglo-Saxon coins are the largest section of the hoard, consisting of a total of 170 coins extant. Two Anglo-Saxon coins have been lost or removed from the hoard. Their numbers have also dwindled from earlier analyses, as coins have been re-attributed to be Scandinavian imitations of Anglo-Saxon coins. This reflects the extensive recent research in Sweden and other places on this period and series. There are some coins that need a special mention, such as the penny of Edgar (959-975) (#1). This coin is an oddity: although the oldest of the series, it is in surprisingly good condition, showing hardly any sign of having been in use. Several other coins should be mentioned for their rarity, all from the reign of Æthelred the Unready (AD 978-1016). One is the unique Transitional Crux penny (#102), without sceptre and diadem, struck in Warwick in the name of Osmær, a hitherto unrecorded moneyer for the

location. The Intermediate Small Cross/Transitional Crux mule (#103), struck at Winchester in the name of Beorhtweald, is also of great rarity, with only one or two other examples known. A third coin that deserves special mention is the Intermediate Small Cross (#104), struck at Wilton in the name of the moneyer Sæwine: this coin is only known in about 10 examples.

The fact that no Anglo-Saxon coins later than the Long Cross type are in the hoard gives a cut-off date of ca. 1003 for the series. The geographical distribution of the mints represented is as could be expected, both that they follow the coast and coastal areas, and that the locations gradually move farther inland. The number of specimens for each mint is quite normal, and there is no significant discrepancy from what could be called an average Scandinavian Viking hoard (Petersson, 1990: 207 ff.). If anything specific should be noted, then it is that there is a tendency towards coins from the south and southeast of England being more numerous. With a hoard as small as this, looking at individual mints does not give the full picture, but, as a hoard, it is interesting to see how many mints are represented in a group no larger than this: in all, there are coins from 35 Anglo-Saxon mints (see Table 2).

Table 2. Geographical origin of the 172 Anglo-Saxon coins originally present in the Gaulverjabær hoard

Mint	No. of coins (of all types)	% of all Anglo-Saxon coins ⁽¹⁾
London	47	28.2 (H)
Exeter	16	9.6 (H)
Winchester	15	9.0 (N)
Canterbury	11	6.6 (H)
Lincoln	9	5.4 (L)
Southwark	9	5.4 (L)
York	8	4.8 (L)
Cambridge	7	4.2 (H)
Chester	5	3.0 (N)
Stamford	5	3.0 (N)
Hertford	4	2.4 (N)
Three each from: Maldon; Thetford; and Wilton.	(Total 9)	1.8% each
Two each from: Barnstaple; Bath; Colchester; Dover; and Ilchester.	(Total 10)	1.2% each
One each from: Bridport; Chichester; Derby; Dorchester; Hereford; Ipswich; Lewes; Lydford; Lympe; Malmesbury; Northampton; Norwich; Totnes; Warwick; Watchet; Winchcombe; and Worcester	(Total 17)	0.6% each

NOTE: (1) Letters in parenthesis indicate the ratio found in the Gaulverjabær hoard in comparison with similar hoards: H = high; N = normal; L = low.

Fig. 3: (Table 2).

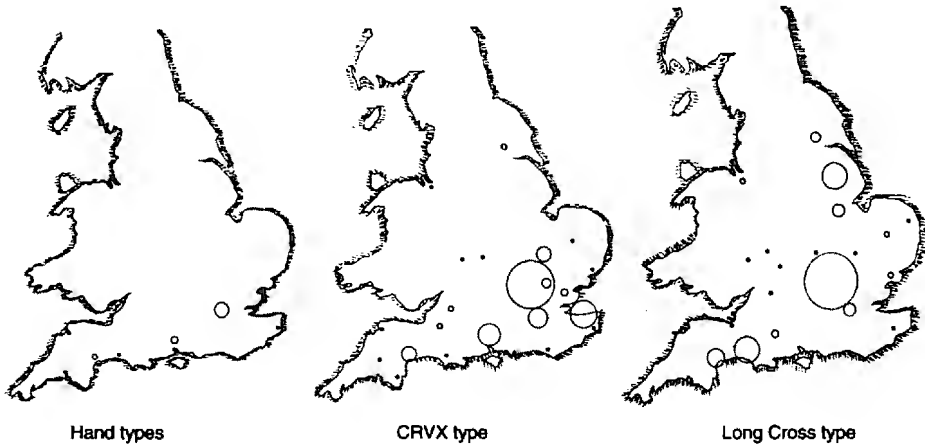


Fig. 1: Distribution of Anglo-Saxon coins by type, in the Gaulverjabær hoard. (AH-fig3.doc)

Fig. 4: Distribution of Anglo-Saxon coins by type, in the Gaulverjabær hoard.

As could be expected, the coins struck in London are the most numerous. On the one hand, there are a greater number of coins from Exeter, Canterbury and Cambridge than might be considered typical in a hoard such as this, yet on the other hand the mints of Lincoln, Southwark and York are not as well represented as one might expect. In Table 2, a letter has been appended to the percentage figures for the larger mints to indicate the ratio found relative to what might have been expected in comparison with equivalent hoards: H = high; N = normal; and L = low. In the instances where only 1 to 3 coins are represented, the percentage figures are not significant. These averages are based on the monumental work of Professor D.M. Metcalf, who put together the statistics of the vast numbers of coins found and originating from Anglo-Saxon, and indeed later, mints to produce a viable hoard ratio (Metcalf, 1998: 294-301).

The Anglo-Saxon coins were struck in the names of numerous moneyers – almost as many moneyers as there are coins (see Table 4). In this hoard there are, however, two instances of coins being struck by the same moneyer, and with the same pair of dies: #155 and #156 of Godæg of Stamford, and #112 and #113 of Dunstan, of Exeter. The latter pair of coins also share dies with a coin in the Royal Coin and Medal Cabinet in Copenhagen (SCBI Copenhagen II: 167). In all, 14 other coins in this hoard share one or both dies with a coin published in the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles*. Half the die-duplicates are to be found in the Copenhagen Cabinet (seven in all), with one each in other museums or collections: Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Hunterian Museum, Glasgow; Mack Collection; West Country Museums; Merseyside County Museums; American Collections; and Polish Museums. In some instances, such as coin #106, by Ælfwine of Chester, it forms part of a longer chain of places and moneyers, where the same obverse die was used. The die was also used to strike coins by Godric in Hertford (SCBI Glasgow 849), Edwine in Huntingdon (Lund, *ex Igelösa* hoard 1924) and Ælfwig of Buckingham (SCBI Copenhagen II: 36). Four other coins in the

Gaulverjabær hoard can be die-linked to other coins. The Wulfnoth of Dorchester coin (#40) shares its obverse die with a coin in Stockholm of the moneyer God, struck in Ilchester, but struck after the Dorchester coin as the die had rusted in the interim (Stockholm, *ex Ytlings hoard* 1894). The Godric coin struck in London (#136) shares an obverse die with a coin struck by Edwine in Huntingdon (Dr R.J. Eaglen collection (Baldwin, 1980)). Coin #149 in the hoard, a Godric of Lympne, shares its obverse with a coin of Godric's struck at Canterbury (Stockholm, Hildebrand 167). Finally, the missing coin #164 of Byrhsige of Winchester has a die duplicate for the obverse in a Cynna of Chichester (SCBI St Petersburg, 649) and a second example in Stockholm (Hildebrand 271)².

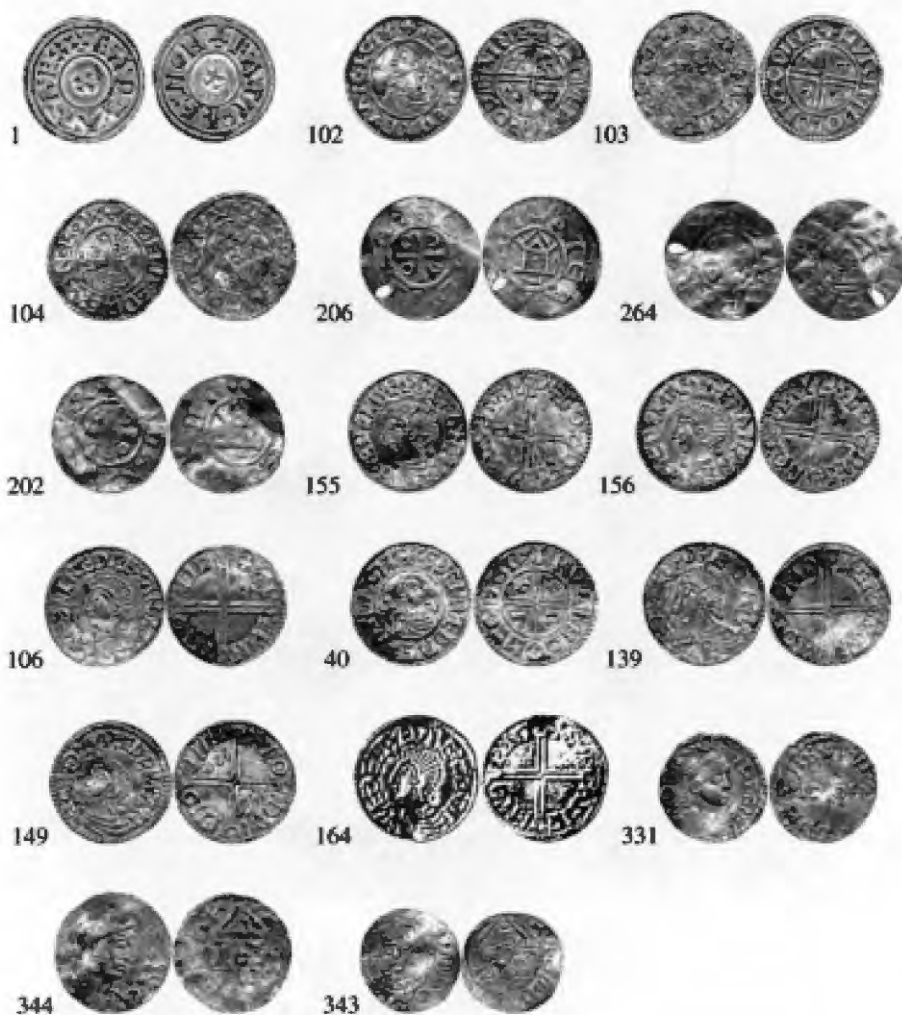


Fig. 5: (*Síða við myntum*). (AH-fig7.doc)

Scandinavian and Irish Coins

The Scandinavian coins in the Gaulverjabær hoard are not numerous, represented by five Danish and four Swedish coins. The Danish coins are of a totally different category from the rest of the hoard, as they are half-bracteates – a much thinner and lighter type of coin than all the others. They are among the older coins in the hoard, as this type dates from around 980 and are therefore regarded as one of Scandinavia's (oldest coinage) earlier issues (Malmer, 1966: 171). These coins are based on an older, Carolus-Dorestad, coinage and stem from Hedeby, in the southernmost part of Denmark.

The Swedish coins are from a later period, and are in fact more akin to the Irish coins, as they are all stylisations of Anglo-Saxon coins circulating at that time. The four Swedish coins are attributed to Sigtuna – a place where coins were minted from about 995 to the 1020s as imitations of the contemporary Anglo-Saxon coinage. They were issued supposedly in the name of Olav Skotkonung, but the legend is not always very clear; the four coins are all of the CRVX type of Æthelred II. The Swedish coins are all catalogued and cited by Malmer in her work on the Sigtuna mint, where they are linked to other known examples sharing the same die or dies (Malmer, 1989: 73-77). The Anglo-Saxon Imitations can also be classified with Scandinavian coins, as they are almost certainly struck in or around Lund in southern Sweden, and here are shown on the distribution map for Sweden. Several of the coins previously considered to be Anglo-Saxon are now confirmed as Scandinavian Imitations, and catalogued as such.

The two Irish coins were struck in Dublin, bearing the name of Sigtryg Silkenbeard. The coins are based on the contemporary coinage of Æthelred II circulating among the northern European countries in the late 10th and early 11th centuries. They are not of the same basic type, as one is an imitation CRVX while the other is based on the Long Cross type.

German coins

This is the second-largest part of the hoard and is a heterogeneous group. The coins from mainland Europe in the Viking period have only in the last few decades been studied to a level similar to that of the contemporary Anglo-Saxon coins, which have been studied for a long period. A great many changes in classification have resulted, reflecting the extensive studies of the vast amount of material unearthed in Scandinavia. These changes have been reported in the literature published in recent years, dealing with the area from Belgium in the west to Poland in the east, and south to what is now the Czech Republic.

Singling out a few items, of portrait issues, the one coin from Huy (#331), portraying Emperor Otto III, is of interest, as it is of a far better style than most of the other coins from the period. This applies especially to the portrait. Of the two coins of Strassbourg, #344 depicts Henry II, in a rather crude portrait, and is one of the youngest coins in the hoard. The other Strassbourg coin (#343) is of a more classical style, with figures on both the obverse and reverse. By far the largest part of this section is the so-called Otto-Adelheid series, numbering some 87 coins in all. Most of these coins have the named value of being deniers, but three coins are half weight, and therefore obols.

Table 3. Geographical origin of the German coins in the Gaulverjabær hoard

Mint Town	No. of coins	% of German coins
1. Goslar and neighbourhood	87	45.4
2. Cologne and imitations	22	13.2
3. Emden	11	6.6
4. Magdeburg	11	6.6
5. Mainz	5	3.0
6. Worms	4	2.4
7. Regensburg	4	2.4
8. Saxony (Duke Bernhard I	3	1.8
AD973-1011)		
Two each from:	(Total 6)	
9. Lüneburg		1.2% each
10. Strassbourg		
11. Verdun?		
One each from:	(Total 6)	
12. Esslingen		0.6% each
13. Halberstadt		
14. Huy		
15. Speyer		
16. Stade		
17. Vreden		

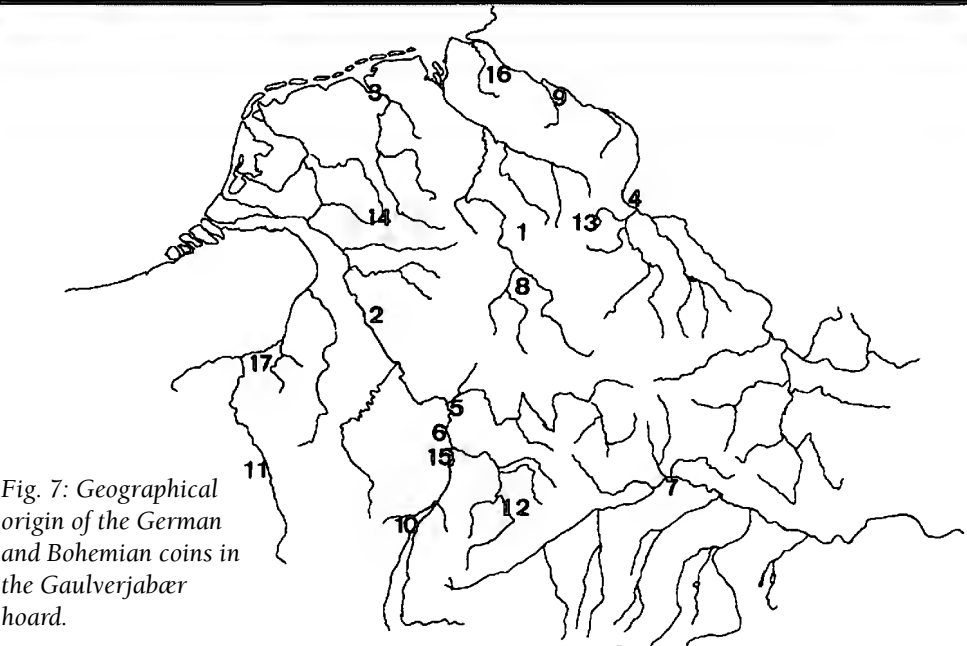


Fig. 7: Geographical origin of the German and Bohemian coins in the Gaulverjabær hoard.

Table 4. Anglo-Saxon mints and moneyers represented in the Gaulverjabær trove

Mint (no. of coins)	Moneyer (no. of coins) ⁽¹⁾
London (47)	Aelfgar (2); Aelfwine; Aethelraed; Aethelwerd (3); Asketil; Asulf; Beorhtlaf (3); Brunstan (2); Ceolnoth (2); Cynesige; Eadmund; Eadric; Eadweald (2); Eadweard; Ealhstan; Ea...?; Goda; Godric (4); Godwine (2); Goldwine; G...?; Heahwulf; Leofheah; Leofing (2); Leofric (3); Leofwine; Sibwine (3); Sweting; Toki; Wulfwine
Exeter (16)	Aelfnoth (2); Dunstan (2); Eadwine; Goda (2); Godwine; Iohan; Manna; Tuna (3); Wulfsige; Wulfstan; Wynsige
Winchester (15)	Aelfsige (4); Aethelstan; Beorhtnoth; Beorhtsige (3); Beorhtweald (2); Godman; Ingatic; Leofweald; Wynstan
Canterbury (11)	Duda; Eadweald; Godwine; Leofric; Leofstan (5); Wulfwig; (?)
Lincoln (9)	Aescman (2); Aethelnoth (3); Dreng; Sumarlithr (2); Thorsteinn
Southwark (9)	Aelfnoth; Aelfric (2); Aethelweard; Beorhtelm; Eadwig; Eadwine; Godric; Heahwulf
York (8)	Aethel...(?); Arnthor; Authgrim; Fastolf; Hundulfr; Sumarlithr; Ulfketil; Wulfsige
Cambridge (7)	Aelfric; Eadmund; Eadric (2); Eadwine (2); Hunstan
Stamford (5)	Aescwig; Godaeg (2); Godleof; Svartgeirr
Hertford (4)	Aethelweard (2); Beorhtlaf (2)
Chester (3)	Aethelwine (2); Leofwine
Maldon (3)	Aelfwine (3)
Thetford (3)	Asulf; Osbern; Sperling
Wilton (3)	Boga; Saewine (2)
Barnstaple (2)	Beorhtsige; Byrhsige
Bath (2)	Aethelric; Wynstan
Colchester (2)	Godric; Wulfwine
Dover (2)	Asfrith; Cyneric
Ilchester (2)	Leofsige; Wulfhelm
Bridport (1)	Wine (?)
Chichester (1)	Aelfwine
Derby (1)	Godwine
Dorchester (1)	Wulfnoth
Hereford (1)	Leofgar
Ipswich (1)	Leofstan
Lewes (1)	Leofwine
Lydford (1)	Goda
Lympne (1)	Godric
Malmesbury (1)	Ealdraed
Northampton (1)	Aethelnoth
Norwich (1)	Sweting
Totnes (1)	Godwine
Warwick (1)	Osmaer
Watchet (1)	Hunwine
Winchcombe (1)	Aelfhelm
Worcester (1)	Aethelmaer

Note: (1) Numbers are only given where there is more than one example.

Fig. 8: (Table 4).

Islamic coins

The Islamic coins in the hoard are few: only four coins or fragments of coins are present, with one coin lost since the hoard was found. The coins in this find span the period AD 869 as earliest date to AD 942 as latest date (AH 256-331). This is about the average that could be expected to be found in a hoard such as the Gaulverjabær finding. So as far as numbers are concerned there are no surprises, in fact the Islamic coins are in all respects normal to a Viking-type hoard of this period (ca. AD 1000). Both the numbers and the age of the Islamic coins in the Gaulverjabær hoard fit in with the norm for Norway, and even Denmark, but to a lesser degree (Skaare, 1995: 30 ff.).

Conclusion

As a Viking age hoard the Gaulverjabær find is not a large one by Scandinavian standards, but as the only significant coin hoard to be found thus far in Iceland it is of major importance. Its discovery proves the transportation of coins to the country in some quantity as well as the accumulation of wealth in coins. The fact that a coin hoard was found in Iceland, a country where the barter system was in use into the 20th century, is also important. The lack of coins generally found in Iceland indicates the dearth of coins in the country and that they were not a part of the daily life.

By weight the Gaulverjabær hoard is the second largest silver hoard found in Iceland to date.

It is only to be expected that scholars do not agree upon the date that the Gaulverjabær hoard was buried. To take a stance and put the *t.p.q.* at after 1002 but no later than 1015 could hardly be too far out, nor hugely adventurous.

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Notes

- ¹. Numbers (#NN) in the text refer to the number which has been allocated to the coin in the forthcoming catalogue of Viking Age Coins Found in Iceland.
- ². The information on die duplicates and chains has come from the extensive but unpublished work being carried out by Mr Bill Lean of Godstone, Surrey.

Chapter 22

Icelandic place-names in North Atlantic light

Svavar Sigmundsson

It's not disputed that place-names remind us of times past, but they don't tell the entire story. Because they are succinct and offer such a limited view, they can be both deceiving and confounding; nevertheless, they can still be very important. As Hermann Pálsson says in his book, *Keltar á Íslandi*: "Örnefni minna jafnan á liðinn tíma en geta þó ruglað fólk í ríminu" (Place-names always remind us of the past, but they can also confuse) (Pálsson 1996:23). Among other things, he says it is possible that wrong conclusions have been drawn from individual farm names in Iceland, which later may have set off inaccurate theories about early settlers. In this connection, for example, Dufansdalur could be named after a holy man, as is Patreksfjörður and Trostansfjörður, and not for the freed-man Dufann as reported in *Landnámabók* (1968:176-177).

A team of geneticists has outlined the latest findings of gene research on the origin of Icelanders. Briefly, the latest data concerning mitochondria in women and the Y-chromosome in men show that more than half of Iceland's earliest female settlers came from the British Isles (mainly from the Hebrides), or 61.5%, but male settlers by far originated in Scandinavia, or 80.5% (Helgason et al. 2000; Sigurðardóttir et al. 2000). This coincides with the theory that Norsemen first sailed west, taking the women they found there with them to Iceland.

But what about place-names? One may ask: what was the vital onomasticon of those people who came to Iceland? To what degree did they create place-names themselves or to what degree did they take them along? Did these first settlers take them directly from Scandinavia, or did they pick them up in the Scottish islands as they had the women? It would be well to consider that Icelandic toponyms are not of pure Norwegian roots, but rather blended with a Scottish or Scottish-Gaelic weave. But however place-names became established, it is generally held that men knew them and passed them on to the next generation rather than the women, but this could be a prejudiced view.

Icelandic place-names and the Faroese

If nothing else were known about Icelanders and their origins other than place-names and the stories connected with them, it would be quite clear that they are probably of Norse roots or, at the very least, that they had lived a long time among the Norse. Icelandic place-names can also suggest a strong connection with the Shetland and Orkney Islands, the Hebrides, and

Caithness, but they share their closest relationship with place-names of the Faroe Islands. Although we do not believe that Icelanders came from the Faroes, many Faroese place-names are very similar to those of Iceland, and it is enough to cite place-names such as Sandey (Sandoy), Kirkjubær (Kirkjubøur), and Þórshöfn (Tórshavn) as examples. In the Faroes too are Hestur, Kaldbakur, Koltur, Klakksvík, Sneis, Steig, Vaglið, Týril, and so forth, all of which are also place-names in Iceland.

There are, of course, exceptions to Icelandic place-names as compared to the Faroese, such as *býli* (farm), called *býlingur* in the Faroes and the Faroese *bøur* (infield), which denotes the Icelandic word *tún* (hayfield), and so forth, but one can assume special development within each Norse area as a rule. Nevertheless, place-names and place-name elements both possess such rich parallels in Norse language regions that all comparison with other language areas of Europe is out of the question (Sigmundsson 1997).

Icelandic place-names and the Northern and Western Isles

Traveling south of the Faroes we reach the Norse areas, the Shetlands, the Orkneys, and Caithness. It is estimated that Norse place-names in these areas number in the thousands. Not all of these names are necessarily of Norse origin, however; they could be Norse interpretations of older place-names originally Pictish. This could be the case for the name of the Shetlands, although it appears Norse.

The Orkney Islands, for example, could have been named by a tribe that lived there, but they have a parallel in Iceland as well, Orkney being not far from Papey off the southeast coast of Iceland, so this might suggest that it could rather have been named after *orkn* (seal). Orkneyinga saga mentions for example the islands Vestrey (Westray), Sandey (Sanday), Hrólfsey (Rousay), Háey (Hoy), and Rögnvaldsey (South Ronaldsay) - all Norse names (Nafnaskrá).

Caithness has had Norse names such as Skarabólstaður (Scrabster), Dungalsbær (Duncansby), and Þrasvík (Freswick), which do not have Icelandic parallels; on the other hand, we do have Þórsá (Thurso) in common.

There are many Norse place-names on the outer parts of the Hebrides, especially in Ljóðhús (Lewis), and what is more, Gaels called these "the islands of the Norsemen". The place-name Ljóðhús was also likely in Norway, and perhaps it moved westward from there. South from Ljóðhús is a peninsula which name is now corrupted to Harris from the Norse name Herað. There are 28 islands in the Hebrides named Oronsay or something similar that are all ebb-tide islands, but at least four islands with the name Örfirisey are found in Iceland (Nicolaisen 1980:119).

The Isle of Man (Mön) has a number of Norse place-names; for example, Áltá, Borg, Djúpidalur, Gnipa, Kringla, Saurbær, as in Iceland. The highest mountain is Snjófjall. Few Norse names are found in Ireland, although Lambey (Lambay), Veigsfjörður (Wexford) and Veðra(r)fjörður (Waterford) may be Norse (Guðmundsson 1997:14).

Toponyms in the Northern and Western isles may have been in sufficient supply for people from there to use them as place-names in Iceland. Yet the landscape of the islands was perhaps not sufficiently varied and awesome for the onomasticon there to satisfy Icelanders. Wherever our forefathers came from, they could not have arrived with ready-made names for some of the natural phenomena in Iceland, such as the geothermal heat, hot springs, volcanoes, and lava. The word *hver* (pot) was used to signify a hot spring, and *varmi* (heat) is the prefix of various place-names. For volcano they used the word *borg* meaning '(rocky) hill' and

for the opening of a volcano that erupts from its top, they used the word *gígur* (crater), of the Germanic root *gi-g-, *gai-g-, which means 'gapa, svigna til hliðar' (gape, bend to the side) (Magnússon 1989:244). For lava they chose a word, *hraun*, that meant 'land covered with boulders' and so forth. Place-names of this kind did not exist elsewhere in Norse language regions.

Papa and Dímon place-names

There are 5 Papa place-names in Iceland, 3 in the Faroes, 1 in Norway, 10 in the Shetlands, 8 in the Orkneys, 2 on Caithness, 12 in the Hebrides, 2 in England, and 1 on Isle of Man, or 44 total, according to Helgi Guðmundsson (88). He believes that the word *papi* denoting 'priest' had come from the middle-low German word *pape*, and that it had been in use in Nordic languages at the time of the Iceland's settlement. Helgi also is of that opinion that it could be true that Norsemen had named places for clerics or hermits, such as Papey and Papýli, where the religious had been in reclusion. Papi is the name of a skerry in the Faroe Islands, which is certainly comparable. From this, then, a parallel can be seen where rocks carry a name element of Biskup (bishop) or Prestur (priest).

Helgi believes that people who lived in northern areas where Papa place-names existed, and then moved to the Faroes and Iceland, could have given those place-names from their native land. Helgi's conclusion is that the dissemination of Papa place-names points to similar namegiving of other kinds of place-names in a large area west of Norway (90). But that Papa place-names say nothing for certain about priests in Iceland at that time.

Dímon names have a similar distribution throughout Iceland as Papa place-names. According to a calculation by Helgi Guðmundsson of Dímon place-names, there are 10 in Iceland, 1 in the Faroes, 1 in Norway, 2 in the Shetlands, 1 in the Orkneys, 1 in the Hebrides, or 16 in all (191).

In addition to Celtic place-names in Iceland, I believe that the farm name *Sogn*, which is used by two farms in south Iceland and is in older sources written "Sörn" or "Sofn", is the Celtic word *sorn* (an oven for drying corn), as compared to the Farosese place-name *Sorngjógv* (platform with air under a ravine). The farm name *Sogn* was also pronounced /sodn/ early in the last century (Sigmundsson 2001:2).

Icelandic place-names and Norway

It is easy to find parallels between Icelandic and Norwegian place-names, especially in Sogn, Fjordane and in Rogaland in Norway. Still, there are certain place-name elements that are not found in Iceland; for example, *-angur* (Harðangur); *-vin* (Björgvin); and *-þveit* in the sense of 'a little piece of land' as in a clearing in the woods or between rocks, as compared to the English *thwaite*, a loanword from Old Norse. Farm names with *-setur* (shieling) as the second element are unknown in Iceland, but they are frequent in the Northern Isles (Fellows-Jensen 1984:160-162).

Although there was need to clear the woods or brushland at the time of settlement, names with *-ruð* (clearing/glade) are unknown in Iceland, and it has not been thought fitting to have such a name element in farm names. The usual explanation for this is that these place-name elements had become obsolete or no longer applied in Norway by the time the first settlers left for Iceland. Another reason could be that the settlers had come from settlements where this type of place-name had been unknown.

Some river names in Iceland are reminiscent of Norse river names found in Norway, such as Fura (Fura), Lýsa (Lysa), Súla (Sula), and Stjórn (Stjørna); Skálm (Skalm is also found in other western Nordic river names); and Kreppa (a narrow channel in Norway). There are Icelandic river names that are at the same time present participles, such as Klifandi, Mígandi, and Pegiandi. The same can be seen in the names of some waterfalls; for example, Rjúkandi (Rjukan in Norway).

A characteristic of Norwegian place-names is that they are more often non-compound, as opposed to Icelandic, especially in the names of rivers, fjords, and islands. Non-compounded fjord names in Iceland are Bitra, Rangali, and Skjálfandi, although some of them can also have an epexegetic element, as in Bitrufjörður and Skjálfandaflói.

The special position of Icelandic lake names is that the word *vatn* (water/lake) has become dominant, and not *sjór* (sea), as in other Nordic countries, with the exception of Langisjór in Iceland. It is unique that the word *lækur* (brook) has become common in Iceland, but not *bekkur*, as in the other Nordic countries, being found only in the farm name Kvíabekkur. *Lækur* is a dialectical word in a fairly large area of Norway. The word *elfur* has not gained footing in Iceland in river names, even though it is so common in Nordic countries.

Many mountain names are common in Iceland and Norway, such as Hestur (Hest), Tindastóll (Stol), Reykjadiskur (Disk), Karl (Kallen), Kerling (Kjerringa), Galti or Göltur (Galten), and Bjarnarfell (Bjørnen).

The Icelandic mountains Esja and Hekla are named after Norwegian or Hebridean mountains; Heklan is found in northern Norway, as are Hekletindan and Heklefjellet. Esjufjall is in the Hebrides as well as three Heklas. Glóðafeykir, a mountain in Skagafjörður, is found in Norway, Gloføykje in Sogn and Fjordane; and the mountain name Gloføken is seen in Hedmark. Skjaldbreiður is a mountain in Iceland, but Skilbrei and Skjellbreia are names of lakes in Norway (Norsk stadnamleksikon).

Looking for common ground

The Place-Name Institute in Iceland has been electronically entering Icelandic place-names into the database Sarpur, which was established by the National Museum of Iceland in 1999. In the future they will in some way or other be made accessible to the public on the Internet, greatly facilitating comparison between separate Nordic regions. This new database will also make it possible to examine the feasibility of combining the place-name catalogs found in Nordic language areas in order to provide an overview and to simplify Nordic toponymic research as a whole.

There are now place-name descriptions for most farms and areas of Iceland, although they are of varying quality, and are mostly in the form of continuous topographical descriptions about the land or the region. A place-names index accompanies every description. Since 1987, new files have been computerized, and now older typed documents are being scanned digitally to convert them to machine-readable form.

Many place-names in the Institute's collections still need to be analyzed. The same may be said about place-names found in older sources, because even though they have been published, there is no general index as yet to make them more accessible. Recently, for example, a name index on the Icelandic annals of 1400-1800, which came out in six volumes between 1922 and 1987, has been published.

If this material could be entered into a database along with Faroese place-names, place-

names in Scotland Scandinavia and place-names in Norway they could be more easily compared with Norse toponyms than is now possible. This step, which would help to remind us of our common past, could also result in clearing some of the confusion that place-names still cause us today. It might also lead us to answer the question: Where did our place-names originate?

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Chapter 23

THE POMPEJI OF ICELAND – and a small Scandinavian congress of archaeologists, who were digging instead of eating dinners

Steffen Stummann Hansen

“Indeed, it’s the best that we take big action in Iceland. You from Sweden, Jan Petersen from Norway, me or another younger person from Denmark, and Þórðarson from Iceland will each take a farmstead, and then we involve half the population of Iceland to excavate the Þjórsár Valley. I think you can call that a real idea” (Nørlund to Stenberger in 1933) [1].

Introduction

In the summer of 1896 the antiquarian Daniel Bruun (1856-1931) of the National Museum of Denmark visited the Þjórsár Valley (Icelandic: *Þjórsárdalur*) in Southwest Iceland and supplemented recordings made the previous year by Þorsteinn Erlingsson (1858-1914), an Icelandic (Erlingsson 1899). Bruun and his small party entered the valley. Bruun described the trip in dramatic phrases and described the valley and its ruins as “The Pompeii of Iceland” (Bruun 1897: 25-27). It was not the last time that the valley attracted the interest from antiquarians.

On September 23rd 1932 the Danish naval inspection vessel *Hvidbjørnen* departed from Julianehaab (Qaqortoq) in South Greenland bound for Iceland [2]. Onboard the ship arrived in Reykjavík three days later carrying onboard the Danish historian, Poul Nørlund (1888-1951) of the National Museum of Denmark, the Swedish archaeologist, Mårten Stenberger (1898-1973) of the University of Uppsala, and the Danish geographer, Gudmund Hatt (1884-1960), professor at the University of Copenhagen. The group was on their way home from the excavations of the presumed farmstead of Eric the Red at *Brattahlíð* (Qassiarsuk) in the Eastern Settlement, as well as from the adjacent areas (Stummann Hansen 1998a).

Nørlund initiated the modern archaeological investigations of the Norse settlement in Greenland in 1921 (Nørlund 1924; 1928). In 1924, he hired a young architect, Aage Roussell (1901-1972) with whom he in 1926 conducted an excavation at Igáliku and thus produced the archaeological documentation for *Garðar*, the Bishop’s See of Norse Greenland (Nørlund

& Roussell 1930). After a number of excavations in the Eastern Settlement during the 1920s Nørlund and Roussell in 1930 took up investigations in the Western Settlement, further north on the West Coast of Greenland (Roussell 1936; 1941a).

The Danish archaeological research in Norse Greenland during the 1920-30s had two targets. On one hand, it was concentrated on historical known sites such as Garðar and Brattahlið, and, on the other hand, it was looking at the architecture and morphology of buildings. Thus, in 1931 Nørlund sent Roussell, who now specialised in the houses and farmsteads in Greenland and other Scandinavian emigrant communities in the North Atlantic region, on a study tour to the Scottish Isles in order to search for material comparative to that of Norse Greenland (Roussell 1934; Stummann Hansen 1998b; 1999).

During the 1920s Hatt had established the archaeology of buildings in Denmark and was about to provide Danish archaeology with an amazing new insight into Iron Age society, its settlements, farms and fields (Hatt 1931; Stummann Hansen 1983). Stenberger was deeply involved in research on prehistoric buildings of Sweden since the 1920s (Stenberger 1933). He was regarded as the leading Swedish authority in this field, which undoubtedly was the reason for his membership of Nørlund's excavation team at Brattahlið in 1932 (Nørlund & Stenberger 1934).

The party onboard *Hvidbjørnen* in September 1932 consisted of some of the most specialised researchers in Scandinavia on the archaeology of buildings. Only Roussell and the Norwegians Jan Petersen (1887-1967) and Sigurd Grieg (1894-1973), who had recorded and excavated plenty of house sites in Western Norway were excluded (Petersen 1933; 1936; Grieg 1934). In this company the vision of a Pan-Scandinavian project in Iceland was born (Nørlund 1943: 7).

The Vision

During the subsequent stay in Reykjavík of the *Hvidbjørnen* party, Nørlund presented the idea of a Pan-Scandinavian project in Iceland to Matthías Þórðarson (1877-1961), the director of the National Museum of Iceland (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands). Þórðarson agreed to the plan, which now turned to action.

It took, however, five years before the final decision to realise the project was taken. This happened at the "Sixth Nordic Archaeological Meeting", which took place in Denmark in June 1937 (Stummann Hansen 2003b: 298; 2004: 58-62). Roussell described the situation as follows, "When all the Scandinavian Directors of Ancient Monuments met together in 1937 it was without difficulty agreed that an attempt should be made at arranging a common Scandinavian expedition composed by experts from the various countries. Under Icelandic control they were to work each on his subject and to compare results and previous experiences. Thus in a way a small Scandinavian congress of archaeologists, who were digging instead of eating dinners" (Roussell 1943a: 122).

Apparently, all the Scandinavian countries were onboard, but already in the spring of 1938 the Norwegians replied that they were not able to achieve the necessary funding. Fortunately, the other countries did manage, and in the spring of 1939 the detailed planning of the expedition to the Þjórsár Valley was in progress.

Þórðarson, of course, was to act as the Icelandic representative and the director of the project. Nørlund had become the director of the National Museum of Denmark in 1938 and therefore could not participate in the project, which he himself had orchestrated. Roussell,

who was regarded as the leading authority in this field in Scandinavia, was his obvious replacement. For Sweden the choice was obvious, and Stenberger, who had been present in September 1932 when the vision was born, was appointed. The Swedish ethnologist Albert Nilsson (1904-1987), who was a specialist in vernacular building customs, would join Stenberger. From Finland Jouko Voionmaa (1912-1991) of the National Museum of Finland was appointed. He had no experience in this specific field of archaeology at all and had only done limited fieldwork on Iron Age fortresses in Finland. A young Icander, who was studying archaeology with Johannes Brøndsted (1890-1965) in Copenhagen, Kristján Eldjárn (1916-1982) was hired as the assistant of Roussell – a co-operation that was established two years earlier on excavations in the Western Settlement in Greenland. Attached to the expedition was also another young Icander, Sigurður Þórarinnsson (1912-1983), who was studying geology in Stockholm. He was about to write his thesis on the dating of tefra-layers, i.e. layers of ashes from volcanic eruptions (Thorarinnsson 1944).

“No German Propaganda”

Others were also interested into the archaeology of Iceland in the same period. In 1935 Nazi-Germany had established a major organisation with the task of co-ordinating a cultural policy as an ideological basis for the activities of the SS. The ambitious project, fathered by Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), was named *Ahnenerbe*. Research expeditions had high priority within SS-*Ahnenerbe*. Plans had been made for an archaeological expedition to Greenland in 1937 but this, as many other projects, had to be cancelled (Kater 1974: 78).

In March 1938 a plan for an *Ahnenerbe*-project in Iceland was created (Whitehead 1985: 72pp). Later the same year, Berlin had to admit that they did not have the money and logistics needed to conduct an expedition that summer. The German interest in an expedition was, however, maintained despite the lack of funding and an excavation planned for the summer of 1939.

Furthermore, in February 1939 another project appeared. The Germans were, hardly surprising, particularly interested in excavations of ancient pagan temple ruins (Danish: *gudehov*) (Gehl 1941). The archaeologist Herbert Jankuhn (1905-1990), director of the *Ahnenerbe*-funded excavations of the Viking town *Hedeby* in Northern Germany, was appointed leader of the archaeological excavations in Iceland and thereby granted the honourable duty of being the first person to excavate a pagan temple ruin in Iceland for Himmler (Whitehead 1985: 73). The Germans were focussing on was an alleged temple ruin in *Sæból* at Dyrafirði.

Þórðarson was now suddenly left with the problem of hosting three international archaeological expeditions in Iceland during the summer of 1939. The German initiatives were clearly a problem also for Roussell and Stenberger. Þórðarson, in a letter dated April 15th, 1939, was calming down Roussell, “No German propaganda is committed here. But the Germans are, as they have been for a long time, very interested in matters Icelandic – literature, archaeology, natural history etc. I also expect some German archaeologists this summer wanting to participate in an investigation of a temple ruin” (author’s translation) [3]. As a counter manifestation, a “Scandinavian Week” was proposed and planned for in Reykjavík, while the Scandinavian expedition was in Iceland. The Scandinavian delegates therefore all brought slides with them to Iceland in the case they were going to give lectures.

However, the German plans were jeopardised as one of the involved indiscreetly revealed the substance of the *Ahnenerbe*-project. Suddenly newspapers in Iceland (*Morgunblaðið*

23.2.1939) and Denmark appeared with articles about the project. On the 23rd of February 1939 the prominent Copenhagen daily *Politiken* presented a front-page story with the headline, “Himmler is searching for ancestors in Iceland” and the subtitles, “Can the Third Reich be traced back to the Vikings of Iceland”. In the article it was stated that “Early in March a large-scale genealogical investigation is planned to take place in Iceland. The Gestapo-Chief *Himmler* has planned a major research tour, and a big group of race scientists has been appointed to trace ancestors, likewise it is attempted to try to find out to what extent the Third Reich may be traced back to the Icelandic Vikings. All race scholars and other members of the expedition must belong to the SS. To the extent that researchers are needed, who are not yet members of the SS, these have been enrolled under the Himmler-banner carrying the two Victory-runes” (author’s translation).

SS-*Ahnenerbe* subsequently cancelled the expedition, officially because of “lack of funding”. The real reason was bad publicity. Wolfram Sievers (1905-1948), a high-ranking SS-officer and a member of *Ahnenerbe* subsequently described, with bitterness, how German science had been spitted on and mocked at in order to prevent it from doing its work (Kater 1974: 97). Neither was the SS-funded archaeological expedition realised. Sievers, who according to the plan should have been one of the leaders of the *Ahnenerbe*-expedition, never got another chance to visit Iceland. After the war he was put on trial (Nürnberg) and hanged in June 1948 for being responsible for medical experiments with humans. The “Scandinavian week” in Reykjavík, it seems, never took place, probably because it was regarded unnecessary when the German expeditions were cancelled.

The Expedition

It was the general opinion in the 1930s that the once so fertile Þjórsár Valley had been destroyed by the eruption of the nearby volcano Hekla in the year 1300 AD, and that approximately twenty farmsteads subsequently were abandoned, never to be inhabited again. In the 1930s the valley appeared as deserted plains of volcanic ashes where the eroding wind now and then uncovered building remains or skeletons from the graveyards. The valley therefore formed a tempting object for the project of 1939 (Roussell 1943a: 125).

Roussell, who already had a name among Scottish archaeologists, spent a couple of weeks in the Northern Isles of Scotland on his way to Iceland studying the ongoing excavations of Viking houses at the *Brough of Birsay* in Orkney and *Jarlshof* in Shetland. Thus he was able to arrive at Reykjavík completely updated in the field (Stummann Hansen 1999: 126-127; forthcoming). Stenberger, Nilsson and Voionmaa came via Bergen, while the two Icelanders Eldjárn and Þórarinnsson had arrived earlier.

The delegates gathered in Reykjavík on the 10th of July and left the following day for the Þjórsár Valley. A few days earlier a work force of twenty men had established a camp at Ásólfstaðir, which was one of the only two still inhabited farms in the valley. On the 12th of July the archaeologists all went to inspect the ruin complexes on horseback and the following day individual teams started their work.

During that summer, a total of six farmsteads and a graveyard were excavated. Roussell excavated *Skallakot* and *Stöng*; Stenberger *Snjáleifartottir* and *Áslákstunga fremri* (Fig. 1); Voionmaa *Stórhólfshlíð* while Þórðarson excavated *Skeljastaðir*. In Borgarfjörður, further north on the West Coast, two sites were excavated: *Ísleifsstaðir* by Stenberger, and *Lundur* by Voionmaa.



Fig. 1: Stenberger and Roussell at the arrival at Reykjavík in July 1939. Photo: The national museum of cultural history, Stockholm, Albert Nilsson archive.

On August 23rd, it was all over. In the evening the Icelandic government hosted a banquet for the team at Hotel Borg in Reykjavík. The following day Stenberger, Voionmaa, Nilsson, and Roussell left Reykjavík. They just made it. A week later Europe was at war.

The Publication

Shortly after the delegates had returned to their homelands, Stenberger took the initiative to publish the results in a monograph. The war, however, soon created almost enormous obstacles. Voionmaa was enrolled in the Finnish army fighting the Russians. Communication with Iceland became very slow and difficult and, of course, the whole question of raising money became complicated. In the autumn of 1941, Stenberger was about to give up. He had raised the money but had great difficulties in getting the contributions.

On January 21st, 1942 Nørlund wrote to Stenberger that he agreed to write the preface



Fig. 2: Roussell (left) and Matthías Þórðarson in conversation while the tent camp at Ásólfstaðir is taken down. Both Roussell and Stenberger eventually developed a somewhat strenuous relationship with Þórðarson. Photo, The national museum of cultural history, Stockholm, Albert Nilsson archive.

(Nørlund 1943). He further stated, “I am sorry that you don’t like the idea that the book should be published in Scandinavian languages. It is strongly on my mind that we are about to exaggerate the use of foreign languages in our Scandinavian academic publications. We have to be careful that our Scandinavian languages are not losing status” (author’s translation) [4]. Nørlund was supported by Roussell and Nordman, the Finnish State Antiquary, and Stenberger gave in.

Stenberger eventually aimed to have the book out on one particular day – April 9th, 1943, third anniversary of the German occupation of Norway and Denmark. He did not manage to create this particular manifestation, but the book *Forntida Gærdar i Island* was nevertheless out in early May (Stenberger 1943a). Stenberger had completed his work with great difficulties: “I

have never had such an unpleasant editor job as this Iceland book, a job which in so many ways could have been so enjoyable” (author’s translation) [5]. Besides a presentation of the sites, the publication contained Þórarinnsson’s chapter on the history and geology of the Þjórsár Valley, including the work on the tefra-layers, as well as Roussell’s very important comparative and conclusive chapter (Roussell 1943d). It also contained specialist’s reports by Jón Steffensen (1905-1991), an Icelandic medical doctor with an interest in history and anthropology, and Magnus Degerbøl (1895-1977), a Danish zoologist, on the skeletal material from Skeljastaðir and the domestic animals in Iceland during the Middle Ages. The final chapter was Nilsson’s work on Icelandic farmhouses of later periods. The contributions were in Scandinavian languages, according to Nørlund’s suggestion, but followed by a summary in English.

The book was well received in Scandinavia. It seems, though, that it was not promoted in Iceland. Tensions had obviously come up during the publication process between Þórðarson on one side, and Stenberger and Roussell on the other. The former was annoyed that Þórarinnsson and not he himself wrote the chapter on the history of the valley, while the latter were desparate with Þórðarson’s seeminly rather inactive attitude towards their efforts to get the publication out. It is probably against this background that Þórðarson on two occasions shortly after the war deliberately avoided Stenberger and Roussell, and that he never commented on the book to them (Stummann Hansen, forthcoming). Most of the stock of books sent to Iceland was returned a few years later to the publisher in Copenhagen, Munksgaard, much to the surprise of Roussell and Stenberger.

Stenberger, with the consent of Roussell, tried to get an English version of the book produced after the war. Negotiations were initiated with the publisher in Copenhagen, but eventually led nowhere. The reason for may well be that both Stenberger and Roussell were involved with other jobs and new projects.

The Significance of the Project

The Þjórsár Valley project was the result of an impressive Pan-Scandinavian effort, which represented the culmination of almost twenty years of pioneer work in the field of archaeology of buildings and settlements. The project became a milestone in the study of Viking and medieval farmsteads (Keller 1989: 93). The Norwegian absence from the project in 1939 was noticeable and much regretted (Nørlund 1943: 8) [6].

Eldjárn summarised the project in his obituary of Roussell and Stenberger as follows, “It must be truly said that these investigations are the biggest step ever taken in Icelandic archaeology, and the publication, *Forntida gærdar i Island* (...), remains a master piece in its field” (author’s translation) (Eldjárn 1974: 137). One could say that Nørlund was the architect behind the project, Roussell the leading authority during the fieldwork, while Stenberger put his immense efforts into editing the results and securing the publication. Although Þórðarson initially welcomed Nørlund’s initiative, he did not seem to have had a strong interest in the project when it was finally realised. Þórðarson with his limited archaeological insight may have found it difficult to match the leading Scandinavian specialists in the archaeology of buildings, leaving him a marginal role in the project. He was, however, important in the sense that he would guarantee that the project was under Icelandic control. This would calm nationalistic elements in the Icelandic society, some of which were reluctant to the idea of any foreigners excavating in Iceland.

The spirit and vision behind the Þjórsár Valley Project was in fact carried on by one of its

leading figures. After five years of isolation during the Second World War, Stenberger took an important initiative to revive and strengthen Pan-Scandinavian co-operation and tried to gather the old Iceland team around his new project – a Pan-Scandinavian excavation of the large Iron Age settlement site of *Vallhager* on Gotland. Stenberger directed the excavations, which were initiated in 1946 and lasted until 1950. The only person from the “old Iceland-team” who participated actively was Eldjárn, but Roussell and Voionmaa visited the excavations in 1947. The project at *Vallhager* was a brilliant idea as it brought the whole post-war generation of Scandinavian archaeologists together.

The Þjórsár Valley after 1939

The fascination of the Þjórsár Valley and its archaeological potential did not die with the 1939 project. Excavations and re-excavations have taken place at the sites *Sandártunga* (Eldjárn 1949), *Gjáskógar* (Eldjárn 1961) and *Sámsstaðir* (Rafnsson 1977).

Especially attention has been paid to *Stöng* – the best preserved of the sites excavated in 1939. The site was given an *ante quem* date of 1300 AD by Roussell and Þórarinnsson based on the artefact assemblage and the tefra-layer superimposed on the structure. This was later challenged by Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson, who in the 1980s re-opened the site in order to obtain new evidence on the chronology and even managed to identify an early church at the site (Vilhjálmsson 1989). Although Vilhjálmsson claims to have evidence for an early date for the site, based on a re-interpretation of the tefra-layers, the dating of the site is still a matter of debate.



Fig. 3: The joint Icelandic-Danish re-excavation of Roussell's old site at Skallakot in the summer of 2001. Photo, S. Stummann Hansen.

In 1999 a project by Orri Vésteinsson of the Icelandic Institute of Archaeology (Fornleifastofnun Íslands) and the present author, funded by the Nordic Research Council, has taken up surveys and mappings. Indeed, in the summer of 2001 a re-excavation of Roussell's site of *Skallakot* was initiated (Stummann Hansen & Vésteinsson 2002) (Fig. 2). The aim of this project is to investigate the settlement pattern and morphology of the buildings. All this work is to a high degree based on the work done by the team in 1939.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to the wide number of persons and institutions who have provided useful information and support. My special thanks are to the Carlsberg Foundation whose financial support made it possible for me to write the story of the Þjórsár Valley Project.

I am most grateful to Kirsten Caning of the Danish Polar Center, who kindly improved my English.

Notes

1. Nørlund to Stenberger in letter of December 2nd, 1933. The Antiquarian-Topographical Archives (Mårten Stenberger). Stockholm. This paper is a short version of Stummann Hansen 2001 and 2003a. The full documentation for the following presentation of the Pan-Scandinavian project in Iceland in 1939 will appear in a forthcoming book by Stummann Hansen (Stummann Hansen forthcoming).
2. Iceland was under the Danish crown 1380-1918, in personal union with Denmark 1918-1944, and became independent 1944.
3. Þórðarson to Roussell in letter of April 15th, 1939. National Museum of Iceland.
4. Nørlund to Stenberger in letter of January 21st, 1942. The Antiquarian-Topographical Archives (Mårten Stenberger). Stockholm.
5. Stenberger to Þórarinnsson in letter dated June 7th, 1944. The Antiquarian-Topographical Archives (Mårten Stenberger). Stockholm.
6. For a discussion of the importance of the Norwegian absence from the project and of the Danish-Norwegian relations regarding Viking Age research in the North Atlantic see Stummann Hansen 2001 and forthcoming.

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Chapter 24

Viking Settlement in an Iron Age Village: Old Scatness, Shetland

Val Turner, Steve Dockrill, Julie Bond

Introduction

Old Scatness and the area around it in southern Dunrossness, Shetland, has been the focus of a major heritage project which began in 1995. The project had 4 primary aims:

- to excavate an Iron Age Broch and its surrounding settlement using modern excavation techniques, in order to establish a tighter framework and chronology for the Northern Iron Age than currently exists
- to undertake a programme of environmental sampling in order to understand more about the economy of the site
- to map the surrounding area in order to see how the key sites in the area related to their hinterland
- to take the public with us every step of the way, presenting the academic results in a way that is lively and exciting .

In order to achieve this we have created a large team led by the authors. The excavation is directed by Steve Dockrill of Bradford University, the post-excavation and environmental work is co-ordinated by Dr Julie Bond, who is employed by the project, and Val Turner of Shetland Amenity Trust directs the field survey and co-ordinates the wider heritage project.

Structures and artefacts

Although the site spans 4000 years of occupation, many of the structures dating to the Iron Age stand to over 1.5m high. Carbon 14 and archaeomagnetic dating have been used in parallel in order to fix the chronology as tightly as possible. These dates are being further supported by two other methods: a programme of optically stimulated luminescence dating, organised by Dr Ed. Rhodes of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology, University of Oxford, and archaeomagnetic dating, supervised by Dr. Cathy Batt, Department of Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford. The results of all these methods are being combined into an overall dating framework (see Dockrill & Batt, in press, for details) .

The site has been full of surprises but one of the most unexpected aspects of the settlement is the apparent evidence of Viking activity within the Late Iron Age and Pictish buildings. There seems to have been a major re-organisation at this time.

The first evidence of Viking activity comes from the infill of a semi subterranean Pictish building (Structure 5) which had been dug into turf banking and lined in stone. At some point the structure seemed to have been filled with ashy midden; it is possible it was partially demolished and the walls levelled at this time. Amongst the objects retrieved from the ashy waste were a line sinker of steatite similar to those from other Norse sites in the Northern Isles and a steatite tuyère almost identical to one from Skaill, Orkney (both illustrated in Bond & MacSween 1998; see Porter 1997, 105 for the Skaill tuyère). The infilling was deliberate and can only be taken as proof that there was Viking settlement in the vicinity.

The Viking material found in one of the wheelhouses (structure 11) was quite different, appearing to form a coherent surface representing an occupation phase within the building. It includes a number of steatite objects including bowl fragments and a group of 21 loom weights, some of which are made of steatite and others being made from schist (Bond & MacSween 1998 Plate 16, Forster et al. forthcoming). These are paralleled by the loom-weights from the later Viking and Norse settlement layers at Jarlshof, (Hamilton 1956, 113, 114). The parallels for the assemblage are certainly not Iron Age. Amanda Forster, a research student at the University of Bradford examining trade in Norse steatite, has confirmed that several of the steatite forms suggest a Norse origin. In a corridor just outside the wheelhouse there was a small round-bottomed, handled, steatite bowl, identified by Forster as being early Norse. Furthermore, a knife blade from the wheelhouse was identified by Gerry McDonnell as being typical of Viking age knives such as those found at Coppergate, York (McDonnell 1998).

These artefacts are associated with a hearth which crossed the centre of the building, and which appeared to be characteristic of a Norse long hearth. The burning was most intense at the southern end of the hearth. Radiocarbon and preliminary archaeomagnetic dates place the use of this hearth and occupation surface in the 9th-10th centuries AD.

The curious thing about this assemblage and the associated hearth was that they were found to be situated above an infill of midden material in the building, about 30cm below the top of the walls. Yet the artefact distribution is very clear cut and definitely indicates an occupation phase. There is no evidence of rebuilding of any stone super-structure surrounding this occupation surface and no surviving evidence of any timber supports.

Structure 6 was a smaller wheelhouse, where occupation was different again. This structure had flagged daises in the corbelled cells, with steatite finds (particularly vessel sherds and spindle whorls) being found in the upper fills at a time when the building may have been rebuilt and used for storage. Its latest occupation dates between the late 7th-late 9th centuries AD.

The latest use of the broch was to house a clover leaf structure (structure 7) within the centre of tower. This corbelled structure stills stands to over 2m high. A passage way linked the clover leaf building to the Pictish Structure 5. The distribution of steatite in the higher floor levels of the passageway suggests activity between the two.

Two line sinkers were included in the Old Scatness assemblages. One of these has a parallel from Rogaland, where a line sinker of very similar design was found in a burial dating from c. 900-1000AD (Foldøy 1995, 149). The second line sinker was retrieved from middens to the NE of the main area of excavation which may be of Late Norse date, though further excavation is needed to confirm this.

The evolving picture therefore is of an initial, temporary Viking settlement which made use of old buildings. As yet we have only had tantalising glimpses of potentially Norse struc-

tures at the edges of the Iron Age village. An area of paving was all that remained of a building on the west side of the mound. It was associated with a fragment of schist bakestone suggesting a Norse date. In addition, there is anecdotal evidence of longhouses having been revealed to the northeast of the village when the airport was extended in the early 1970s.

Environmental evidence

The environmental evidence for the Late Norse phase of the site comes from the midden excavated to the NE of the mound which concealed the Iron Age village. Evidence from it includes extensive fish remains and this too is reminiscent of other Viking/Norse assemblages in the Northern Isles. In Viking fish assemblages the proportion of cod to other fish increases and the fish being caught get larger. In the Late Norse period, the numbers of fish caught increase (Barrett et al. 1999).

The environmental evidence for Iron Age agriculture suggests a highly successful agricultural community at Old Scatness; one which grew barley and latterly cultivated oats, which provided a second crop of both human and animal food.

The site at Old Scatness sits on a soil which may first have been improved and manured in the Bronze Age. Manuring practises appear to have changed throughout time. In the earliest soils around Old Scatness, domestic waste seems to have been added, apparently originating from ashy middens. In the Norse and later period animal manure and turf appears to have been added. (Simpson et al. 1998) It would have been easier to continue to use a soil which had first been developed than to break open an entirely new one. Simpson suggests that in the Viking period manuring practises intensified. Further dating work on the soils around Old Scatness should enable us to refine this chronology.

In the Late Iron Age and then into the Norse period, agriculture appears to intensify in the Northern Isles (Bond, in press). The main crop continued to be barley, a storable carbohydrate source, which was to become crucial to the seat of the later Earldom. By the 13th century grain was traded between the Orkney Earls and Iceland, and perhaps a grain trade was established earlier with Norway. Dunrossness would have been the granary of Shetland and so grain may have been traded from here around the islands.

The surrounding area

The evidence of Norse occupation in the survey area around Old Scatness is harder to detect than at two of the three other multi-period broch-centred sites close by at Jarlshof and at Eastshore. (Little is known about the broch site at Toab, discovered by the survey in 1998, in an area where no previous archaeological work had been undertaken.) Evidence of two pagan graves, one male and one female, have been found in Dunrossness. A tortoise shell brooch which came from Second World War disturbance on Ward Hill identified the female grave. The male grave, which contained a sword and what was probably a shield boss, was found when the Sumburgh Airport's Control Tower was built a few hundred yards to the east of Old Scatness.

John Hamilton (1956: 85-88) identified two Late Iron Age huts at Jarlshof. He suggested that they were fishing bothies due to the large fish bones found in associated middens, but from his descriptions, plans and the visible remains on the site, they are reminiscent of the Old Scatness Pictish buildings. Hamilton describes them as "upright slabs supporting several courses of horizontal masonry backed against..... pure sandblow" (p85). A third, more rectan-

gular building was constructed in the same style above “Hut 2”. Hamilton felt that “From a structural point of view this suggests the blending of two traditions – the rectangular Norse plan and the indigenous revetment technique. The associated finds [pottery sherds similar to those found in the huts, and what Hamilton identified as Viking types of steatite sherds, whorls and loom weights] also suggest an overlap between the two cultures ...” (p88). This appears to bear out the evidence from Old Scatness. It is also worth noting that the later Viking and Norse longhouse settlement at Jarlshof is also situated outside the limits of the Iron Age village.

The multi-period settlement centred on the broch at Eastshore includes a structure to the west of the mound which could, morphologically, be Later Norse. It is reminiscent in plan of Bigelow’s excavated Late Norse house site, Sandwick South, Unst (Bigelow 1985).

The Eastshore earthwork remains abuts a modern field wall standing to full height. The course of the field wall is very irregular which suggests that it may even follow the foundations of a prehistoric field boundary. In that case, the line of the boundary must have continued into the Norse period as the putative Norse structure is apparently situated immediately adjacent to the dyke. This relationship between field dyke and house site is an emerging pattern of Norse settlement being seen elsewhere in Shetland (Turner, forthcoming).

The only other possible Norse site picked up in the south Dunrossness survey, North Taingpool, may equally, be prehistoric – the morphological evidence is ambiguous. This site is also situated beside the remains of a field dyke, and in this instance, is situated close to two prehistoric houses and fragmentary remains of later, crofting, field systems.

Conclusions

The picture which is beginning to emerge, albeit still incomplete, is one of incoming Vikings targeting the rich Iron Age/Pictish estates. Old Scatness, Jarlshof and Eastshore all fall into this category. The North Taingpool site, if used in the Viking period, may well also have been on a cultivated prehistoric soil, albeit less prestigious in the Iron Age period. All the estates may have altered significantly in the Viking period but they do not seem to have been abandoned.

The agricultural practices suggest a continuation of use, and the evidence from other Northern Isles sites such as Pool, Orkney, indicates an intensification of the Pictish arable activities in Viking times (Bond, in press). We cannot yet be certain if this is true at Old Scatness because the vast amounts of data are still being processed.

In the fields reuse of boundaries cannot immediately be proven morphologically, but one of the next steps which Turner and Simpson are currently taking in the survey area is to use micromorphology in order to detect changes in land management (manuring practices etc).

The structures at Old Scatness show evidence of both native and Scandinavian artefacts being deposited in structures which are no longer being used or rebuilt in traditional ways. Is it the reuse of existing, but abandoned, buildings by incoming Vikings that helps to explain why first generation Vikings have hitherto been so difficult to find in Shetland? What was the relationship of these settlers with the native population? Further analysis of the artefactual, economic and environmental evidence from Old Scatness should lead us to a better understanding of Norse colonisation in Shetland and the interaction between native Shetlander and Norse incomer.

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Chapter 25

From Hermaness to Dunrossness: some Shetland ness-names

Doreen Waugh

Most of the ness-names (ON *nes* n. a promontory) which are the topic of this paper are impossible to date, but it can be said, with near certainty, that although some of Shetland's ness-names must have been created in the Viking period, many were also created in the post-Viking period, in the broadest chronological sense of that expression. 'Ness' is a word which is widely used in Shetland and, theoretically, it could still be used in the creation of new 21st-century place-names, although the ness-names which form the basis of this paper were certainly all recorded before 1980, on the Ordnance Survey Pathfinder 1 : 25000 maps from which the names were extracted, via Robin Hooker's electronic Pathfinder Gazetteer to which the bracketed four-figure references (e.g. HU 6299) relate.¹

Arguably, many of Shetland's ness-names were, in fact, created in the early post-Viking period because the element *is*, for the most part, compounded with other Norse terms. Some of these terms, however, have subsequently been anglicised and some, like *ness*, survive into the modern dialect, making any claim for their antiquity questionable. There is also the dating complication introduced by the 'Ness of X' structural type, which is clearly an English or Scots compound, although both parts of a name of this type can be unquestionably Norse because X is commonly an existing Norse place-name such as Ness of Ramnago (HU 6299), Ness of Wadhisier (HP 5601), Ness of Cullivoe (HP 5502), Ness of Vassetter (HU 5389) and so on.

Overstepping the knotty question of precise dating, therefore, it is my contention that ness-names can be said to epitomise post-Viking Shetland naming in that the continuing use of the common Norse element *nes* links Shetland firmly in naming practice to its Scandinavian North Atlantic neighbours, while at the same time demonstrating the way in which aspects of rural life gradually develop their individual character in the unique set of historical, geographical and linguistic circumstances which characterise Shetland in the post-Viking period. Some of Shetland's ness-names have exact or near parallels in The Faroes, although Shetland is apparently well ahead in sheet number of such names recorded on maps.² There were 81 examples of ness-names on the Faroese (1:100000) map, whereas the total extracted from the Shetland maps (1:25000) was 380. Part of the difference in numbers may have to do with differences in population distribution and differences between the topography of Shetland and The Faroes because *ness*, although a general term for a headland, tends – in Shetland at

least – to apply predominantly to headlands which have some land-use potential by way of providing pasture for animals, or a source of fuel etc.

Shetland's ness-names, as the title suggests, are spread from Hermaness in the north (perhaps *Hermundar-nes, with a personal name specific, which is unusual)³ to Dunrossness in the south, which has the status of being the name of one of the medieval and present-day parishes of Shetland. (Two other ness-names – Sandness and Whiteness – also occur in the names of the parishes of Walls & Sandness and Tingwall, Whiteness & Weisdale respectively.) The Faroese scholar Jakob Jakobsen includes Dunrossness in his excellent volume *The Place-Names of Shetland* and suggests the derivation “*‘dynrastar-nes’ ... from the strong tide “dynrøst” (mentioned in *Orkneyinga Saga*) running past its south-eastern point).⁴ Perhaps Dunrossness was initially a name for a single headland but an area roughly equivalent in extent to the medieval parish of Dunrossness has now become ‘Da Ness’ (i.e. The Ness) par excellence in Shetland place-name usage.

There are some other examples of simplex Ness in Shetland but less than I had expected. There are nine in total and all occur in particularly remote places or on islands where there are few other nesses to compete for the name:

Da Ness (HT 9541)	Foula
The Ness (HU 3626)	South Havra
The Ness (HU 3174)	Gunnister Voe
The Ness (HU 4034)	Wester Quarff
Ness (HU 2158)	West Burrafirih
The Ness (HP 6114)	Burra Firih
The Ness (HU 3691)	Sand Voe
The Ness (HU 3192)	opposite Uyea, North Mavine
The Ness (HU 3786)	North Roe

None of these refers to a prominent or elongated ness and four are names of small, rounded headlands on the side of a voe (ON *vágr* m.) rather than the principal ness extending out along the voe towards the open sea. It seems probable, however, that to this small number could be added many names of the Ness-of-X type which could initially have been simplex ness-names, subsequently differentiated by being compounded with the name of the settlement for which they traditionally provided pasture, peat or some other natural resource. Examples such as the Ness of Houlland (HP 5205) in Yell which has three divisions Ousta Ness, Mid Ness and Inna Ness (cf. Faroese *Innarnes*) support this suggestion because it seems very likely that the original name was simply Ness before the tripartite division which reflects the use of the ness as a farming or crofting resource.

There is another word for a headland which is, in a sense, both simplex and compound, and which does apply to elongated or very obvious nesses. As a name, it is now recorded on Shetland maps as a single word Foraness or separate words Fora Ness (ON *for-nes* n. a promontory), and there are four examples, the Delting example not being quite the traditional ness but an island joined to the mainland by a natural causeway. The neighbouring mainland farm is called Swinister and although it is now sheep which are put to graze on Fora Ness at Swinister, it must originally have been used for pigs (ON *svín* n. a swine):

Fora Ness (HU 3546)	Innersand
Fora Ness (HU 4547)	Breiwick

Fora Ness (HU 3517) Spiggie
 Fora Ness (HU 4571) Swinister, Delting

ON andness or annes n. 'a promontory or point of land' also occurs, but only in a single name Aness (HU 4428) in Cunningsburgh.

Jakobsen cites one example of a name from Delting – de Nesjen⁵ – which, he believes, contains ness in the plural form *nesin and the topography does support his theory in that there are several prominent nesses as well as smaller headlands with ness-names in Delting, but that could be said of most of Shetland. The name now appears on the Pathfinder map as Neshion (HU 4376), but its derivation is a little doubtful given 16th century forms such as Neschoun and Nesso.⁶

Many ness-names are purely topographical in reference, but human presence or farming activity of one kind or another also provides the specifics for a large number of ness-names in Shetland. In fact, the evidence of specifics points to the ness as a coastal feature which was much more often named from the perspective of land use than from its seaward appearance or significance, although the latter type may also occur in names such as Roe Ness (HU 3243) from ON rauðr red, or Quida Ness (HU 1761) or Whiteness (HU 2447) from ON hvitr white (cf. Faroese Hvítanes), although the adjective could imply that the ness is grass-covered rather than being a reference to white rock noticeable from the sea.

Examples of naturally occurring resources which would have been important to farming life in neighbouring settlements are found in:

Watsness (HU 1749) from ON vatn n. fresh water (essential to life and to animal husbandry and, perhaps surprisingly, there are parts of Shetland in which good surface water for animals is scarce) (cf. Faroese Vatnsnes); Turr Ness (HU 5340) probably from ON torf n. a turf or sod (cf. Faroese Torvanes); Lunna Ness (HU 5071) from ON hlunnr m. a roller for launching boats, which suggests that the ness was one of the locations used for portage of goods; Ling Ness (HU 4650) from ON lyng heather for the byre or cattle shed; Fugla Ness (HU 3635) from ON fugl m. a bird (collection of eggs or of the birds themselves would have provided an additional source of food); collection of eggs may also be suggested in a name such as Spoo Ness (HU 5607) from ON spói m. a curlew; Sella Ness (HU 3973) and Selie Ness (HU 3460) from ON selr m. a seal (sealskin and oil were both important commodities) (cf. Faroese Selnes); Whal Ness (HU 3351) from ON hvalr m. a whale, which could also be named thus because of its shape; Hoga Ness (HU 5500) from ON hagi m. pasture; Winnia Ness (HU 4775) possibly from ON vin f. gen. vinjar a meadow, pasture; Fiska Ness (HU 3066) from ON fiskr m. a fish, probably freshwater fish in this instance because the ness is located alongside the Town Loch as opposed to the nearby Laird's Loch on the island of Muckle Roe.

Nesses were important to sea-fishermen as well because they were recognisable points on the land and could be used as 'meads' or markers by which to pinpoint fishing grounds or as places by which to tell the time when the sun dipped behind them. Jakobsen suggests an interpretation of *nóns-varða for the hills known as "de Nunsvird, -firt" in Whalsay and North Mavine which he identifies as 'hills used as solar marks'⁷ from ON nón n. about three o'clock in the afternoon, and I believe that the common ness-name No Ness (HU 2377) or Noness (HU 4422) might have the same origin, although there could be other explanations of the specific. Fishermen also drew their boats up on nesses in suitable places such as Neostie Ness (HU 6771) on Skerries and Noust Ness (HU 6689) in Fetlar.

Further pursuit of the theme of the natural resources of the ness leads to the ness-name Saltness (HU 2448; HU 3666) / Salt Ness (HU 4562; HU 3450; HU 4880) of which there are five examples in Shetland (cf. one example of Saltnes in The Faroes). When this name occurs in Norway, according to Jakobsen 'we find a reminder of the boiling of sea-water carried on there for the extraction of salt'.⁸ Alternatively, salt could also be procured by burning seaweed.⁹ In whatever way the salt works were undertaken, there is a certain similarity between the places which are described as Saltness in Shetland. Saltness in Walls is situated by The Houb (ON hóp n. a small landlocked bay or inlet), an inlet of the sea which has a narrow channel leading in from the sea and which affords sheltered, easy access to sea-water and plentiful seaweed driven in by the prevailing westerly winds; another Saltness is situated to the south of Brae by shallow water and gravel-flats; Salt Ness in Whalsay is now by the pier at Symbister and it is difficult to tell what it would have been like in the past, but certainly sheltered; Salt Ness by Semblister on the Westside is on a low-lying headland; the final example of Salt Ness is situated on a low-lying point by shallow water opposite The Vadill (ON vaðill m. shallow water which could be forded on horseback) in the south of the island of Yell.

As well as being used for its naturally occurring resources such as salt and peat, the most obvious function of the ness is as a place where animals were regularly put out to pasture. In fact, in a rural economy dominated by animal husbandry the importance of the ness as part of the farming unit is considerable. Ness-names which incorporate words for animals can be found widely throughout Shetland and there are related names which refer to the penning of animals. The 'rooing' (cf. ON rýja) of the sheep (or plucking the wool off by hand) was still a very important social occasion in Shetland in my 1950s childhood in Sand on the Westside, when people gathered at the 'crö' (ON krá or *kró f. a small pen or fence) as we called the enclosure where the sheep were penned. The word for animal enclosure which appears as the specific in two ness-names is not ON krá, however, but rétt f. and réttir m. a public fold. This word has generally disappeared in the dialect, although Jakobsen records it from the island of Unst in the sense of "enclosure for horses" and in Northmavine in the compound "retta-dyke"¹⁰, but it survives in two place-names located on islands on the Westside as Rit Ness (HU 3362) on Papa Little and Reitta Ness (HU 2166) on Vaila.

The animals which were being penned on the nesses cover the range that one would expect. There have been sheep in Shetland for many centuries and names such as Lambaness (HU 1662) and Lamba Ness (HU 6517) (ON lamb n.) on Papa Stour are testimony to their presence (cf. Faroese Lambanes), as may be Sodasness (HU 4778) in Yell (from ON sauðr m. a sheep). Pigs were also reared, as has already been mentioned with reference to Fora Ness with the neighbouring farm of Swinister, and the name Swinna Ness (HU 6409) also occurs in Unst. The name Hesta Ness (HU 6692) (ON hestr m. horse) occurs on Fetlar, while Rusness (HU 3064) (ON hross m. a horse) is on Muckle Roe and Russa Ness (HU 5063) in a remote part of Vidlin and, equally, in Sandsound (HU 3749) on the Westside. Cattle are probably being referred to in the name Buness (HU 6209) in Unst and Bu Ness (HU 2272) in Fair Isle (ON bú n. abode, farm or stock of cattle on a farm). Another possible reference to cattle is in the name Yuxness (HU 3414) which seems to contain ON uxi m. an ox but it is improbably located on Fitful Head and it may be that the unfortunate animal merely met its death at that spot. The association of Ux Ness (HU 3835) on Burra with living cattle is more probable because it is recorded as a place from which cattle were swum to the neighbouring island of Trondra.¹¹

Movement between points of land was also important for human beings and there are several ness-names which incorporate ON *kalla* to call, cry or shout. Jakobsen notes the Trondra example of Kallines from **kallaðar-ness* and there are others.¹² Its spelling has occasionally been further 'anglicised' on the Pathfinder map as Kallee Ness (HU 3835). Jakobsen also notes a translation of an earlier Norse name of this type in "de Cryin'-teng" from ON **kallaðar-tangi*".¹³

Habitative specifics are not commonly compounded with ON *ness*, with the exception of ON *kví* f. which, in a Shetland and Orkney context, has developed to apply to the habitation associated with an outlying farm, from its original meaning of fold or pen.¹⁴ Names such as Qui Ness (HU 2965), Quee Ness (HU 4865) or Queyin Ness (HU 6671) contain ON *kví*. ON *garðr* m. an enclosure also occurs in Garda Ness Hill (HU 4369), with reference to the place where the two enclosures of Holligarth and Bennigarth had their peat-cutting rights. Other minimal evidence of building can be seen in Skeo Ness (HU 4769), in which *skeo* is the Shetland term recorded by Jakobsen and still used today for "a loosely built up stone hut or shed with small slits in the walls, used for drying, esp. meat and fish, occas. also clothes." Jakobsen draws a parallel with Norwegian *skjaa*, m., a shed, drying-hut (*fiskeskjaa*, *torvskjaa*, etc.), a wooden hut with interstices for letting in the air.¹⁵ Buildings which were already there when the Vikings arrived are recorded in names such as Burra Ness (HU 4475) (ON *borg* f. a broch) although the reference can be to the dome-shape of the ness itself, and possibly in Toft Ness (HU 4476) (ON *topt*, *tompt* and *tupt* f. 'a site, place on which a building may be erected or has been erected' or simply 'site of a settlement').¹⁶

Kirk Ness (HU 5565) or Kirka Ness (HU 3043; HU 3346) (ON *kirkja* f. a church) is also a ness-name which occurs in a few locations in Shetland. In the religious context there is also the name Papil Ness (HP 5404) (ON *Papar* m. the Norse name for the Irish anchorites) which faces Crussa Ness (HP 5403) (ON *kross* m. a cross) across Papil Bay on the island of Yell, reflecting early religious activity of which the Vikings were aware. The remarkable 'Monks' Stone' found at Papil in West Burra in 1943 gives a picture of these Irish priests equipped with croziers and book-satchels carrying their message across the sea.¹⁷

Other than these examples, specifics in ness-names, where it is possible to interpret them with reasonable certainty, are largely topographical. They note the shape or size of the ness, as in the several examples of Mio Ness (HU 6670) or Mu Ness (HP 6301) (ON *mjár*, *mjór* slender) (cf. Faroese *Móanes*); Brei Ness (HU 3167) (ON *breiðr* broad) (cf. Faroese *Breiðanes*); Snarraness (HU 2356) (ON *snara* f. a snare) with reference to the narrow neck of land beyond which the rounded ness juts out into the sea; arguably Scatness (HU 3809) falls into this shape category, if my suggestion of derivation of its specific from ON *skati* m. in the sense of 'something long and thin, probably protruding' is accepted;¹⁸ some characteristic of the neighbouring sea may also be the reference, as in the examples of Strom Ness (HU 2965) (ON *straumr* m. a stream, current, race) (cf. Faroese *Streymnes*) and Brim Ness (HP 6117) (ON *brim* n. surf) (cf. Faroese *Brimnes*); the quality of stone in the locality, as in Esha Ness (HU 2278) (ON *esja* n. a kind of clay or soft stone which flakes easily) or Stenness (HU 2177) (ON *steinn* m. a stone) where the beach is now noted as a collecting place for agates and other beautiful semi-precious stones; Grut Ness (HU 5766) (ON *grjót* n. rough pebbles) and Urie Ness (HU 5994) (ON *eyrr/øyr* f. a gravelly bank) both describe the most common material found on Shetland beaches; Sandness (HU 1857), the parish name (ON *sandr* m. sand); a wild animal associated with the ness, as in Catta Ness (HU 4967) (ON *köttr* m. a cat or

possibly a weasel); the vegetation as in Ling Ness (HU 4560) (ON *lyng* n. heather) and Gruness (HU 2755) (ON *grœnn* green or grass-covered) and so on.

The topographical list could be very lengthy, but space is limited and I hope that this selection of place-names has given a picture of Shetland's ness-names which will convince readers that while nesses are, in a very real geographical sense, peripheral and seaward-facing, their names have a great deal to convey about the importance of the ness to life on land in Viking and post-Viking Shetland.

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Notes

- ¹ Pathfinder Gazetteer – 1.Ov – Scotland, compiled by Robin A. Hooker FRGS
- ² Unfortunately, the only Faroese map which I could acquire, and that with some difficulty, was *Føroyar Topografiskt Atlas 1 : 100000*, and I am, therefore, conscious that I am not exactly comparing like with like.
- ³ Jakobsen 1936: 151.
- ⁴ Jakobsen 1936: 126.
- ⁵ Jakobsen 1936: 85
- ⁶ e.g. Ballantyne et al 1999: 154, 262.
- ⁷ Jakobsen 1936: 113
- ⁸ *ibid*: 86
- ⁹ Cleasby et al 1874 (1982): 510.
- ¹⁰ Jakobsen 1936: 91
- ¹¹ Stewart 1987: 307.
- ¹² Jakobsen 1936: 86.
- ¹³ Jakobsen 1936: 5
- ¹⁴ Marwick 1952: 227-229.
- ¹⁵ Jakobsen 1985: 790.

¹⁶ Gammeltoft 2001: 17-32.

¹⁷ Cant 1996: 159-173.

¹⁸ Waugh 2001: 47-57.

Journal of

The Role of the State in the Development of the Legal System in New Zealand

John Gammeltoft

The role of the state in the development of the legal system in New Zealand is a complex issue. It involves a number of factors, including the historical context, the political system, and the legal system itself. The state has played a significant role in the development of the legal system in New Zealand, particularly in the area of the common law. The state has been responsible for the creation of the legal system, the establishment of the courts, and the development of the legal profession. The state has also been responsible for the regulation of the legal system, including the regulation of the legal profession and the regulation of the courts. The state has also been responsible for the development of the legal system in New Zealand, particularly in the area of the common law. The state has been responsible for the creation of the legal system, the establishment of the courts, and the development of the legal profession. The state has also been responsible for the regulation of the legal system, including the regulation of the legal profession and the regulation of the courts. The state has also been responsible for the development of the legal system in New Zealand, particularly in the area of the common law.

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‘Look now, stranger, at this island’.¹ A brief survey of the island-names of Shetland and Orkney.

Peder Gammeltoft

The Northern Isles comprise two archipelagos, Shetland and Orkney (cf. Figure 1). Orkney is situated just off the north-eastern tip of Scotland. A further 100 km or so north-northeast of Orkney lies Shetland. To the east of the Northern Isles lies Norway. The normal starting point from Scandinavia for a journey to the Scottish colonies would have been Western Norway. If one sailed from Western Norway, it was ‘only’ a matter of sailing west or west-southwest for a couple of days until the Northern Isles were reached. And from there one could steer south-southwest and reach other Scandinavian colonies in the British Isles. Owing to the relative proximity of Shetland and Orkney to Norway, they were probably among the first of the North Atlantic islands to have received a Scandinavian influx.

Within the field of place-name research there has been a long tradition of placing various place-name types into chronological sequence. In this respect, it has long been recognised that the names of islands may range among the oldest layers of place-names. In Scandinavia the very oldest layers of island names are generally recognised to be simplex or derived constructions, such as the Norwegian names *Lovunda* (< poss. **Laufund*, ‘The foilaged one’, cf. NG 16: 154), *Sula* (< **Sūla* ‘The cloven one’, from ON *sūla*, f. ‘a cleft’, cf. NG 13: 61) and *Tjøtta* (< **Pjótta*, f. ‘The thigh-like one’, cf. NG 16: 60). In the Common Scandinavian period a new type of construction appeared, namely that of a compound consisting of a specific + the generic *ey*, f. ‘island’ or *holmr*, m. ‘islet’, etc. (cf. NSL 1997: 47-49), as in e.g. *Bastøy* (< ON *bast*, n. ‘bast’, cf. NG 6: 111-12), *Flatøya* (< ON *flatr*, adj. ‘flat’, cf. NG 6: 330) and *Håøya* (< ON *hár*, adj. ‘high’, cf. NG 2: 84). This new type of construction even seems to have been found so appropriate that a number of the originally uncompounded island names in the course of time have been supplied with a similar epexegetic or descriptive element. An example of this is the Danish island of *Samsø* which is recorded by Adam of Bremen in c.1075 as *Samse* but as *Sampsø* in c.1200 (DS 1: 1; Jørgensen 1994: 244). By the time of the Scandinavian conquest and settlement of the Scottish Isles, the construction *specifying element* + *ey*, *holmr*, etc., seems to have become the standard one and almost all the Scottish island-names of Scandinavian origin conform to this structure. This is also very much the case with the Northern Isles and only a few exceptions to this type of construction exist. Most of these exceptions are so-called

comparative names, such as e.g. Noss in Shetland (1490 Nws (DN VIII, no. 426), and Wyre in Orkney (c.1350 Vigur DI III: 50n). Noss derives from ON *nös*, f. 'a nose, nostril', whereas Wyre originates from ON *vigr*, m. 'a javelin, spearhead', the former having been named so because of its steep cliff sides resembling the shape of a nose and the latter owing to its apparent likeness to a spear or a spearhead.

Since islands are likely to be among the first localities to be named, they constitute an important group in so far as they might be able to convey information about the nature and intention of the colonisation of the area, or possibly what or whom the colonisers encountered. There are at least 300 named islands, holms and skerries in the Northern Isles but not all of these can be reckoned to be of Scandinavian Viking-Age origin. About 40% are modern names, mostly of the type *Holm of x* and *Isle of x*. Island-names of this type usually relate the situation of the island in relation to a better known location, be it a larger island or a large settlement, etc. In total, there are some 160-180 names which may be reckoned to be of Scandinavian Viking-Age origin, although, owing to the lack of substantial and early written sources from the area, some names of islands may have been formed in the post-Norse period. The general character of this place-name material is, however, distinctly Viking-Age.

The fact that the island-name material generally appears to belong to an older layer of naming may be viewed through the 18 island-names in Shetland and Orkney which contain a personal name as the specific, all of which are of Old Norse origin. Of these personal name specifics, 7 are of an ancient type of original compounded personal names, e.g. ON *Kolbeinn*, m., *Rögnvaldr*, m. and *Vémundr*, m., which are reflected in the island-names of *Copinsay*, Orkney (c.1350 *kolbeinzey* (DI III: 51n.)), *South Ronaldsay*, Orkney (c.1300 *Raughnvallzey* (Orkn 325I: 163)), and *Vementry*, Shetland (1577 *Vehementrie* (SheDoc2, no. 246), 1582 *Wemenderø* (SheDoc, no. 42)), respectively (cf. figures 2 & 3). This type of personal name is typically found in the very oldest layers of place-names in Scandinavia, usually dating to the Iron Age, i.e. the period prior to the Viking Age (cf. KLMN 8: 217-18). However, this name-type also continued well into the Viking Age and I am in no way trying to imply that the Shetland and Orkney island-names of Scandinavian origin are in any way pre-Viking-Age in origin. During the Viking Age a new type of personal name became increasingly popular, namely hypocoristic personal names, names which have originated as short-forms or pet-forms of original dithematic or monothematic personal names. It is striking to note that there are only a couple of island-names which may contain this type of personal name, such as possibly ON *Balti*, m., as in the name *Balta*, Shetland (1558-59 *Balta* (SheDoc2, no. 115), 1599 *Baltay* (SheDoc, no. 280), cf. Jakobsen 1936: 121 and Stewart 1987: 2). I, therefore, feel that the generally old character (probably early Viking-Age) of the personal name stock found in the specifics of the island-names serves as a fairly reliable age-indicator of this name-group as a whole.

If the personal names embedded have the appearance of being relatively early in character, the remainder of the island-name specific material is normally straight-forward Old Norse word-stock.² Place-names only serve one function in life and that is to single out one locality from all other localities. The most appropriate or relevant way to single out a locality is to describe it by means of readily available word-stock. Relevance should in this respect only be seen as the namer's subjective opinion of what is the most noteworthy aspect of the locality. It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that the most potent naming motive relates to what the islands may be used for, in particular when it comes to the smaller islands. This utilisation may be described in terms of which domestic animals were being kept or reared on the is-

lands. From Orkney alone, island names such as *Fara* (c.1350 *færey* (DI III: 50n.), *Hunda* (1550 *Hunday* (REO: 243), *Lamb Holm*, *Swona* (c.1300 *Sviney* (Orkn 325I: 130, 167)), contain the elements ON *fær*, n. 'a sheep', ON *hundr*, m. 'a dog', ON *lamb*, n. 'a lamb' and ON *svín*, n. 'a pig', respectively.³ Sometimes, the reference is also to wild creatures on or around an island, as is the case with the Shetland islands of *Foula* (1490 *Fogle* (DN VIII, no. 426)) and *Whalsay* (1490 *Hwalsøy* (DN VIII, no. 426)), the former specific of which is derived from ON *fogl*, *fugl*, n. 'a bird', whereas the latter contains ON *hvalr*, m. 'a whale'. Between one-fifth and one-sixth of the Viking-Age island-name material reflects this naming motive. Marginally less popular seems to have been the need to describe islands in terms of the vegetation found there. For instance, there are no less than 11 *Lingas* in the Northern Isles. These all derive from an original **Lyngey*, (< ON *lyng*, n. 'heather') 'Heather island'.⁴ Why heather should feature so prominently in island-names of Shetland and Orkney is not known, but considering the various uses to which heather could be applied, such as grazing, brooms, roofing, etc., it is perhaps not so surprising that there should have been a need to name islands after this vegetation. Of other examples of specifics describing the plant-growth, there are *Braga* and *Rysa Little* (1492 *Ryssay (Sound)* (HSRO: 72)) in Orkney, where the reference is to Mod. Norw. *brake* 'a juniper-tree', and ON *hrís*, n. 'brushwood' or *Bigga* (1581 *Biggay* SheDoc, no. 27)), Shetland, which contains the crop designation ON *bygg*, n. 'barley'. Quite often the shape, size or colour of the island is also recorded in the specific, e.g. ON *hár*, adj. 'high', ON *flatr*, adj. 'flat', ON *grænn*, adv. 'green', as reflected in the Shetland names of *Hoy* (1601 *Hoy* (SheDoc, no. 308)), *Flotta* (c.1350 *flatey* (DI III: 51n.)) and *Gruney* (15th c. *Grønøy* (DN XII, no. 190)).

As is evident from the above, the majority of island-names in Shetland and Orkney relate to the more mundane aspects of life, that is surviving and getting by. Only in such names as those compounded with personal names do we catch a glimpse of some of those Scandinavians who may have been among the first to settle in these parts of the North Atlantic. But what about those whom they encountered, the original inhabitants of these islands? The indigenous population of Shetland and Orkney was probably Pictish. Later Scandinavian references certainly suggest that Picts lived in these islands before the arrival of the Scandinavians. The Picts were usually termed *pettar* by the Scandinavians, and this designation is found forming part of the Old Norse name for the *Pentland Skerries*, which is recorded as *Petlandz skær* in 1329 (DN II, no. 170). *Petland* is a Scandinavianized form of the name Pictland (i.e. the northern and eastern parts of the Mainland of Scotland at the time of the Scandinavian colonisation), the skerry being situated halfway between Orkney and the Mainland. It would, therefore, not seem unreasonable to assume that the tribal designation *pettar* might form the specifying part of place-names in the Northern Isles. Reality, however, is different. Not a single island-name contains a reference to the Picts by their tribal designation, and this is a general feature of the Northern Isles' place-name material. In fact, there are only four place-names in total in the Northern Isles which contain the tribal designation *pettar* and these all seem to be more recent. Of the four primary *Pet*-formations (*Petta Dale*, *Petta Water*, *Petta Dale* and *Pettifirth*), only *Pettifirth* seems to have been recorded prior to the 17th century (cf. Stewart 1987: 284). It is, therefore, doubtful whether place-names in *Pet*- can be used as evidence of a Pictish presence. In fact, the only possible glimpse we might catch of a Pictish presence in the island-names of the Northern Isles is in *Unst*, *Yell* and *Fetlar* in Shetland, whose names are either impossible to interpret or only with great difficulty accounted for as being Norse.⁵ If

anything, they appear to have been given a thin layer of Scandinavian 'varnish', not to conceal the fact that they are not Scandinavian – after all, a place-name only needs to function, not to mean anything – but rather to fit them into the framework of Scandinavian phonology and morphology. It is, however, worth noting that place-names of pre-Norse origin may exist in Shetland, as transfers of place-names from one language into another must rely on a prolonged and maintained period of peaceful contact. But whether these island-names are Pictish or not is impossible to say, as our knowledge of the Pictish language is virtually non-existent.

There has long been a general consensus in academic circles that the element *Pap-* in island-names like *Papa Stour* in Shetland and *Papa Westray* in Orkney referred to an ethnic and religious grouping called *papar* by the Scandinavians. The designation *papar* is ultimately related to the same word as *pope*, and appears to refer to Christian – probably Irish – monks; they did not, in other words, constitute an indigenous population (cf. Macdonald 1977: 109). Island-names of the **Papaey*-type are fairly common throughout the North Atlantic, and at least ten place-names of this type are known (cf. Macdonald 2002: 26-29, Fellows-Jensen 1996: 116-17). In the Northern Isles alone, there are five such island-names.

I mentioned earlier that when an element occurs as a constituent of a place-name it is because it is significant within its context. On these grounds, it would be tempting to argue that the *papar* monks were of relevance and well known to the Scandinavian settlers at the time of the naming of these particular islands. On the other hand, the status of Picts does not seem to have been the same to the Scandinavian settlers. The only indication of a Pictish presence in island-name material is found in the few apparently pre-Norse names of islands in Shetland. What is the cause of this difference? As I see it, these differences may contain some important clues to the contact and interaction of these peoples and the incoming Scandinavians. It has earlier been argued that the **Papaey*-type island-names may originally have been given to islands abandoned by monks (Fellows-Jensen 1996: 116), but why should it be more relevant to name abandoned *papar*-sites than abandoned *pettar*-sites, especially considering that the *broch*-structures of the latter population are considerably more distinctive than the remains left by the *papar*? Instead, I think we should consider that the *papar* lived alongside the Scandinavians in the Northern Isles for some period of time. This ties in well with the fact that a large number of *papar*-sites are associated with post-Viking-Age chapels or graveyards, which presupposes a prolonged period of Christian worship at these sites. Whether this means a continuous clerical presence from pre-Viking-Age times or not, is uncertain. However, if this is the case, then the presence of the Christian *papar* might represent early attempts at converting the heathen Scandinavians.

The majority of island-names in the Northern Isles are of Scandinavian origin, which shows very aptly with what linguistic force and might the Scandinavians settled in the area. There are apparently, however, the notable exceptions of *Unst*, *Yell* and *Fetlar*, which are usually taken to be of Pictish origin. As our knowledge of the Pictish language is extremely sparse we are not even able to give a suggestion to the etymology of these names. This is as such not the important issue in this respect. What is important is to recognise that these pre-Norse names actually managed to survive in spite of the total annihilation of their source language. This indicates that there must have been a prolonged period of contact between the incoming Scandinavians and the indigenous population. One possibility is that these islands constituted the first trading posts between the Scandinavians and the Picts, trading posts that could then later have developed into early settlement bridgeheads. The Picts, although probably

good trading-partners, did not fit into the colonisation equation and thus became expendable.

The different character in which the *papar* appear in the island-name material, may on the other hand suggest that they do not appear to have threatened the expansion process and that they may have been allowed to live alongside the Scandinavians. If the numbers of converted Scandinavians in the *Landnámabók* are correct, the Scandinavians and the monks might have enjoyed a relatively close relationship in the Scottish Isles.

Whereas the above suggestions relate only to a fraction of the entire island-name material, the vast majority of island-names are described from an every day perspective. Here, islands constituted a potential economic resource – they could be used for storing livestock in the summer to keep them well away from the sparse arable land, or their vegetation was of a certain importance to the household. In other cases, the reference is to the appearance of the island, where its shape, size or colour must have been of prime importance, perhaps as a means of identification for sailors and fishermen. The prime intention behind the naming of islands in the Northern Isles thus seems to be intricately linked to the aspects of survival and getting by in the new environment. But what is perhaps most important to note is the fact that when most of the islands of the Northern Isles were named, the system and culture in which these names were bestowed was almost entirely Norse in character. And all foreign cultural reflections in the island-name material only survive today because they were an integral part of the Norse cultural and linguistic systems at the time of naming.

Bibliography and abbreviations

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DI = *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni að halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og máldaga, og aðrar skrár, er snerta Ísland eða íslenska menn*. Gefið út af hinu íslenska bókmenntafélagi. Copenhagen 1857-72. 16 vols.

DN = Lange, C.C.A., Unger, C.R. & Huitfeldt-Kaas, H.J. (eds) 1847-: *Diplomatarium Norvegicum: Oldbreve til kundskap om Norges indre og ytre forhold, sprog, slegter, seder, lovgivning og rettergang i middelalderen*. Kristiania. vol. 1-.

DS = *Danmarks Stednavne*, Udgiven af Stednavneudvalget/Institut for Navneforskning 1-. Copenhagen, 1922-.

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HSRO = Thomson, W.P.L. (ed.) 1996: *Lord Henry Sinclair's 1492 Rental of Orkney*. Kirkwall.

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KLMN = *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*. København, 1956-78. 22 vols.

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NG = Rygh, Oluf 1897-1936: *Norske Gaardnavne*. Kristiania. 19 vols.

Nes, Oddvar 1970: 'Stadnamn som er lata till ei germansk stamme **Streun-*', *Maal og Minne*. Oslo, 1-25.

NSL = *Norsk Stadnamnleksikon*. Redigert av Jørn Sandnes og Ola Stemshaug. Oslo 1997.

Orkn = Nordal, Sigurðr (ed.) 1913-16: *Orkneyinga saga*. Reykjavík.

REO = Clouston, J. Storer 1914: *Records of the Earldom of Orkney, 1299-1614*. Edinburgh.

SheDoc = Ballantyne, John H. & Smith, Brian 1994: *Shetland Documents, 1580-1611*. Lerwick.

SheDoc2 = Ballantyne, John H. & Smith, Brian 1999: *Shetland Documents, 1195-1579*. Lerwick.

Stewart, John 1987: *Shetland Place-Names*. Lerwick.

Notes

- ¹ Quotation from W.H. Auden's poem 'Look, Stranger!' from 1936 (published in America as: 'On This Island').
- ² Not all specific elements forming part of the island-name material are attested in ON. The Orkney name of Stronsay, for instance, (i *Strionsey* c.1300 Orkn (p. 130 (*Orkn* 325I)); *Straumsey* c.1350 (c.1640) DI (III, p. 50n.); *Strjónsey* c.1387-95 Orkn (p. 172); *Stronsay* 1535 REO (p. 219)), seems to contain the genitive sg. of an otherwise unattested ON appellative **strjón*, m. 'a current'. Although unattested as an independent appellative in Old Scandinavian, it does, however, feature in a number of Scandinavian place-names, of which the island-names *Strøno* (Hordaland fylke, Norway) and *Strynø* (Svendborg Amt, Denmark) are direct parallels (Nes, 1970, pp. 1-25).
- ³ Alternatively, Old Norse island-names containing animal designations such as pig, hog, ox or dog may in some cases be used of islands which are difficult or perilous to navigate, cf. NSL 1997: 440.
- ⁴ Shetland: *Linga*, Aithsting; *Linga*, Delting, *Lyngaholm* 1561 (SheDoc2, no. 131); *Linga*, Delting, *Linga* 1560 (SheDoc2, no. 119); *Linga*, Tingwall; *Linga*, Walls, *Linga* 1576 (SheDoc2, no. 229); *Linga*, Yell, *Linga* 1605 (Retours O&S., no. 1); *East Linga*, Whalsay; *Little Linga*, Whalsay, *lesser Linga* 1560 (SheDoc2, no. 119); *Urie Lingey*, Fetlar. Orkney: *Linga Holm*, Stronsay; *Little Linga*, Stronsay, *Lingalittle* 1639 (Retours O&S., no. 28).
- ⁵ *Unst* is first recorded as *Aumstr* (c. 1387-95 Orkn, p. 137n.), which might reflect an original subst. ON *ömstr*, m. 'a stack, heap' (Stewart 1987: 1). However, since ON [ø] does not develop into Shetl. [û] under normal circumstances, this is somewhat untenable. No other formal ON linguistic possibilities seem to exist.

Yell has been taken to derive from *ála*, plural of ON *áll*, m. 'a deep furrow in a stream or sound' (Stewart 1987: 3), on the basis of the form *Alasund* (c.1300 Orkn: 159 (*Orkn* 325I)), the earliest reference to *Yell Sound*. Later, independent recordings of *Yell* are: 1405 *Iala* (DN I, no. 606), 1485 *Iaale*, *Zaill*, etc. (REO: 72), seemingly reflecting a pronunciation with initial [j-]. This makes the suggested origin very problematic, as breaking in ON only occurs with short *e* followed by *a* or *u* in the ensuing syllable.

Fetlar, 1490 *Føtalare* (DN VIII, no. 426), 1587 *Fetlair* (SheDoc, no. 102), might formally originate from *fetlar*, the plural of ON *fetill*, m. 'a carrying-strap', albeit entirely unprecedented.

Economic Intensification in Viking Age and Medieval Orkney, Scotland: Excavations at Quoygrew

James H. Barrett

Introduction

This paper introduces a research project intended to identify, date and interpret the intensification of production on land and sea and its corollary, the long-range trade of staples such as dried fish and cereal products, in a nominal ‘periphery’ of medieval Europe (cf. Barrett *et al.* 2000a). In past studies of the region, economic intensification has been observed as an increase in the importance of fishing for large cod and related species at the Pictish-Viking Age transition (e.g. Barrett *et al.* 2001), the appearance of semi-specialised fish middens at the Viking Age-medieval transition (Batey 1989; Cerón-Carrasco 1994; Morris *et al.* 1995; Barrett 1997; Cerón-Carrasco 1998; Barrett *et al.* 1999), changes in the abundance of arable crops such as flax and oats in the Viking Age (Bond 1998), a possible increase in the importance of dairy products in the Viking Age (Bond 1998; see also Bigelow 1985; 1989) and the expansion of anthropogenic plaggen soils – possibly in the Middle Ages (Simpson 1993; 1997). However, important questions remain regarding the chronology and character of these developments. Some were probably associated with the process of Scandinavian colonization and the introduction of new food ways in the 9th century (Barrett *et al.* 2001). Others may be related to the later ‘commercial revolution’ of the Middle Ages (Bigelow 1985; 1989; 1992; Barrett 1997; Barrett *et al.* 1999; 2000a). Yet others could be more apparent than real, products of an incomplete archaeological record.

Interpretations of economic intensification in Viking Age and medieval Orkney are thus dependent on a better understanding of the chronology and spatial distribution of the relevant archaeological evidence. In the context of the maritime economy, for example, it is necessary to disentangle diachronic trends in the economic importance of marine resources from possible changes in refuse disposal practices. Put simply, did large fish middens appear in medieval Orkney because fish became more important (possibly for trade) or because people began to discard their fish bone in one place and their mammal bone in another? Turning to a terrestrial example, when did artificially thickened topsoils (evidence of agricultural intensification) really begin to accumulate on a large scale? In Orkney they tend to be associated with Norse place-names of Viking Age or medieval origin (Simpson 1993; 1997), but these

sites continued to be occupied into recent centuries and could have underlying prehistoric antecedents (cf. Dockrill and Simpson 1994; Simpson *et al.* 1998). The excavation of Quoygrew, Westray, (Figure 1) is an attempt to address these questions at the intra-site level. The work is ongoing, but this interim report provides an overview of current results and their implications. In due course the project will contribute to our understanding of the relationship between economic change, migration and core-periphery relationships in medieval Europe.



Fig. 1: Location of Quoygrew and other sites mentioned in the text: 1. Sandwick, 2. Quoygrew, 3. St. Boniface, 4. Tuquoy, 5. Brough of Birsay, 6. Robert's Haven, 7. Freswick Links.

Quoygrew

The abandoned settlement site now known as Quoygrew is located on the north side of Rackwick, a large north-west-facing bay in a township of the same name in Westray, Orkney (Figures 1 and 2). It was first recorded as an archaeological site (under the name of the nearest modern settlement, Biggings Farm) in 1977 (Hope and Wickham-Jones 1977:25) and in 1978 Sarah Colley (1983) dug a test pit in the fish middens exposed in the wave-cut bank. The current programme of work began with an assessment in 1997 (Barrett *et al.* 1998), which has since been followed by four short seasons of excavation (Barrett *et al.* 2000b; Barrett and Moore 2001; Barrett and Gerrard 2002).

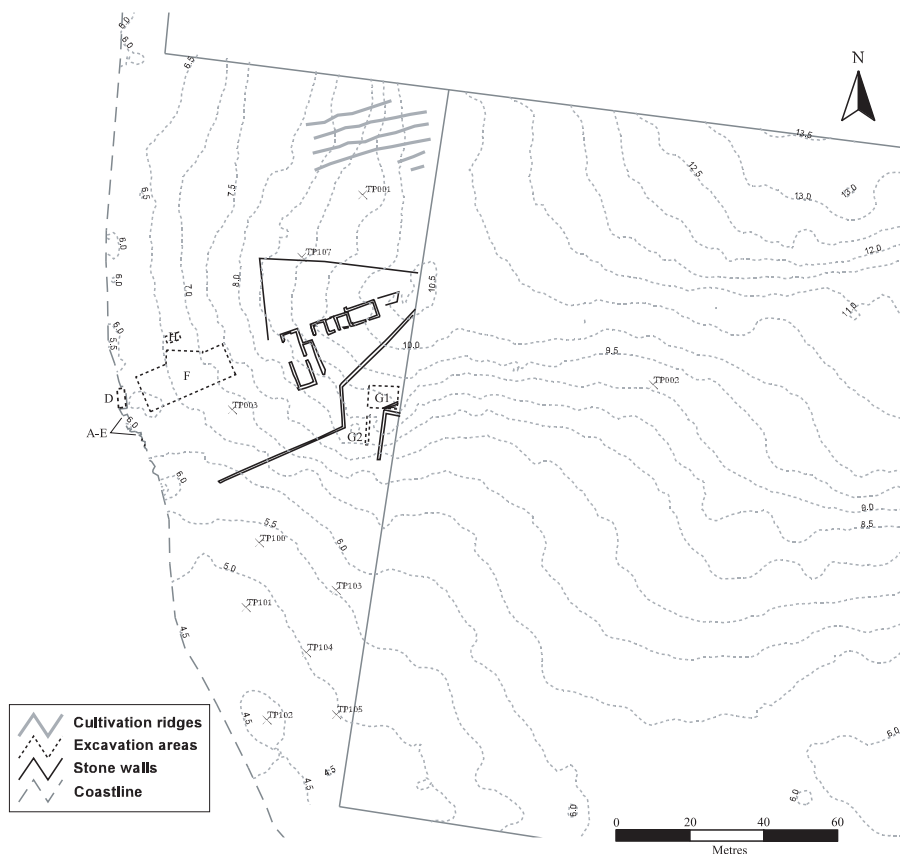


Fig. 2: Quoygrew, showing the excavation areas and test pits. The fish midden is evident as a slight mound at the coast. The farm mound occupies the western terminus of an east-west oriented ridge.

The site was called Nether Trenabie in 19th century sources (e.g. Miller 1866). This name incorporates the *bær* element, traditionally associated with early and high status Norse estates (Marwick 1952; Thomson 1995). The modern steading of Trenabie sits on a hill overlooking Quoygrew, but auger survey has failed to locate any evidence of medieval occupation around it. Quoygrew may thus represent the original settlement focus of the estate, which moved to the new hilltop location by the early 18th century (see Fereday 1990). In any case, post-medieval Quoygrew (Nether Trenabie) existed only as a small satellite community – a factor which has done much to preserve its underlying Viking Age and medieval strata.

Today, the visible remains include the ruins of a croft (comprising a dwelling, outbuildings, a yard and an enclosed garden) which was abandoned in the 1930s and has since been heavily robbed for building stone. These relatively recent structures overlie an irregular farm mound composed of kitchen midden c.2m in elevation and c.50m in diameter (Areas G1 and

G2). They also overlook a second low mound of 'fish midden' on the shore which has a maximum dimension of c.40m and has been sectioned by coastal erosion (Areas A-C and E). In the gently sloping area between the two mounds geophysical survey and excavation have revealed a sequence of medieval and post-medieval buildings (Areas D and F). Ongoing auger survey and soil test pits have also identified an artificially thickened 'plaggen' topsoil, interpreted as an infield associated with the settlement (Simpson *et al.* forthcoming). Radiocarbon and artefact evidence now indicates that the excavated deposits range in date from the 9th or 10th to the 17th century AD.

The Fish Midden: Columns A-C and E

The eroding fish midden at the shoreline, composed predominately of peat ash, shell and fish bone, was mapped and sampled in 1997. The deposit stretches c.40m along the wave-cut bank and augering suggests that it may also continue inland for c.15m (see Area F below). The central 20m of the exposed profile (1m to 1.3m in thickness) was drawn (Figure 3). Four sample columns (Columns A-C and E) were excavated for fine recovery of bone, botanical macrofossils, soil micromorphology samples, soil chemistry samples and datable artefactual material (Figure 4). The stratigraphy of the sample columns could be interpreted at a finer resolution than the eroding section, so separate context numbers are used in Figure 3, showing the drawn cliff section, and Figure 4, showing Column A.

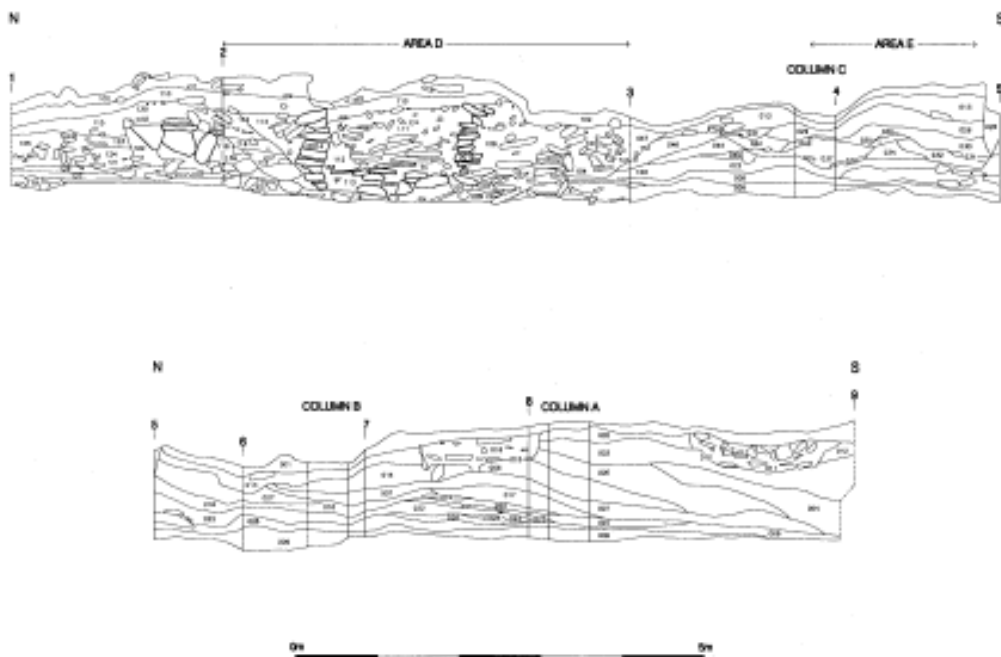


Fig. 3: The central 20m of the coastal fish midden, including the semi-subterranean feature of Area D. The numbered points indicate changes in the angle of the cliff face. (JHB-fig3.tif)

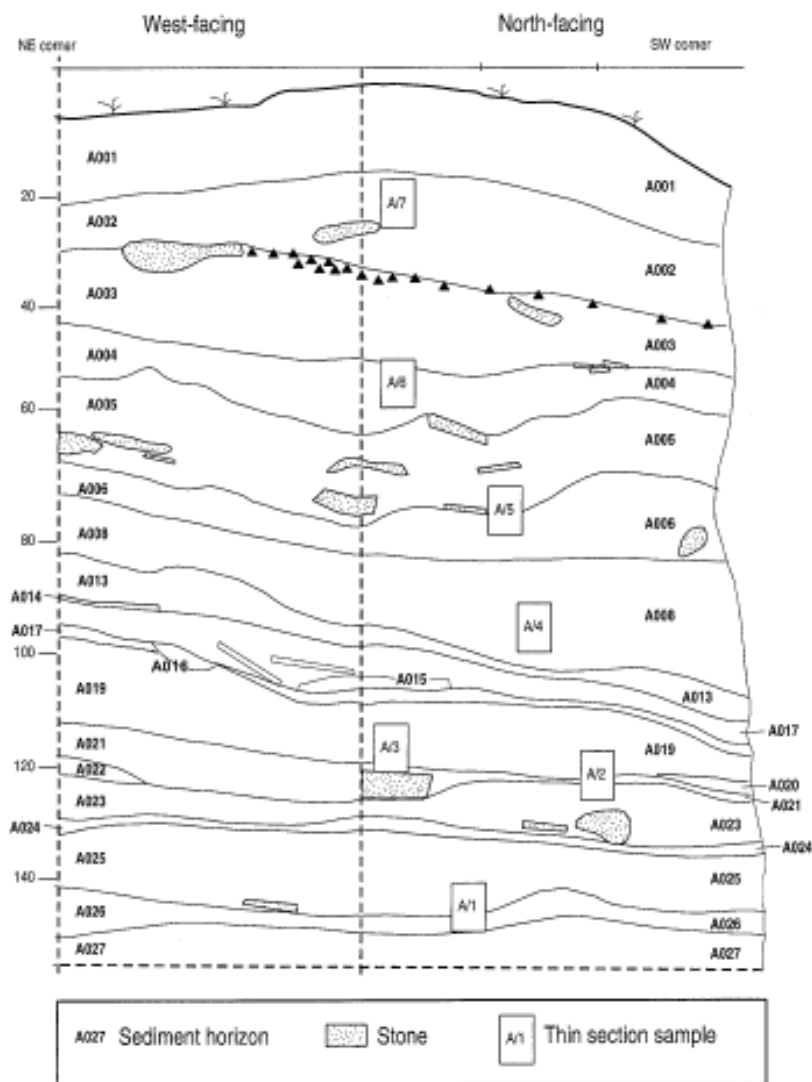


Fig. 4: Column A from the coastal fish midden. (JHB-fig4.tif)

Context A026, at the interface of the fish midden deposits and subsoil in Column A, has produced a date of AD 676-896 on barley. It probably represents a soil contemporary with the initial occupation of the site in Area G (see below).¹ The earliest date for the fish midden deposits themselves is provided by a single radiocarbon assay on an articulated calf skeleton from context E030/022, AD 1018-1191, and (slightly higher in the stratigraphy) a combined date of AD 1066-1223 on four cereal grain samples from context A023 of Column A which produced statistically equivalent results. Dating the top of the fish midden is complicated by bioturbation and by marine reservoir effects. Five assays from the uppermost 'undisturbed'

context of Column A, A004, are not statistically equivalent at the 95% significance level. Given that the immediately overlying strata were clearly disturbed, it is likely that some intrusive material has moved into A004. The rejection of specific dates on this grounds entails some danger of circular argument, but samples AA-52326 and AA-52327 are significantly younger than the remaining three assays. The latter constitute a statistically equivalent set, yielding a combined date of AD 1217-1294. A final assay of AD 1027-1276, on a cattle pelvis from a feature dug into the fish midden (see Area D below), should theoretically provide a *terminus ante quem* for the deposit. However, the associated $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ value of -17.92 implies that the animal in question was probably fed some fish waste or seaweed, which would make the assay appear older than it should (cf. Barrett *et al.*, 2000c). Turning to the artefactual evidence, the fish midden can be generally dated to the 10th-12th centuries on the basis of antler comb fragments, steatite vessel shards, and a bone pin (Batey 2000). Other finds include a copper alloy disk, a possible bone gaming piece and perforated bone disks made from the unfused vertebral epiphyses of a small whale. A few shards of coarse pottery occur in the upper strata. In sum, the fish midden accumulated at some point between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Lab code	Context ¹	bp	±	δ13C	Material	95% range	Bayesian calibration 95% range	Stratigraphic interpretation
Farm Mound (Area G1)								
AA-50702	G037	1130	35	-19.5	pig skull	AD 782-995	AD 779-981	base of farm mound
AA-39135	G020/G021	905	60	-22.2	horse pelvis	AD 1004-1262	AD 1035-1261	base of block G026
Pre-midden Soil at Shore (Column A)								
TO-7118	A026	1220	50		barley	AD 677-959	AD 676-896	predates fish midden
Fish Midden (Columns A and E)								
TO-7529	E030 (022)	970	40	?	articulated calf	AD 996-1162	AD 1018-1191	near base of midden, predates A023
AA-52329	A023 (007)	877	45		cereal grain	AD 1028-1262		near base of midden, predates A005
AA-52330	A023 (007)	833	38		cereal grain	AD 1070-1278		near base of midden, predates A005
AA-52331	A023 (007)	832	49		cereal grain	AD 1042-1282		near base of midden, predates A005
AA-52332	A023 (007)	946	53		cereal grain	AD 995-1217		near base of midden, predates A005
AA-52329, AA-52330, AA-52331, AA-52332	A023 (007) combined	865	24		cereal grain	AD 1066-1241	AD 1066-1223	near base of midden, predates A005
TO-7530	A005 (005)	860	40		barley	AD 1039-1264	AD 1161-1264	near top of midden, predates A004
TO-7117	A004 (003)	800	50		barley	AD 1159-1291		near top of midden, postdates A005
AA-52325	A004 (003)	709	79		cereal grain	AD 1188-1406		near top of midden, postdates A005
AA-52358	A004 (003)	722	38		cereal grain	AD 1243-1381		near top of midden, postdates A005
AA-52325, AA-52358, TO-7117	A004 (003) combined	747	30		cereal grain	AD 1223-1296	AD 1217-1294	near top of midden, postdates A005
AA-52327	A004 (003)	587	64		cereal grain	AD 1284-1439		intrusive, excluded from Bayesian calibration
AA-52326	A004 (003)	519	40		cereal grain	AD 1326-1444		intrusive, excluded from Bayesian calibration
TO-7044	D017	870	50	-17.92	cow pelvis	AD 1027-1276		post-dates midden, but marine reservoir effect, excluded from Bayesian calibration
Plaggen Soil (Test Pit 2 and Area G2)								
TO-7116	TP2	2760	60		cereal grain	1045-803 BC		redeposited (residual) sediment
TO-7528	TP2	1690	50		heather	AD 240-435		burnt peat (old wood)
AA-54914	G025	685	55		cereal grain	AD 1256-1400		manuring of soil or bioturbation from midden

¹ For samples from excavation columns in the fish midden the equivalent cliff section context is given in parentheses.

Fig. 5: Radiocarbon dates from Quoygreew (calibrated with the atmospheric curve of Stuiver *et al.* (1998) using both standard (Stuiver and Reimer 1993) and Bayesian methods, including sensitivity and reproducibility analyses (Buck *et al.* 1999)). (JHB-fig10.doc)

The bone assemblage, dominated by cod and related species, superficially resembles medieval collections from Robert's Haven, Caithness, (Barrett 1997) and St. Boniface, Papa Westray, (Cerón-Carrasco 1998) which have been interpreted as specialised waste from the production of dried fish possibly for export as well as local consumption. Analysis of the fish bone recovered from Sarah Colley's 1978 test-pit is consistent with this interpretation (Colley 1983; Barrett *et al.* 1999), but study of the new material is ongoing (J. Harland pers comm.). The botanical assemblage is dominated by barley and oats, which imply some input of settlement waste. The presence of cereal chaff and weed seeds suggest local production of these crops. Flax is also common in the fish midden. The most interesting find among the less common plants is a grain of bread or club wheat (from context A008) which may represent imported cereal (Poaps and Huntley 2001; A. Hall pers comm.; see Barrett *et al.* 2000a:21-22).

The Entrance Passage, Cellar or Naust: Area D

Towards the northern end of the fish midden, a small, semi-subterranean, dry stone structure was also eroding out of the wave-cut bank (Figure 3). It had been noted by Colley (1983) in 1978, when its central drain was recognised in the erosion face. In 1997 this feature was included in the drawing of the cliff section and further investigated with a 2m by 5m test trench (Area D). The structure was clearly inserted into the midden. A trench c.5m wide (contexts 151 and 154) had first been dug, into which were inserted two parallel single-skinned dry stone revetment walls spaced 1.6m apart (contexts D014 and D015). The spaces between the walls and ditch edges were then back-filled with a combination of midden and roughly coursed stone rubble (contexts 047, 103, 109 and 114). A drain (context D028) was added to the centre of the resulting cellar using parallel stone rows covered with lintels which also formed part of a rough flagstone floor (context D023). Although only excavated to a length of c.2m, the building continues into the west facing section and an unknown area has been lost to the sea.

A poorly built stone foundation (context D016), c.0.5m wide, was uncovered just below the surface 0.6m south of this feature. There were also faint traces of a matching wall c.0.7m north of it in the eroding section outside the excavated area. These foundation lines may indicate an associated superstructure which would have had an internal width of c.4.4m.

It is difficult to suggest a function for this building. If originally open at the west end it may have been a naust (boat shelter or boat house) – a fishing weight was found in later rubble fill (context 111). If surrounded by four walls it may have served as a cold store or, by analogy with post-medieval Icelandic architecture, a semi-subterranean byre (albeit a very small one) (Ólafsson 1982). Given that the structure is in line with the buildings of Area F further inland, however, it is also possible that it served as an entrance ramp from the shore. Broadly similar (if larger) semi-subterranean entryways can be seen at the Brough of Birsay, Orkney, and Kirkjubøur, the Faroe Islands (Curle 1982:12-13; Krogh 1988:14-15).

No artefacts were found which can be directly associated with the use of this structure. Steatite from the ditch backfill probably derived from the earlier fish midden. Coarse medieval pottery was common in the rubble used to level the feature after it went out of use. A cattle pelvis from this rubble has provided a radiocarbon assay of AD 1027-1276 (from context 111), but as discussed above, it may be subject to marine reservoir effects. In sum, the structure cannot have been built before the 12th or 13th centuries, given the date of the underlying fish midden, and it was probably backfilled at some point in the Middle Ages. Post-medieval middens containing low-grade coal subsequently accumulated over the feature, into which a kelp burning pit was eventually dug.

Structures 1 to 3: Area F

Approximately 5m east of Area D, three major dry stone building episodes, termed structures 1, 2 and 3, have been identified thus far in Area F (Figures 6-8). They are aligned end to end and orientated roughly north-east/south-west. Structure 1 was the earliest of the three presently uncovered. It was rectangular, with internal dimensions of c.10m by 4.8m and walls c.0.8m thick. It had a primary external door in the eastern gable wall, which later provided access to structure 2, and probably another opposite it in the western end of the building. The position of the second doorway has been made ambiguous, however, by stone robbing in this location (cut F392/F604).



Fig. 8: Structures 1 (background) and 2 (foreground) looking west. Elements of phases i.i to i.ii are exposed in structure 2. The features under excavation in structure 1 are predominately related to the penultimate and ultimate occupation phases. (JHB-fig7.tif)

The building originally had c.0.6m of superimposed floor layers based on their exposure in a pit cut (F072). The upper c.0.2m excavated thus far have produced four distinct occupation phases (each with one or more hearths). These were served by a subfloor drain dug into the earlier house floors. The exposure of bedrock in parts of the eastern end of the house, despite the fact that c.0.4m of floor layers remain to be excavated in its central area (where they are exposed in the pit cut), suggests that structure 1 may originally have had a rock-cut dais (cf. Bigelow 1987:29; Crawford and Ballin Smith 1999:226). By the phases currently excavated, however, any such raised area was obscured by the accumulation of secondary floor layers.

In its last three phases, structure 1 was subdivided into eastern and western rooms (or possibly shortened) by the insertion of a stone wall (contexts F017/F034). A stone bench (context F511) ran along most of the south wall in all of the occupation levels presently excavated, but its eastern end (context F027) was added or rebuilt in the penultimate phase. Subfloor pits existed in some phases, as did internal fittings comprising cut slots and rows of small upright stones which presumably supported flagstone or plank-built features. The most substantial of these was a possible cupboard (context F015) on the east side of the internal wall in the penultimate and ultimate occupation phases (Figure 6).

The depth of stratigraphy suggests that structure 1 may have been very long lived, but the dating evidence available at present is all from the later centuries of its use. The central hearth (context F071) from the penultimate occupation level has produced an archaeomagnetic date of AD 1300-1420, which is consistent with a date of AD 1310-1360 on a subsidiary hearth (context F384) against the north wall of the same phase (Batt 2002). The central hearth (context F412) from the preceding phase produced an assay of AD 1280-1340 or AD 1390-1450, but it was directly under hearth F071 so this date may have been influenced by use of the later feature. It has not yet been possible to date samples from the last hearth used in structure 1 (context F010, of sandstone), but this may be feasible in due course (Batt 2002).

The best artefactual dating evidence for structure 1 derives from two shards of pottery in a Scottish redware fabric (13th-15th century in date, D. Hall pers comm.), one from the penultimate phase and one from the fill of the subfloor drain. A schistose soapstone baking plate of 12th century or later date (cf. Weber 1992) was also recovered from the fill of the stone bench (context F511) along the south wall. Other finds, of course pottery and steatite vessel shards for example, are less chronologically sensitive. Overall, therefore, the strata excavated thus far probably date between the 13th and 15th centuries. Stratigraphic links with structure 2 are consistent with this interpretation, but could also imply continued use or reuse into the 16th and 17th centuries (see below).

Outside structure 1, the most significant deposits are middens rich in fish bone and shell which seem to have built up against its north-west corner (contexts F475, F504 and F505) and a drain outside the southern wall (cut F502, fill F501). The western end of the latter may predate structure 1, possibly implying the existence of an earlier building. Its fill (context F501) included bone which should provide a *terminus post quem* (TPQ) for structure 1 once radiocarbon dated. The midden deposits are not yet closely dated, but they have produced steatite vessel shards and are likely to be broadly contemporary with the internal occupation layers. It is particularly important that they contain a high proportion of fish bone – implying that the coastal fish middens were not entirely a product of differential refuse disposal.

Structure 2, which has been completely excavated (and can thus be provided with phase

numbers), was added to the eastern end of structure 1. It had internal dimensions of c.5.6m by 4.3m and walls 0.6m to 1m thick. It was first thought that this room originally lacked an exterior door. It was thus interpreted as an inner sleeping chamber (e.g. Barrett 2002b). However, this hypothesis was influenced by the existence of a temporary baulk through what proved to be an entrance in the middle of the north wall. In later phases (iii to v.ii) structure 2 also acquired a secondary entrance in the south wall (see below).

The earliest finds from structure 2 include a straight-sided steatite vessel of medieval Shetlandic type (cf. Smith 1999:131-132) and over 20 shards of redware pottery (13th-15th century, D. Hall pers comm.). These were concentrated in the primary phases (i.i and i.ii), when the interior of the structure was given a 'packed earth' floor consisting of ash spreads (contexts F198/F200/F221/F230/F236). This surface was augmented by an area of casual paving (e.g. context F237) in the lowest (south-west) corner, two larger flags (context F235) in the middle of the eastern end, and a carefully kerbed flagstone surface (context F196) immediately inside the exterior doorway. Little can be said about the north-west and north-east corners in phase i.i, but possible storage bins or small animal stalls were added to the north-east corner in phase i.ii. There is no sign of a hearth in the room. The ash from the floors was thus presumably redeposited. It is difficult to suggest the initial function of structure 2, other than as an entrance vestibule to structure 1 and perhaps a store room (cf. Pálsson and Edwards 1989:135).

Structure 2 was later used as a workshop (phase ii), after which it fell into disuse leading to a probable episode of roof collapse (phase iii). It was then reused in phases iv to v.ii. A central posthole was added (presumably to support a new roof), a second entrance was inserted in the south wall and (in phases v.i and v.ii) flagstone floor surfaces were carefully laid. The function of these phases is difficult to ascertain with any certainty. However, the addition of a carefully flagged surface to a building with two opposing (if staggered) doorways may imply use as a winnowing barn (Fenton 1978:372). At the end of its life, both the walls and flagstone floors of this building were heavily robbed.

The dates of phases iii to v.ii in structure 2 remain ambiguous, but may extend beyond the Middle Ages. A Dutch doir of Batenburg struck between 1616 and 1622 (N. Holmes pers comm.) was recovered from the abandonment deposits of phase iii. It may be in situ, which – combined with two pennies of James IV's second issue, c.1500-1510, (N. Holmes pers comm.) recovered outside the northern entrance – could suggest continued occupation into the 16th and 17th centuries. This possibility, however, is difficult to reconcile with the 13th to 15th century date for the penultimate phase of structure 1. At least the eastern room of structure 1 seems to have remained intact throughout the structure 2 sequence and the two buildings were ultimately demolished simultaneously based on stratigraphic analysis. It is possible that the post-medieval coins were deposited during later stone robbing (given that the broader settlement continued to be occupied until the 1930s), but this question may not be resolved until the latest hearth in structure 1 (context F010) is successfully dated. Both buildings, and structure 3 discussed below, were clearly dismantled by 1866 as they do not appear on a detailed estate plan of that date (Miller 1866). By then the focus of settlement had returned to the farm mound, where it remained until the 1930s.

Only the tops of the surviving walls of the east end of structure 3 have been exposed thus far (Figure 6). It may post-date structure 1, but the relationship between the two buildings is

presently obscured by the robbing episode mentioned above (cut F392/F604) and the incomplete state of excavation. It is clear, however, that this building was 4.9m wide in internal dimension with walls c.1m thick. Rather than being connected to structure 1, a narrow passage appears to have run between the two. There is some indication that structure 3 had a doorway in the centre of the eastern gable wall, which would have been opposite the hypothesised entrance in the west end of structure 1. Structure 3 overlies fish middens (containing steatite vessel shards) which are almost certainly equivalent to the 11th-13th century deposits exposed at the wave cut bank further west. It may also stratigraphically post-date the semi-subterranean feature in Area D dug into this midden.

The chronology of structures 1 to 3 needs to be tightened through future work, but the general point that they represent a very long-lived sequence is unlikely to change. The practice of inserting new floors and hearths between the same walls observed at Quoygrew is paralleled in other medieval settlements of the Northern Isles, such as Tuquoy, also on Westray, and Sandwick, Shetland (Owen 1993:326, Bigelow 1987). It differs from medieval architecture (at least when built on the sands of the machair) in the Western Isles, where whole houses were rebuilt on top of their predecessors, often on differing alignments (Sharples and Parker Pearson 1999).

Overall, work in Area F has produced c.1000 small finds. The majority of these are pottery shards of medieval to modern date (including the Scottish redware mentioned above), iron objects (most of which will require x-ray before identification) and pieces of worked steatite (predominately vessel shards). Other notable objects include spindle whorls of stone and bone and a whale bone swivel. These are currently interpreted as typical farmstead refuse, but the Scottish pottery does constitute an 'import' at this stage in the political history of Orkney. The Scandinavian earldom was not ceded to the Kingdom of Scotland until 1468, nominally as a temporary pledge (Thomson 2001:189).

The Farm Mound: Areas G1 and G2

Auger survey during the 1997 assessment indicated that substantial volumes of midden material underlay the modern croft, forming a small 'farm mound' (cf. Bertelsen and Lamb 1993). Thus a c.8 by 6m trench (Area G1) was excavated on the southern edge of the mound in an area that had served as the *planteicrue* or kailyard (enclosed garden) of the post-medieval croft and was free of recent building and rubble. A narrow extension of this trench (Area G2) also permitted an examination of the stratigraphic relationship between the farm mound deposits and the plaggen soils of a possible adjacent infield, the latter of which was designated context G025 (see below; Figure 9).

The maximum depth to subsoil in Area G was found to be 1.6m. The top c.0.3m to 0.7m (between contexts G001 and G007 in the east-facing section drawing, see Figure 9) was composed of turf and garden soil with frequent shards of post-medieval pottery. The base of this soil was marked by cultivation furrows (context G011/G050) filled with a lens of windblown sand (context G018). The garden was bounded by a dry stone wall (robbed out in the east-facing section as cut G028). Below the garden wall and cultivation furrows were undisturbed middens with good bone preservation. They can be divided into two distinct stratigraphic blocks based on the ratio of fish bone and shell to mammal bone. The upper c.0.5m (block G026, between contexts G008 and G021 in the section drawings) were dominated by fish bone and shell. The lower 0.3m (between contexts G022 and G037) included some fish bone,

accumulated in the Viking Age and Middle Ages. Early in the excavation process it was speculated that the lower block, less dominated by marine resources, might be Pictish (see Richards 2001:66-67), but this has not proven to be so.

The 'Infield': Area G2 and Test Pits

Given that the natural soils of northern Scotland are very thin, the productivity of arable land was traditionally maintained and increased by the addition of seaweed, animal dung and turf stripped from uncultivated land (Simpson 1997; Davidson and Carter 1998). This process created artificially thickened 'plaggen' topsoils, the large scale development of which has been deemed relevant to the process of agricultural intensification – be it in the Middle Iron Age (e.g. Simpson *et al.* 1998) or the Middle Ages (e.g. Barrett *et al.* 2000a).

A combination of auger survey, test pitting, thin-section micromorphology (of samples from Area G2 and test pit 2) and sediment chemistry has been used to identify an area of plaggen soil at Quoysgrew, covering c.1.5 ha south and east of the farm mound. It was recognised in the field as an area of thickened topsoil, over 60cm deep in places, with occasional black peaty flecks, but without a high density of bone and shell inclusions (which characterize the farm mound and fish midden, see Figure 10). This soil has enhanced total phosphorus values and thin section analysis suggests that it was formed by the deposition of grassy turves, organic material (probably animal manure) and peat ash. It may be relevant that it extends into a field now known as "North Tun". The term "tun" may be derived from the Orkney term *tunmal* which defined land held by one settlement and kept in continuous cultivation – typically an infield (Thomson 2001:328; Simpson *et al.* forthcoming and references therein).

Dating the plaggen soils at Quoysgrew has been difficult. Radiocarbon assays on cereal grain and charred heather twigs from test pit 2 yielded differing dates – 1045-803 BC and AD 240-435 respectively. It is difficult to accept these at face value. The charred heather is likely to derive from manuring with ash from peat or peaty turf (see above), which would have a considerable, but unknown, residual age. Given that the cereal grain from the same deposit has yielded even older dates, it too must be residual. It may have been transported with turf cut from the rough grazing ('hill') land north of Quoysgrew – where earlier prehistoric sites are known – as part of the process of plaggen soil creation. Given these problems, the date of the proposed infield must rest on stratigraphic and radiocarbon evidence from Area G2 (Figure 9). The field soil (context G025) clearly overlies the earliest midden layers and interfaces with the upper strata of block G026, indicating that it is medieval or later in origin in this area at least. A radiocarbon date of AD 1256-1400 on two cereal grains from context G025 supports this interpretation. It is possible, however, that this grain could also be residual (as in test pit 2) or even bioturbated from the underlying middens – leaving stratigraphy as the strongest evidence.

To the south and south-west of the site, test pits 100 to 105 were dug in order to see if the soils recognised in Area G2 and test pit 2 could be found to interdigitate with coastal wind-blown sand deposits suitable for OSL dating. Unfortunately, the soils here were thin, c.25cm, and do not represent the same duration and/or intensity of cultural augmentation found elsewhere. A sand horizon under a fossil topsoil 25cm thick in test pit 101 was dated to AD 1680-1770 (sample 903) and superimposed sand layers over a similar topsoil in test pit 102 were dated to AD 1695-1785 and AD 1885-1915 (Sommerville 2003). These thinner areas of fossil soil, at the margins of the site, thus accumulated late in the history of the settlement. They

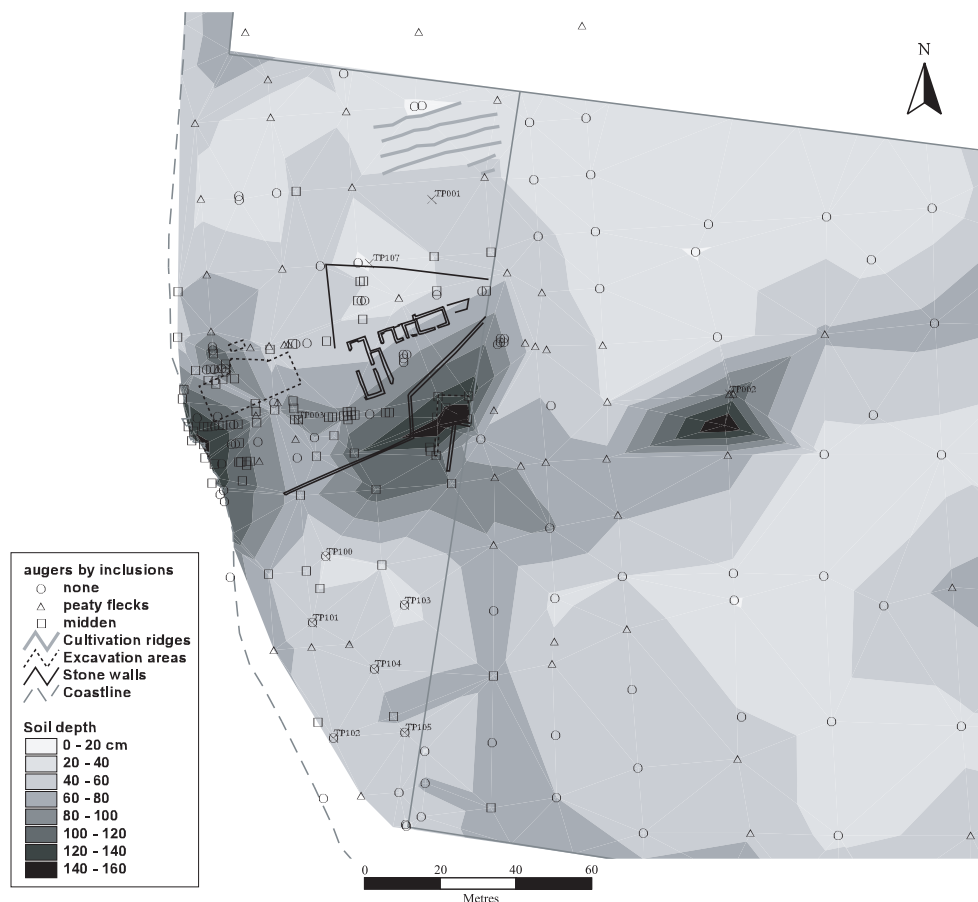


Fig. 10: Soil and midden thickness around Quoygrew based on auger survey. The fish midden and farm mound are evident as deep anthropogenic sediments with frequent bone and shell inclusions. The plaggen soils appear as thickened deposits, sometimes exhibiting occasional black peaty flecks and bone or shell inclusions. Windblown sand horizons are excluded from these results (after Zimmermann 2001). (JHB-fig9.cdr)

may or may not represent a continuation of the processes which led to the formation of the much thicker plaggen soils of Area G2 and test pit 2.

Discussion

Although much work remains to be done, it is now possible to reconstruct the broad outline of settlement history and economic intensification at Quoygrew. Occupation began in Area G in the 9th or 10th century, as evidenced by the accumulation of the lower block of midden. The paucity of fish bone in this deposit could be interpreted as continuity of Pictish dietary practices (Richards 2001:66-67), but some large cod were present and the material culture from this deposit – principally steatite vessel shards – is more consistent with nominally ‘Scandinavian’

settlement (see Barrett 2003:83-84). The buildings related to this phase have not yet been located, but may be upslope from the middens. Some household refuse was also scattered elsewhere around the settlement at this time.

Between the 11th and 12th centuries, middens dominated by fish bone and shell began to accumulate at both the shoreline and in block G026 of the farm mound. However, these deposits differ based on the evidence of sediment micromorphology and chemistry (Simpson *et al.* forthcoming). The coastal fish midden seems to have been composed predominately of peat ash, fish bone and shell – with frequent steatite vessel shards. Conversely, the farm mound deposits probably included turf construction materials and animal bedding in addition to peat and turf fuel residues, food waste and steatite. The fish midden was thus a more specialised deposit, albeit one which received some household refuse such as charred cereal grain and chaff (see above). Work on bone from the farm mound has not yet begun. However, preliminary zooarchaeological analysis of the fish midden suggests that dried cod and related taxa suitable for export may have been produced at Quoygre (Colley 1983; Barrett *et al.* 1999). The combination of fish bone, peat ash and steatite vessel shards in this midden may also imply the rendering of oil, during which fish livers were traditionally boiled in large pots (McGregor 1880; Cerón-Carrasco 1994). Fish oil was both exported and used locally for lighting in post-medieval Orkney (Fenton 1978:527-530). The shell from the coastal midden, much of it limpet, is likely to represent bait based on ethnohistoric analogy (e.g. Fenton 1978:542). Unless hooks were baited ‘at home’, however, the abundance of limpets in block G026 of Area G may imply that shellfish were also eaten in large numbers.

At some point after the 12th century, the southern margin of the farm mound was overlaid by a horizon of plaggen soil interpreted as an adjacent infield. If this stratigraphic evidence provides an approximate TPQ for the field itself, the development of plaggen soils at Quoygre post-dated the increase in fishing activity.

By the 14th century, structures 1 and 2 had both been built. It is not yet possible to say when structure 1, the earlier of the two, was first erected (or to confirm whether it was preceded by an earlier building in the same location). Given the depth of unexcavated floor remaining and the find of a schist baking plate, however, the 12th century may be a realistic estimate. In any case, structure 1 must have been in place by the 13th century, making it likely that its occupants were responsible for at least the upper strata of the fish midden. Refuse from the medieval phases of structure 1 was also discarded against the north wall of the house. It too was dominated by fish bone. Structure 2 was later abandoned for a time and its roof appears to have collapsed. It was finally brought back into use as a possible winnowing barn, perhaps as late as the 17th century.

This sequence of events implies three tentative conclusions of direct relevance to the project's research objectives. Firstly, although large cod and related species may be more common in Viking Age than in earlier sites in northern Scotland, not all 9th-10th century deposits are dominated by fish bone. The relationship between diet and ‘Norse’ identity in Viking Age Orkney thus deserves more nuanced study (cf. Barrett *et al.* 2001; Barrett 2003). Secondly, there does appear to be a clear increase in fishing activity at the Viking Age-medieval transition, beginning in the 11th or 12th century. The appearance of semi-specialised fish middens at this time is unlikely to be a function of changing refuse disposal practices. Medieval ‘domestic’ middens at Quoygre – in block G026 of Area G and north of structure 1 – also exhibit a high proportion of fish bone. Thirdly, in this case study at least, the large-scale development of

plaggen soils appears to date to the Middle Ages (perhaps the 13th-14th centuries), probably after the intensification of fishing activity.

In sum, the occupants of this medieval rural settlement were intensifying their production on land and sea starting in the 11th or 12th century. What remains to be established is the implication of these practices for wider socio-economic developments at the Viking Age-medieval transition. In particular, was economic intensification in northern Scotland, far from the urban economic centres of the medieval world, related to the demands and opportunities of an expanding European trade in staple products (e.g. Dyer 2002:187-218)? There are some indications that this may have been the case. It is possible that wheat was imported to Quooygrew, and that dried fish were processed for export. Moreover, it is known that other cereals (principally barley) were exported from Orkney by at least the early 13th century (Barrett *et al.* 2000a and references therein). Most of this evidence is circumstantial rather than definitive, but the research at Quooygrew may nevertheless serve as a reminder that world-systems processes need to be studied from the 'periphery' as well as the 'core' (cf. Andersson 2002).

Acknowledgements

Excavation at Quooygrew has been funded by Historic Scotland, Orkney Islands Council, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Society for Mediaeval Archaeology, the University of York, Orkney Archaeological Trust and the University of Glasgow. The visiting specialists, excavation supervisors and field crew members responsible for this work are too numerous to be given the individual recognition they deserve. However, particular gratitude is owed to James Gerrard, Jen Harland, Karen Milek, Terry O'Connor, Tessa Poller and Ian Simpson. Colleen Batey (University of Glasgow), Derek Hall (Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust) and Nick Holmes (National Museum of Scotland) kindly provided information regarding the artefact assemblage. Colleen Batey also suggested that the feature in Area D may have been an entryway. Anne Sommerville has generously made her OSL dates available prior to publication. Allan Hall (University of York) assisted with the wheat identification. Other specialist contributions are cited in the text and bibliography. Jerad Zimmermann, Toby Simpson (both University of York) and Bill Jamieson (University of Stirling) produced the figures. Invaluable support has been provided by Julie Gibson, Anne Brundle, Rod McCullagh and Sam Marcus. Many thanks are also owed to the land owners, George and Margaret Drever, and our Westray hosts for their patience and support.

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Note

- ¹ All radiocarbon dates quoted are calibrated at the 95% (two sigma) error range using the atmospheric curve of Stuiver *et al.* (1998). These results have been calculated using both standard (Stuiver and Reimer 1993) and Bayesian methods, including sensitivity and reproducibility analyses (Buck *et al.* 1999), but the Bayesian results are given priority in the text and interpretations which follow. Full sample details, including the stratigraphic relationships used in the calibrations, are provided in Table 1. The 95% error range is also used for all archaeomagnetic dates, but only one sigma estimates have been calculated for the less precise optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) assays.

An Ethnic Enigma – Norse, Pict and Gael in the Western Isles

Andrew Jennings and Arne Kruse

Introduction

What happened to the native people of the islands of Scotland when the Vikings appeared over the horizon? Were the men killed and the womenfolk bundled on to the ships, leaving the land empty and ripe for resettlement? Or did they survive the Viking visitation living alongside the newcomers and ultimately blending with them?

There is still no consensus about which scenario best approximates to the truth, despite it being, for many decades, a topic of debate between scholars. Opinions appear to depend partly on the scholar's discipline and partly on his or her personal beliefs about human nature. For example, the archaeologist Olwyn Owen (2004) has argued cogently for a degree of integration in Shetland and Orkney, whilst the historian Brian Smith (2001), with a more pessimistic view of Dark-Age race relations, provides a stout defence of ethnic-cleansing in the Northern Isles.

Unlike Per Sveaas Andersen (1991) who, reviewing evidence for Norse / native interaction in the Hebrides as a whole, argued for some degree of continuity, our contribution to this debate focuses entirely on the Western Isles of Scotland (the Outer Hebrides). Here we, as historian and linguist, are faced with a dilemma, which, even more than our jaundiced view of human nature, colours our interpretation of the impact of the Norse on the pre-existing Hebridean inhabitants. Namely, the Norse place-names appear to provide the earliest onomastic stratum now surviving in the Western Isles.

The research done on the place-names of the Outer Isles is conclusive: no pre-Norse place-name stratum has been identified. (See Henderson 1910:185, Fraser 1974:18-19, 1984:40, Fellows-Jensen 1984:151, Stahl 1999:365. Richard Cox, who believed he had found place-names of a pre-Norse date in Lewis (1987, 1991), now states in his most recent publication (2002:118) that 'none of them can be shown without doubt to be pre-Norse.') Only the names of the two big islands in the Outer Isles, *Lewis* and *Uist*, are likely to be of pre-Norse origin. These names were probably borrowed into Norse at a very early date when the first explorers from Norway made contact with local people. When the Norse started to settle the islands they did not adopt any of the names for the headlands, mountains, rivers, lochs and settlements. They treated the islands like linguistically virgin land and renamed them so that the place-name inventory eventually resembled that of any other Norwegian group of islands.

The fact that there are no pre-Norse place-names incorporated into the Norse nomenclature is important. If there had been linguistic continuity with the pre-Norse past, one would have expected the Norse names to have shared the islands with a number of pre-Norse Celtic place-names, created in the millennia preceding Scandinavian settlement. If Gaelic had been spoken prior to the arrival of the Norse, one might have expected to find Norse place-names incorporating Gaelic place-names, such as the hypothetical examples of **Tarbert+eið* or **Benmor+fjall*. Such names do not exist, although the corollaries do. When Gaelic took over in the Outer Hebrides, thousands of Norse names survived and were incorporated into new Gaelic place-names, such as the tautological *Loch Langavat*. However, there are actually reasons to believe that the local population was Picts rather than Gaels. Alcock (1971) coined the term 'Peripheral Picts', to describe the pre-Norse inhabitants of the Western Isles, to indicate both their distinctiveness in their use of pottery and lack of imported wares, and a link with the Pictish Mainland. Supporting this view is a knife inscribed with Pictish ogham discovered on Vallay, North Uist, and the Pictish symbol stone from Pabbay, Barra (see Fisher 2002:11-12).

A Pictish / P-Celtic stratum in the Norse names, however, has also not been identified. There seems to be no linguistic link between the modern and the Iron Age population of the Outer Isles. This is significant and difficult to explain if a native population, in some form or other, survived the Norse impact. This awkward linguistic finding was taken into account by the historian and archaeologist Iain A. Crawford in his paper to the Eighth Viking Congress 'War or peace – Viking colonisation in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland reviewed' (Crawford 1981). Here he argued that a violent, disruptive meeting between the natives and the Norse was "the only rationalization of the existing linguistic, historical, and archaeological evidence". He dismissed the school-of-thought which advocated relatively peaceful integration with forceful and splenetic argument. However, in the two decades since the publication of his paper, there has been a considerable amount of new archaeological research in the Western Isles. On the basis of this work it has been claimed that there was clear continuity between the Norse period and the pre-Norse past. (See for instance Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999.) As scholars outside archaeology we want to look at this new evidence and see whether it throws light on the enigma of the place-names.

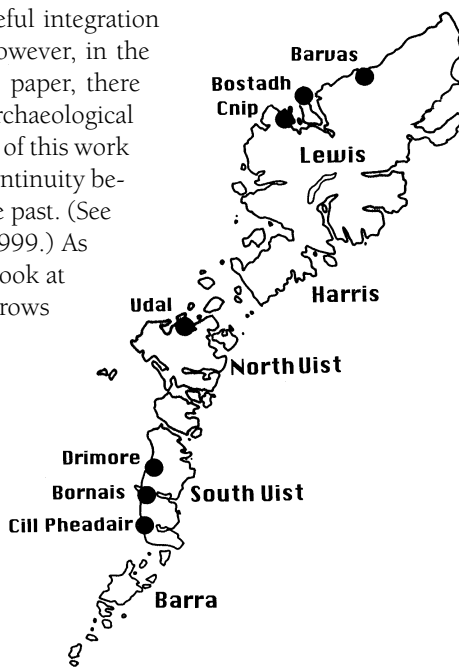


Fig. 1: The Outer Hebrides.
Places mentioned in the text.
(AK-fig1) (*Skanning vantar*)

Buildings

The spate of recent archaeological activity has added considerably to the number of Norse house sites known from the Western Isles. Lewis has yielded Bostadh in Great Bernera (Neighbour 2001) and Barvas (Cowie et al., *forth*), while South Uist has contributed the excavated sites of Bornais and Cill Pheadair and a large number of other Norse sites identified by survey (21 altogether) (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999).

At Bostadh, Great Bernera, on the site of a pre-Norse 'figure-of-eight' house a rectangular structure was discovered. In addition to its shape, which is indicative of a Norse origin, it was associated with a midden containing Norse material, including steatite bowls and carved antler pins and combs. There appears to have been a period of time between the abandonment of the pre-Norse House 1 and the building of the Norse structure. The former had been filled by sand by the time the Norse structure was built. It was not clear for how long House 1 had been abandoned, but the presence of at least one phase of 'squatter activity' suggested that some time had passed between the decline of one building and the erection of its successor. This appears to be evidence for continuity of site but temporal discontinuity between one house and the next (Neighbour 2001).

In South Uist the sites at Bornais and Cill Pheadair have proven to be fundamentally different from one another. Bornais is much the bigger of the two with 5 discrete clusters of buildings, perhaps representing discrete farms. Cill Pheadair, on the other hand, consists of a single house with ancillary buildings replaced 3 times over 4 centuries. The difference perhaps reflects a difference in status and age. Mound 2 at Bornais, like Bostadh to the north, is believed to have underlying Iron Age settlement, whereas Cill Pheadair does not. At the time of the publication of the 1999 article, the earliest Viking Age levels had yet to be investigated, but both are believed to date from the 9th century (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999:51 & 58).

The earlier structures at each site comprise houses similar to Drimore (MacLaren 1974) and the phase X structure at the Udal (Crawford [undated]), namely rectangular Norse houses. All the Bornais and Cill Pheadair houses appear to be sunken floored, being dug into the machair with a single stone wall holding back the sand. As there is not yet clear evidence, artifactual or otherwise, for a 9th century date, it is still unclear what happened at the Norse-Native boundary. However, Sharples & Parker Pearson argue for continuity on the basis of settlement distribution, because the pre-Norse settlement pattern of South Uist appears to have been preserved into the Norse period. They state that there is 'little evidence for any significant disruption of the settlement pattern when the Norse artefacts appear. The mounds that have Norse material are intimately associated with those producing evidence of Late Iron Age occupation' (*op.cit.* 1999:57).

Similarity of general settlement pattern in the pre-Norse and Norse periods is not particularly strong evidence for continuity. It is not unlikely that subsequent people would choose to adopt the settlement pattern created by their predecessors. South Uist does not provide a wide choice of potential settlement areas. Good farming land is restricted to the narrow western machair strip (see map in Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999 fig.2). Norse farmers, as their Celtic antecedents before them, are likely to have chosen to inhabit this strip instead of the moorlands of the interior or the rocky east coast. In addition, it would not be surprising if the Norse chose to divide up the land in a similar way, using pre-existing boundaries wherever possible. It would have been obvious to the incoming farmer where to site his dwelling; beside the fertile infields manured over generations. There was also an available source of

stone right in the middle of the best land; namely the previous house. Even after a break of several years it would not be unlikely for a settler to choose to settle on the site of the dwelling of the previous inhabitant. This might explain the apparent period of abandonment at Bostadh.

Despite a certain similarity, it is actually far from clear that the pre-Norse and Norse period settlement patterns are identical. Although the sites of Bostadh, Udal and Bornais have both pre-Norse and Norse settlements present, Cill Pheadair does not. 500m between pre-Norse and Norse mounds is not particularly close proximity. Also, in South Uist, the Norse do not appear to have settled on the black-lands (the peaty hinterland), where the pre-Norse peoples had built their brochs and duns (14 in all according to the distribution map in Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999 fig. 3). They restricted their settlement to the machair. None of the broch/duns of the black-lands appear to have been reused by the Norse. Sharples & Parker Pearson (1999:48) found that even the impressive broch site of Dun Vulcan, which dominates the only harbour on the west coast, was abandoned c.800AD after having been continuously occupied since 200BC. There was no archaeological evidence of Norse reuse. This is a pattern which is also apparent in other areas of the Western Isles. There is no evidence of Norse settlement at the broch at Loch na Beirgh in Bhaltois, near Cnìp, Lewis, despite this site having been continually inhabited for over a thousand years. Its walls were built in the second half of the first millennium BC. Its last inhabitants lived during the Pictish-period. Penannular brooches, composite bone combs and pipe-bowl crucibles, have been found indicating the last period of inhabitation spanned the period between the seventh and the ninth centuries AD. Armit (1996:202) has suggested that Loch na Beirgh broch was probably still occupied when the Norse raids began. He also claims, in contrast to Sharples and Parker Pearson for South Uist, that there appears to have been a major restructuring of land-holding and settlement location in Bhaltois coinciding with the period of Viking settlement (Armit 1994).

With the abandonment of the broch sites a venerable native architectural tradition came to an end, a tradition which had been developing for about a millennium. The predominantly cellular and circular forms disappear, being replaced by the rectangular. Norse houses in the Western Isles can be identified by their shape. D.M. Wilson (1976:100) pointed out that when the Scandinavians settled in the inhabited lands, such as Russia, England and Dublin, they normally adopted local house styles. Scandinavian-style houses in England from the Viking Age are rare, (possibly also due to a continuous use of the sites (Richards 2001)), and in Dublin, most of Viking Age houses were of post-and-wattle construction in the Irish style (Murray 1983). Wilson suggests, maybe facetiously, that this is because the Scandinavians put the locals to work building houses for them. Although, as a rule, dominant incoming groups don't adopt to indigenous house styles, it may still be that the Viking Age houses in Dublin are the result of the adoption of locally developed house styles suited to the new environment. Where the Scandinavians settled in the uninhabited lands of the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland they took with them their traditional building techniques and constructed hall houses, because they were constrained to build them themselves. In the North and the West of Scotland the situation appears similar to that pertaining in the uninhabited areas. Here it is the style itself that is indicative of the existence of a Norse presence.

There might be a proviso. Sharples & Parker Pearson (1999:58) also argue that there are two indications of continuity of building technique in South Uist, firstly semi-subterranean construction (walls are partly dug into the sand) and secondly single skinned walls. However, these building techniques are within the repertoire of the Norse building tradition. The Nor-

wegian archaeologist Arnvid Lillehammer (in private correspondence) agrees that although it is true that the large, rectangular dwelling houses from the Viking period in Norway are not dug in, the technique is frequently found in Norway for smaller houses on a farm. What we see in South Uist may be the application of an existing Norse building technique to a type of farm building where one would not normally expect to find it. As such, it is not a particularly revolutionary development in a sandy environment in an extremely exposed coastal location. It's interesting to notice that in a recent reassessment of a settlement site on Begnish, south-west Ireland, the archaeologists involved used the fact that the house had a sunken floor as the main criterion for classifying the house as Scandinavian. They show there was a widespread occurrence of houses with sunken floors in Southern Scandinavia from the late Roman Iron Age and through the Viking Age, and they point to recent archaeological excavations in Dublin where there are sunken-floored buildings, radiocarbon dated to the late 8th to the mid-10th centuries, 'in the absence of any convincing evidence for similar buildings from native contexts' (Sheehan, Stummann Hansen and Ó Corráin 2001:99-101). As for single-skinned walls, Lillehammer is able to point to several early Viking period house-sites in Norway where the walls are single-skinned stone constructions covered with turf, for example Oma in Time, Rogaland (Petersen 1933, 1936). It is important to bear in mind that this period saw several types of building techniques used simultaneously in Norway and in the Norwegian expansion area. There are stave constructions, log houses, turf-walled houses, double- and single-skinned houses, and a combination of several techniques, depending on environmental constraints and possibilities. In the Western Isles both double- and single-skinned Norse houses are found (the building at Barvas was double-skinned) and, potentially of great importance, in Mound 2 at Bornais, Neil Sharples (2000:31) has recently uncovered the remains of a substantial wooden hall, which is the oldest Norse house so far discovered on the site. This, of course, indicates even more clearly a break with what went before.

Pottery

In contrast to the Northern Isles, Iceland and Norway where steatite was the raw material of choice (Buttler 1989) large quantities of pottery have been recovered from the Viking period in the Outer Isles and Skye.

The most thorough analysis of Hebridean pottery has been done by Alan Lane. In his doctoral thesis (1983) and in a later article (1990), Lane analysed in detail the Dark-age and the Viking-age pottery found at Udal, North Uist, with reference to other Viking-age pottery finds in the Hebrides – 29 finds there are positively identified as Viking-age – and other related locations outside of the Hebrides.

Figure 2 shows Dark-Age pottery called Plain Style, and Viking Age pottery, both from the Udal North Hill. According to Lane there is no change in the former style from the beginning of the post-Roman settlement to its end with the arrival of the Viking Age. The pots are non-kiln fired and undecorated. They are flat based with a plain bucket and shouldered jar form, some have long upturned or flaring rims (Lane 1983:144-69). The pots are made by adding strips of clay with a tongue-and-groove joint construction. This technique constitutes a distinctive feature of the Dark-age pots because it is used so consistently (op.cit.:234-5). During the Viking Age the Plain Style is replaced by a new pottery style. This new style differs from the earlier one by having sagging and flat-based bowls and cups. There are also flat pottery discs or platters. There is no obvious link with the previous style of Hebridean pottery. In addition,

a new construction technique is employed. Instead of tongue-and-groove, the strips of clay are merely pressed on top of each other, giving a flattened or angled straight joint (op.cit.:236, see also Fig. 2). There does not seem to have been a gradual transition of style and technique: 'I can see no evidence to derive the Viking-age style from the Dark-age style. The difference in form and construction methods seems overwhelming' (op.cit.:379).

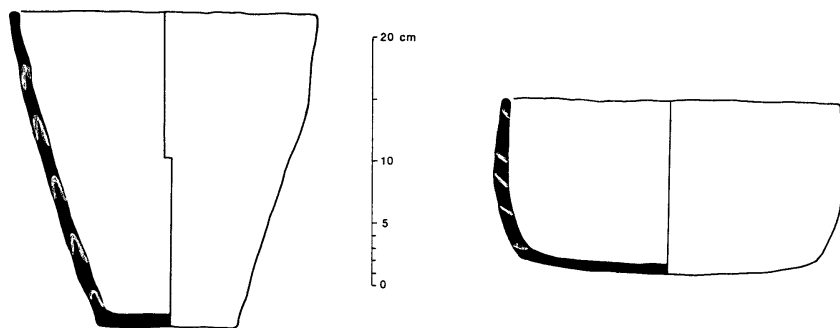


Fig. 2: Examples from Udal, North Uist, of the Plain Style pottery showing characteristic tongue-and-groove joint construction (left) and of Viking Age pottery showing straight joint construction (right). (Adapted from Lane 1990:118 and 124.) (AK-fig2) (Skanning vantar)

As the Norse did not arrive in the Hebrides with a strong pottery tradition, the continued use of pottery in the Hebrides might appear to indicate that the Norse adopted a well established and useful practice from the local population, thus implying some degree of continuity. However, if they did adopt pottery from the locals, why did they not adopt the local style and, perhaps more importantly, why did they not continue to make it in the traditional way? Alan Lane has suggested that the changes are so fundamental that the new pottery was made by new potters. He points to close parallels in time and style to the northern Irish Souterrain Ware assemblages in Co. Antrim and proffers the possibility that the Norse may have learnt to make pottery in Ireland before they settled in the Hebrides, or alternatively, they may have imported knowledgeable Irish slaves to make pots for them. This suggestion receives a fillip from the Faroe Islands, the only other Scandinavian settlement area in the West Atlantic region with a pottery tradition. Lane, having investigated the pottery from Sørvágur and Sandavágur, with its sagging-based bowls, suggested that it seemed very similar to that from the Hebrides (op.cit.:348). As the Faroes are unlikely to have had a native pottery making population prior to the Norse settlement it is likely that the pottery makers arrived as slaves. A Gaelic stratum has been identified in the place-names of the Faroes by Jakob Jakobsen (1902), and the presence of Gaelic agricultural terms in the Faroese language indicates that there are likely to have been Gaelic slaves in the islands. Perhaps the clay deposits of both the Faroes and the Hebrides were utilised by Irish slaves.

Environmental Archaeology

A relatively new and rapidly developing branch of archaeology focuses on how people through

the ages have made use of their environment. Studies of this type have been integrated as part of the more recent archaeological excavations in the Western Isles.

Recent studies of fish bones from both northern Scotland (Barrett, Nicholson & Cerón-Carrasco, 1999) and from the site of Bostadh on Bernera, Lewis (Cerón-Carrasco 2002) show that there was a great change in the exploitation of the fish resource between the Iron Age and the Norse period. From the Iron Age saithe bones dominate. However, although saithe survived as a catch into the Norse period, cod (and sometimes ling) bones appear in great quantities. Herring also becomes a major catch, a feature which has also been noted at Bornais (Sharples 2000:33). The size of the fish also increased dramatically. Barrett et al (1999) suggest this indicates that fishing methods changed. While small saithe and cod were probably fished from shore, or from boats very close to the shore, the larger cod, saithe, ling and haddock are more likely to have been caught by hand line from boats in deeper water. Although the Iron Age inhabitants probably had ocean-going boats, the fish bone evidence suggests that they did not use these for off-shore fishing. The change of economy that is indicated by the bones, is so significant that the researchers (Barrett, Nicholson & Cerón-Carrasco 1999:374) conclude their article with the following statement:

“It is possible that the Norse colonization of Northern Scotland involved fundamental economic changes more consistent with large-scale migration of primary producers than the integration of two cultures or superficial elite dominance”.

In his doctoral thesis Mike Church (2002) researched carbonised plant macrofossil assemblages from nine sites in Lewis, including Bostadh, covering the first millennia BC and AD. Interpreting the variations in plant use over time he suggests the various social dimensions that the changes might imply, e.g. changing belief systems or the need to diversify the arable economy. Oats is one of the plants he follows over time. This grain can be grown in more marginal areas and with less looking after than barley. The cultivation of oats expands the area of land which can be brought under cultivation without greater input of labour. There is ‘an initial experimentation with oats during the Late Iron Age period followed by a more substantial and important contribution to the arable economy in the Norse period’ (op.cit.:135, fig. p.304). An intensified cultivation of flax has often been used as a ‘Norse marker’ alongside oat. However, at Bostadh there is a significant presence of flax over the Late Iron Age, and, contrary to what would be expected, a near absence of flax in the Norse period (op.cit.: fig. p.304). Church (op.cit.:138) sees the Late Iron Age cultivation of flax as indicative of a specialised and labour intense production of fibres and/or oil that would also have meant a specialised trade network and that this came to an end as the result of a social upheaval following the Norse incursions.

The archeobotanical study by Church is far from conclusive. He says himself that aspects of his results may be used to argue both for a peaceful integration or a more violent disruptive invasion of the Norse. Without discussing this point in detail he does, however, express the view that the paleoeconomic evidence, including Cerón-Carrasco’s results, points to such a fundamental shift in the subsistence base that it does ‘hint at a more interventionist Norse invasion’ (op.cit.:136).

Graves

There has been one major addition to the list of Hebridean viking period graves since the publication of Crawford’s paper, the cemetery at Cnip, on the west coast of Lewis. This in-

cludes the grave (actually uncovered in 1979) of an aristocratic lady of perhaps 10th century date (Welander et al. 1987) and a grave cluster. Burials were uncovered in excavations in 1991 – a child, and in 1992 and 1994 (Dunwell et al. 1995), consisting of three adults, two children. These adults appear to have belonged to a different social status to the earlier female. They were all buried in simple shallow grave pits marked on the surface by low mounds kerbed by rectangular arrangements of stones. Two lay with their heads to the east, perhaps indicating Christian belief, and one to the north. Christianity is also suggested by the fact that one body appears to have been buried in a shroud, arms crossed, and the gravegoods were very meagre. The female had a bone pin and a perforated iron plate. It is suggested that their small stature indicates they suffered poor conditions during childhood. Life did not get much better as they reached adulthood because there are signs from their skeletons of arduous working conditions. These burials are dated to the latter part of 9th century.

Armit (1996:201) has suggested that the poorly furnished burials might represent the graves of a relict Pictish population whose burial traditions, following native precedents, were less ostentatious than those of the Norse settlers, whilst the rich grave represents the new aristocratic Norse upper class. However, attractive though this hypothesis might be, can one be sure that the slaves were the descendants of locals rather than coming from elsewhere? Their graves overlies Bronze Age graves, so perhaps they were using their ancestors burial ground. However, this could be coincidental, as no Iron Age graves have been found there is no clear continuity. Isotope analysis of the teeth might throw some light on the question.

Janet Montgomery (in private correspondence, see also Montgomery 2002 and Montgomery, Evans & Neighbour 2003), at the University of Bradford, looked at the lead and strontium isotope data contained in the teeth of the incumbents. Whereas the rich woman, probably buried in the 10th century, appears to have grown up locally two of the individuals from the poorer graves, probably of 9th century date, must have grown up in an area with volcanic bedrock. This eliminates both Lewis and Norway. They could have come from one of the volcanic Inner Hebrides or from Antrim in Northern Ireland. Obviously, one cannot extrapolate too much from such a tiny sample. However, we find it relevant to point out, if these are the graves of slaves, they did not belong to a relict Pictish population, rather they were imported from elsewhere, perhaps from Ireland.

Genetics

Recent studies of both mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), inherited only from the female side, and the Y-Chromosome, inherited by males from their fathers, have been carried out on the populations of the northern Atlantic. These indicate that a large Norse genetic component exists within the gene-pool of the modern population of the Western Isles.

In the Western Isles and Skye respectively, 11.5% and 12.5% of the mtDNA appears to be of Norse origin (Helgason et.al. 2001), while a recent study carried out by the BBC for their programme 'The Blood of the Vikings' suggests 30% of the Y-Chromosomes in the Western Isles are Scandinavian (Richards 2001). If the statistical methods employed by the geneticists are accurate this means that a sizeable proportion of the modern population of the Western Isles has Norse ancestry.

This is clear evidence of a population movement. There must have been an extensive settlement of both sexes to create these results, not just the replacement of the native elite by a Norse one. However, the Norse component in the gene-pool is less in the Western Isles than

in either Orkney or Iceland. In Orkney 35.5% of the mtDNA and 60% of the Y-Chromosomes are Scandinavian. In Iceland the figures are 37.5% and 80% respectively. This would seem to indicate that the Norse settlement in the Western Isles was less extensive than these other areas. However, can it be used to justify the hypothesis of native survival?

One could argue that the lower figures indicate less extensive settlement and the concomitant survival of the previous population. However, the figures indicate the situation existing today, rather than that existing 1000 years ago. In the case of the Western Isles one does not have an unchanged, isolated population. There has been extensive population interaction between the Western Isles, Ireland and mainland Scotland over the last 1000 years. Indeed, given this interaction it is perhaps surprising that the Norse component is still so large. It is now impossible to ascertain what the gene-pool looked like 1000 years ago. It could have been substantially different from today. It could have been identical to Iceland which is indeed an isolated population having seen no major movements of population since the settlement period.

At the present level of genetic research there is no way of ascertaining if any, or all, of the 88.5% mtDNA and the 70% Y-Chromosomes of non-Norse origin in the gene-pool can be traced back to a pre-Norse population inhabiting the Isles. The evidence from Iceland indicates that a large non-Norse component could have been imported at an early date by the Norse themselves. Iceland did not have a pre-Norse population, but 20% to 25% of its ancestral Y-Chromosomes are Celtic (Helgason et al. 2000) and there appear to have been more women from the British Isles than from Norway involved in the settlement (Helgason et al. 2001). This Celtic component presumably arrived as slaves and wives. A similar scenario could be imagined in the Western Isles. The Celtic component in the Hebridean DNA could have increased substantially over time.

Conclusion – Towards a Model

Some aspects of the new scientific evidence could argue the case for a degree of continuity, such as the use of pottery, the reuse of some settlement sites and the current genetic profile of the inhabitants. However, we have suggested that the evidence for continuity in each case is not as strong as it at first appears. For example, the Norse pottery appears to be made in a different way from that in the Iron Age, and the construction methods used in the houses in South Uist, given as evidence for the continuity of native building practices, are not out with the scope of Norwegian building techniques. Similarly, the non-Norse genetic material need not indicate a pre-Norse component in the peripatetic population of the Western Isles. We believe the new scientific evidence supports the case that the Western Isles received a substantial migration of Norse settlers, who brought with them a new language, culture and method of using the environment. There must have been profound change. To our eyes, the scientific evidence does not sufficiently support the case for continuity, or undermine the linguistic conclusion of the place-names which argues for severe discontinuity, perhaps even to the extent of a total replacement of the pre-Norse population. Severe discontinuity is also implied by the name used by the Irish for the Outer Hebrides as early as the mid-9th century in the text *Cath Maige Tuired* (Carey 1989-90), where they are called *Innse Gall* 'Islands of the Foreigners' (at this period *gall* refers almost exclusively to the Scandinavians). In addition, Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1998) has argued cogently that, subsequent to colonisation between 795 and 825, an aggressive kingdom was established in the Scottish Isles, called *Lothlend*. The Outer Hebridean

des formed an important part of this entity. It was from *Lothlend* that devastating plundering and slaving attacks were organised against the monasteries and petty kingdoms of Ireland and eastern Scotland.

We have suggested throughout this paper that the Norse settlers may have been accompanied by Gaels, presumably slaves and wives. An early Gaelic presence in the Western Isles receives corroboration from the onomastic record. Richard Cox (2002:118), in his detailed study of the place-names of the Carloway Registry of Lewis, comes to the conclusion that there are names dateable to the period prior to the Scottish annexation of the Hebrides in 1266, and indeed, there is evidence of 'a continuous Gaelic-speaking presence during the Norse period'.

We would like to offer for discussion the following model of what took place in the Western Isles:

- 1) The Outer Hebrides were repeatedly attacked and raided by the Norse, which made life untenable for the native Pictish population, who were either killed, taken away or fled. This emptied the islands. Therefore, no place-names were passed on because there was no contact with the earlier inhabitants.
- 2) The Norse began to settle and farm the land of the previous inhabitants. They chose to live in more or less the same places due to the nature of the land. However, they built their own houses and did not resettle the brochs.
- 3) The Norse, having no native population to enslave, imported Gaelic slaves, probably from Ireland, who brought with them their language, a knowledge of pottery-making and their DNA. Just as in Iceland and the Faroes a Gaelic component was introduced into the population under the auspices of the Norse. They were not the descendants of the pre-Norse people but also incomers, if perhaps unwilling immigrants.

It is not difficult to imagine that intensive raiding would make life untenable for the native peoples of the Outer Hebrides. This was certainly the case on the island Noirmoutier, south of Brittany, at the mouth of the Loire, described by the monk Ermentaire, where in 834 the local population was so terrorized it abandoned its island home and for a long time the island was used as a base by the *vestfaldingi* (i.e. from Vestfold in the Oslo Fjord) for raids up the Loire: *The barbarians often suddenly attacked the harbour of the island, they behaved like ferocious men and destroyed everything. The inhabitants, following the example of their masters, preferred to flee rather than run the risk of extermination.* (Ermentaire, translated from the French.)

For islanders, sea-raids constitute an even greater threat than for those who live on the mainland. The problem for the natives of Noirmoutier, as for inhabitants of islands of a similar size – like most of the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland – is the lack of hinterland in which to hide when they were attacked from the sea. It would be very difficult to hide well enough and for long enough to survive repeated violent raids. The sensible thing to do, if they were able, was to seek shelter where shelter could be found, namely on the mainland.

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Acknowledgements

An interdisciplinary study like this would not have been possible without the help and patience of the following experts in their various fields: Ruby Céron-Carrasco, Archaeology, University of Edinburgh; Mike Church, Geography, University of Edinburgh; Arnvid Lillehammer, Archaeology, Stavanger University College; Janet Montgomery, Archaeology, University of Bradford; Tim Neighbour, CFA Archaeology Ltd, Edinburgh; Alan Wright and Veronique Vitart, HGU, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh. The authors of this article are fully responsible for any misunderstanding or misquoting of their comments.

Scotland's Viking 'towns': a contradiction in terms?

Olwyn Owen

The Romans bequeathed no urban tradition in Scotland and the early historic centres, for all their wealth and power, proved transitory. Archaeological evidence for pre- 12th-century 'towns' (defined in terms of the activities and character of a larger-than-usual settled community) is stubbornly sparse. In early medieval Scotland only the Vikings were familiar with the notion of 'town' as trading settlement and market place. Mercantile centres were established in Scandinavia at Ribe and Birka from as early as the second half of the 8th century, and at Dublin and York from the mid to late 9th century (Clarke and Ambrosiani 1991). In Orkney and Shetland, though, most excavated sites have proved to be simple farms. The lack of evidence for trade, manufacturing or market places there is often explained by reference to the nature of society in the widely dispersed settlements along the west Norwegian coast. In a society of developing chiefdoms, it is argued, surpluses were rendered to the chief through hospitality and feasts, and the relationship cemented by exchanging gifts, probably at agreed farms rather than fixed centres. This system, or something like it, would be transplanted to the Orkney earldom by early Norse settlers. The contention of this brief paper, however, is that this picture of an overwhelmingly agrarian society of self-sustaining chiefdoms may be an over-simplification.

Recent work in Denmark has shown that coastal landing places, where the agrarian and maritime aspects of Viking Age society met, were common (Jens Ulriksen pers comm). They functioned as anchorages, watch stations, harbours or production sites, serving the rural hinterland and local chieftains. Typically they have a few sunken huts and a longhouse or two and yield mainly domestic debris. There are indications of the presence of blacksmiths, weavers and woodworkers, but rarely more specialised crafts. They rarely developed into medieval towns (Århus is an exception), but might emerge as a major farm with a church in the 11th century or as a settled medieval village. They are found by looking for good natural harbours with major 11th- or 12th-century farms nearby, Viking graves and a later church.

The example of Pierowall

The Viking sailors' most precious asset was their ship and they were headed to a place where wood was scarce and ship-repairing difficult. Once the islands were under Norse control, their destination would have been one of a small number of safe, familiar harbours. The wide, shallow bay at Pierowall is an outstanding natural harbour on a strategically important island: Westray is the first landfall en route from Norway to Orkney. In *Orkneyinga Saga*,

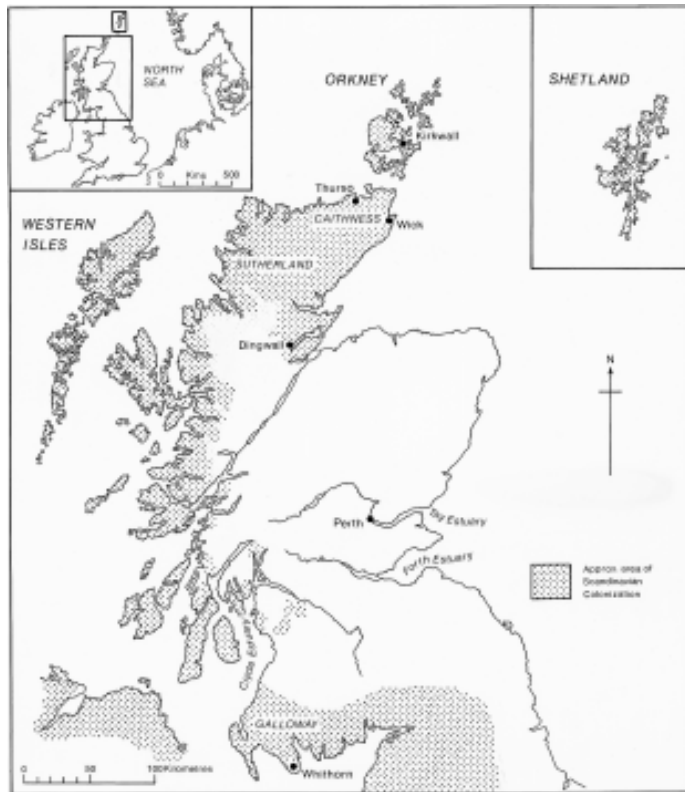
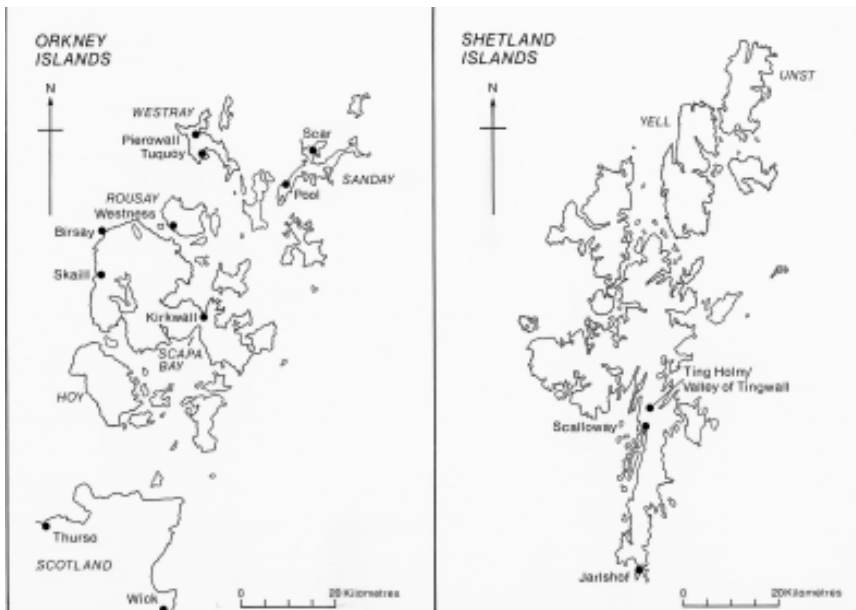


Fig. 1: Scotland and the Orkney earldom: map of places mentioned in the text. (OO-fig1a.tif; OO-fig1b.tif)



Pierowall is called simply *Hofn* (Haven: Ch lxxv). Indicators of Pierowall's status as a harbour site on the Danish model include an extensive pagan cemetery with a minimum 20 graves (Thorsteinsson 1968; J Graham-Campbell pers comm). In Scandinavia, cemeteries often occur next to proto-urban centres: Birka has over 1100 grave mounds. Barrett *et al* (2000) argue that the Pierowall cemetery cannot compare with these sites, which is true in strict numerical terms but ignores the geographical context. This is by far the most extensive Viking cemetery known in Scotland. Other indicators include Pierowall's medieval parish church, Lady Kirk, and Pierowall is also the only Orkney settlement to be called *þorp* (village) (Lamb 1983). It is probable that Pierowall was an established Norse harbour and that one or more settlements lay around the bay.

What went on in and around these harbours? In an era characterised by sea travel, the harbour would have been the natural gathering point for local produce and the place where farmers, new arrivals and transients would mingle. Did it also attract a periodic beach market, where settlers and traders on their way to more lucrative markets might exchange or barter goods? As Thomson (1987: 20) says: 'attempts to identify an incipient merchant-town in Pierowall perhaps carry speculation farther than the present evidence justifies.' The grandiose connotations of the phrase 'merchant-town' highlight the problems of definition that bedevil studies of developing markets and urbanisation. No Norse settlement has been securely identified around Pierowall Bay (though middens are common: Lamb 1983), far less the remains of booths, workshops or types of dwellings likely to characterise a landing place and trading settlement. This is not surprising given the likely insubstantial nature of such remains and the locally mobile topography of shifting sand dunes. In truth, surprisingly few Viking Age settlements have been found anywhere in the Orkney earldom: Birsay and Jarlshof still seem remarkable survivals.

How, then, can we explore the evidence for imported goods or a market at Pierowall? The mid 9th- to 10th-century pagan graves demonstrate that the incomers were importing material in quantity: everyday implements and tools, weapons and jewellery; but possessions could have been brought in on the settlers' own boats and need not denote trade. The types of evidence we should find convincing are staples: low-value, high-bulk necessities. Barrett *et al* (2000) have demonstrated an intensification in traded staples in the later period (dried fish, cereals, butter and wool). It is not unreasonable to project some level of trade back to the earlier period.

Timber must have been the most useful commodity to import into near-treeless Orkney. Large wooden artefacts were clearly arriving, for example, the boats found in graves at Scar, Westness and Pierowall. The chemistry of sand grains trapped in the Scar boat caulking suggests it was built in Scandinavia and, presumably, brought to Orkney on a cargo ship—and ships that could carry 7m-long rowing boats could also have carried other structural timber. One of the perennial questions about Viking Orkney is why the intensive colonisation signified by the placenames is not reflected by the survival of many Viking farm sites. Conventional wisdom is that continued occupation up to modern times has masked traces of earlier structures. This must be part of the reason, but what if some or many Viking houses were built mainly of Norwegian timber, augmented by locally available organic materials such as turf?

A large and waterlogged pit, radiocarbon dated to the 10th century, was found on the beach at Tuquoy, Westray (Owen 1993). The sheer quantity of pine off-cuts from trimming planks is evidence for the large-scale import of wood into Viking Orkney. The trunks had been cut to



Fig. 2: Wood debris, including pine off-cuts from the trimming of planks, from Tuquoy, Westray, Orkney. © Historic Scotland.

squared cross-sections at source for ease of transport. Ready-made objects were also arriving: a fine maple handle, small quantities of oak for carpentry, and ash for handles, hafts and shafts. The presence of unfinished objects testifies to an active wood-working industry. Tuquoy is an inferior landing place, especially for heavily-laden ships. It may be that ships carrying staples like timber landed at Pierowall, whence the goods were dispersed in smaller quantities to high-status farms like Tuquoy.

This is not to argue that 10th-century Pierowall was necessarily a well-developed market-place akin to Paviken, Gotland, with its specialised boat-repairing, goldsmithing, etc. In a predominantly agricultural economy, Pierowall was always at the 'peripheral' end in the scale of broadly contemporary market places. Nonetheless it was an established Viking Age harbour, where staples and maybe luxury goods arrived regularly and made their way into Norse Orcadian society.

What of trade in the other direction? Staples and consumables are notoriously hard to identify archaeologically, but the likeliest Orkney-to-Norway exports must be grain. At Pool, Sanday, the earliest Norse levels are discernible partly by the introduction of flax; and its production quickly intensified, signalling a major shift in the agricultural and economic base



Fig. 3: Reconstruction drawing of a beach market at Pierowall. Colour painting; © David Simon.

of the settlement (Hunter *et al* 1993). Flax is well-suited to the warm, damp conditions of the Northern Isles, and linen was much prized by Viking women (Näsström 1995: 85-6). Flax may have been grown in Orkney partly for the Norwegian market. Other traded staples might have included other grain types, hides, fur, iron, oil, etc.

Shetland, too, must have had its established havens. People attending the assembly at Ting Holm would put up temporary huts and booths at the head of the fertile valley of Tingwall, at *Skalårvagr*, meaning 'Bay of Huts' (Stewart 1987). This is the origin of the present village of Scalloway; perhaps here, too, there was an established Viking Age harbour and periodic beach market, especially when the *thing* met.

There was little impetus for any single site in this agrarian, island-scattered society to develop into a centre of trade. The Northern Isles lay on an important trade route between Scandinavia and the Irish Sea; access to goods was relatively easy. It is interesting to note the scarcity of evidence in the Northern Isles (and its complete absence from Shetland and Caithness) for the standard merchants' equipment: lead weights and folding scales (Owen and Dalland 1999: 125)—another pointer to coastal landing places in Denmark. There was no shortage of wealth in Scandinavian Scotland. The Skaill hoard, buried c.950-70, weighed over 8kg and contained great neck-rings, brooches, arm-rings, pins, ingots, ring-money, hack-silver and Arabic coins (Graham-Campbell 1995: 34-48). This mixture of apparently 'active' silver, for use as payment, gifts or in exchange, and prestige ornaments in good condition, suggests that this was not a merchant's hoard, but the accumulated capital of a Norse chieftain or leading family. Skaill was after all one of Orkney's prime settlement locations, with a fine

natural harbour, Viking graves and a possible early church (Morris *et al* 1985). Perhaps established landing places and the activities they engendered were controlled by the same aristocratic families who controlled the land and its potential wealth.

Norse Kirkwall

Not before the 11th century do we have evidence of a developing town in the Orkney earldom. Kirkwall, first mentioned in *Orkneyinga Saga* in 1046, is Norway's oldest town on its original site (Gourlay and Turner 1977; Lamb 1993). Centrally located on Orkney mainland, Kirkwall has an outstanding natural harbour and lies within easy reach of another: Scapa Bay. Here, if anywhere in the Northern Isles, we could expect to find an earlier harbour and trading settlement, maybe even a production site.

The town lies along the east side of Kirkwall Bay, where the bay is almost blocked by a sandspit known as the Aire. As a result the town has two waterfronts: one to the north, along the coast of Kirkwall Bay where the harbour is today; and one to the west, along the east coast of the Peerie Sea. The presence of two waterfronts is reflected in two different street patterns. In the north, the principal axis is along the shore of the bay, with a major thoroughfare, Bridge St, lying at right angles to the shore. About 100m from the shore, Bridge St crosses the Papdale

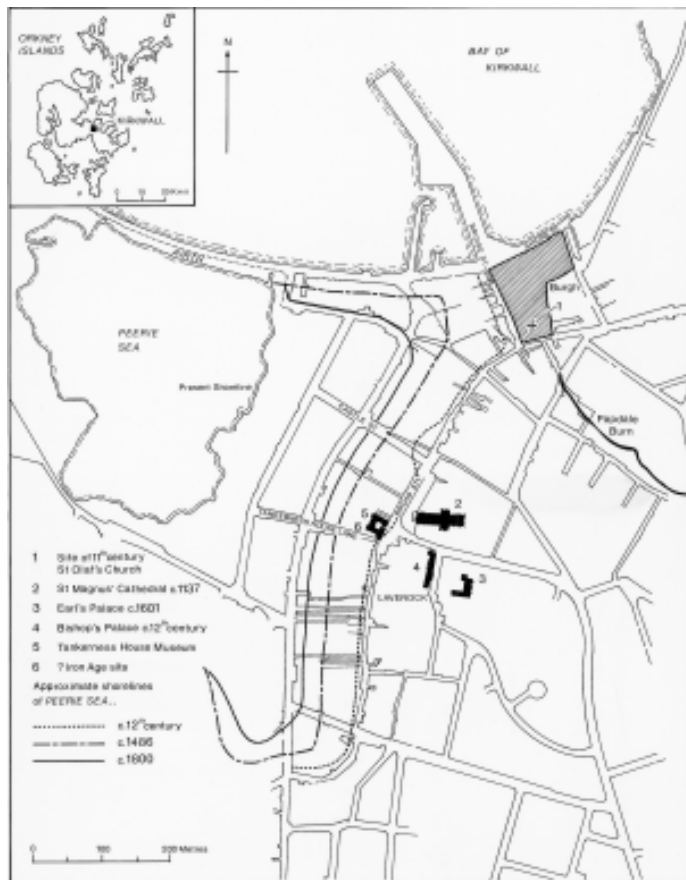


Fig. 4: Kirkwall showing excavated sites and topography of early medieval town.

Burn, which marks the southern boundary of the early town. This area, known as the Burgh, is focused on Bridge St and bounded by Shore St and St Catherine's Place. This would have been the core of the Norse trading settlement, controlled by the earls. By 1046 it consisted probably of irregular rows of houses by St Olaf's Church and Papdale Burn, with the earl's palace nearby and with merchants trading from wharfs and jetties along the shore of the Peerie Sea. St Olaf's Church, to where the relics of St Magnus were translated from Birsay in c.1117, may overlie an earlier church, as the name Papdale Burn suggests.

The growth of medieval Kirkwall must have gained new impetus with the building of St Magnus Cathedral from 1137; but the cathedral was built on a greenfield site, 300m from the earlier centre, and around it sprang up the Bishop's Palace and other ecclesiastical buildings in an area known as the Laverock. Along the original Peerie Sea waterfront, the bishops fostered their own mercantile centre; it was only in later medieval times that the two rival towns coalesced.

The earliest archaeological evidence so far dates to the 12th century (McGavin 1982). Excavation has revealed successive stages in the reclamation of land from the Peerie Sea as the waterfront moved westwards, including a 12th- to 13th-century jetty and beach. The modern Peerie Sea is now a fraction of its original size, but the excavators suggest that 12th- and 13th-century ships used the Peerie Sea waterfront both for landing goods and for ship-hauling and repair, as at Bergen. The finds also point to close Norwegian contacts, such as a steatite toy quern and baking plate.

Excavation immediately east of the 16th-century Earl's Palace also located medieval deposits, some waterlogged, which have supplemented the picture of a thriving medieval town focused on the 12th-century Bishop's Palace (Cox *et al* 1998). Indeed, comparisons have been drawn with King Hakon's Hall and palace complex in Bergen. There was clear evidence of the woodworking of undressed logs, almost certainly imported from Norway, and plenty of domestic refuse. Given the close ecclesiastical connections between Kirkwall and Trondheim, a fine 13th-century comb from Kirkwall was probably produced in a Trondheim workshop.

In a watching brief along Broad St and down Castle St and Tankerness House Lane, Raymond Lamb (forthcoming) noted a substantial Iron Age site south of Tankerness House, built out into the water, and proposed the intriguing idea that Kirkwall may have developed out of two early centres: one Norse, represented by St Olaf's Church and the Burgh; and the other Pictish, represented by this Iron Age site at the heart of the Laverock.

Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to excavate in the heart of the Burgh, the likely early Norse trading settlement. Today, much of the site is occupied by a 20th-century oil depot; but the land in front of the depot was reclaimed when the new harbour and road were built c.1865. This means that, as well as the proven high potential for important medieval deposits in the bishop's part of the town, there is the potential for buried waterfront archaeology in the earl's part of the town, possibly including timber structures, perhaps even ships—here, in the original Norse trading settlement.

Kirkwall was the only properly urban centre to develop in all the North Atlantic Norse colonies, but there are other candidates in mainland northern Scotland for Norse harbours, beach markets or trading settlements: Thurso, Wick and Dingwall, for example. We need to be alert to this possibility as opportunities arise to excavate in northern Scottish coastal towns. Similarly, Crawford (2002) has suggested possible Danish influences on the origins of towns in eastern Scotland such as Perth, and cajoles us to look for trading sites around the Forth and

Tay Estuaries. So far only one site on the Scottish mainland has a confirmed Norse presence of urban character, but it is extremely important: Whithorn in the far south-west (Hill 1997).

Whithorn

This obscure inland site 5 km from the sea began as the 5th-century cult centre of St Ninian and was foremost a spiritual centre; but as the monastery grew in importance, a thriving market place was kindled on its doorstep, even in this inauspicious location. The arts of building, manufacture and decoration were encouraged, donations of gifts and labour attracted to a protected environment; and the accumulation of wealth in one place kindled the local exchange of goods, until the very presence of the monastery was promoting social and regional development. This was the genesis of the monastic town, a pattern echoed at monasteries across Europe, and elsewhere in early historic Scotland.

Historical obscurity envelops Galloway after the mid 9th century just as Scandinavian place-names appear in the landscape; but excavations at Whithorn gave a fascinating glimpse of a complex cultural evolution. Whithorn survived as an ecclesiastical site and was home to a



Fig. 5: Reconstruction drawing of Norse Whithorn. Colour painting; © David Simon. (OO-fig5.tif)

distinctive school of 10th-century sculpture. Churches and other buildings came and went. In the late 10th or early 11th century the settlement was transformed again, with the erection of a densely packed band of small buildings at 45° to the former Northumbrian buildings, enclosed by shallow ditches.

There has been a curious reluctance to acknowledge the Norse character of Whithorn's 10th- to 12th-century levels, but by then, the material culture and economy of the settlement was recognisably Norse. There were specifically Norse objects such as a Ringerike-style bronze strip, a cut piece of silver ring-money and some lead weights. There were objects made at Whithorn by Norse craftsmen, or by Celtic craftsmen for Norse patrons, such as a decorated leather trial piece and a Hnefatafl board. There were Irish/Norse ring pins spanning the 10th-12th centuries; a fine carved antler handle; and amber beads testifying to long range trade with the Baltic. A group of cat skulls discarded in a pit near the workshops suggests that cats were kept, killed and skinned for their fur. Most important, there was copious antler waste from the manufacture of Viking combs in workshops—the ubiquitous indicator of a Viking Age town. By the 12th century, with the market place fully developed, a new style of wattle building was being erected at Whithorn—smaller but otherwise strikingly similar to buildings in Hiberno-Norse Dublin (Wallace 1992).

This was not a typical Viking town on the Scandinavian model. Galloway lay at a cross-roads of Irish, Northumbrian, Scandinavian and British influences, all reflected in the material from Whithorn. Neither was its development typical of early medieval Scottish towns. The somewhat surprising picture of relative stability, regional independence and continuing prosperity must be partly accounted for by its long-lived monastic heritage. The Norse were pragmatists; the existence of a flourishing centre was all the encouragement they needed to participate in the cultural cacophany that was 10th- to 12th-century Whithorn.

Norse Whithorn reminds us that, as well as understanding the place of Scandinavian Scotland in the Viking world, we need also to see it within the context of the emerging nation of Scotland — in whose history Scandinavians played such a formative part.

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Scandinavian Place-Names and Settlement-History: Flegg, Norfolk, and East Anglia in the Viking Age

Lesley Abrams

This paper, which derives from a much longer collaborative study (Abrams and Parsons 2004), applies the evidence of archaeology, history, and place-names to a study of one small part of England during the Viking Age.¹ On the 'isle' of Flegg, in the southeastern corner of Norfolk, thirteen of the twenty-five settlement-names recorded in Domesday Book in the hundreds of East Flegg and West Flegg were formed with the Old Norse element *bý*. This unusual cluster of names invites speculation.

There has been much interest in the application of place-names to historical questions about the Scandinavian presence in England, which, thanks to the almost complete absence of written sources, is very obscure. Place-names, on the other hand, occur in significant quantity, and their testimony has been crucial in allowing historians and place-name experts to construct plausible interpretations of the Scandinavian settlement. Scholars have, however, failed to agree on such basic matters as the number and status of the settlers and the chronology of the settlements. These disagreements have led more recently to doubts about all past approaches, and it has been suggested that place-names should instead be applied principally to new questions of identity and interaction (Hadley 2002: 56-62). However, regional analysis may prove to be more rewarding, as may be suggested by this brief study of East Anglia in general and Flegg in particular.

A.H. Smith's well known distribution map of place-names seems to delineate the lands involved in the Scandinavian settlement (Abrams and Parsons 2004: fig. 1). However, as has frequently been observed, the names have no chronological context, being largely assembled from evidence available for 1086. Despite the best efforts of experts, attempts to derive precise chronological information from place-names have been disappointing. For historians, the inability to date the surviving place-names conclusively has been a major stumbling-block in applying them to the history of the Scandinavian settlement, for the names would be understood differently if they were associated with the 870s (Viking conquest), or 917 and 954 (when Scandinavian territories were in turn conquered by the West Saxons), or 1016-42 (when England was ruled by Anglo-Danish kings). We need also to remember that while East Anglia, the Northwest, Northumbria, the Five Boroughs, and the south-east midlands all have



Fig. 1: Place-names in -by in East Anglia

place-names with Scandinavian elements, they also had different histories with respect to Scandinavian activity. Regional variation and local complexity have been largely lost in the absence of documentation, and there has been a natural – but questionable – tendency to apply the same historical interpretation to all regions which have the same categories of place-name.

Our meagre written sources tell us that south of the Humber, Scandinavian political control lasted from the early 870s to c. 917. Established within a few years of one another, the Scandinavian regimes in eastern Mercia and East Anglia were overcome at much the same time by the West Saxon king, Edward the Elder, and his sister Æthelflæd, ‘lady of the Mercians’. The histories of these Scandinavian territories south of the Humber appear to be analogous, but their place-names form quite different patterns, ranging from dense concentrations (in parts of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire) to areas such as Cambridgeshire, with almost no Scandinavian names, or East Anglia, with a more dispersed pattern.

The distribution of place-names in *-bý* in East Anglia (fig. 1) has suggested to some that the Danish settlement there was less intense than elsewhere in the Danelaw (Ekwall 1937-45: 25; Davis 1991). With the exception of Flegg, the scattered distribution of names of this type contrasts with the concentrations found in other parts of Scandinavian-controlled England.² In Suffolk there are only three or four names in *-bý*, which contrasts with, for example, the sixty-three in Leicestershire and 234 in Lincolnshire. Only nine other *bý*-names occur in Norfolk besides Flegg's cluster of thirteen. Flegg's *bý*-names (fig. 2) therefore stand out in contrast with East Anglia's generally dispersed pattern, and this unusual concentration has naturally attracted attention. Although their totals vary (from six to eleven), Karl Inge Sandred, Gillian Fellows-Jensen, and John Insley have concluded from their studies of Flegg's names in *-bý* that a significant proportion were formed with Scandinavian personal names as the first element (Sandred 1986-7; Sandred 1996: 1-83; Insley 1998: 114-15; Fellows-Jensen 1999: 48-52). In this respect Flegg's names belong to a significant group in eastern England formed in this way, apparently in contrast with *bý*-names in Denmark, where personal names are more rarely found as the first element. However, Flegg's names in *-bý* have their own distinctiveness. An unusual number of the personal names they contain are monothematic and were originally bynames or nicknames, unlike the compounded forms which were more common elsewhere in England in the formation of place-names of this type.

In addition to the *bý*-names, there are in each of the two counties about thirty so-called 'Grimston-' or 'Toton-hybrids' with Scandinavian personal names + *tun* (fig. 3). There has been disagreement about their significance as a class and about when this type of name might have been coined – some have placed them in the settlement period, others later, once English had been influenced by Norse (Cameron 1975; Fellows-Jensen 2001: 285-6; Hadley 2002: 56-62).³ There are also potentially ten Scandinavian hundred-names – eight in Norfolk and two in Suffolk – which (with the exception of Flegg) occur in regions without substantial numbers of settlement-names (Sandred 1994). On Flegg alone (fig. 2), a number of other names – *Sco* (ON *skógr*, wood), *Thurne* (possibly ON *þyrnir*, thorn-bush), *Thralham* (ON *þrall*, slave), *Repps* (ON *hreppr*, district, community), *Stefne* (ON *stefna*, meeting), and *Pockthorp* (possibly ON *púki* + *þorp*) – have also been identified as Scandinavian (Sandred 1996: 42, 60, 69, 45; Fellows-Jensen 1999: 53). Flegg itself probably comes from a Danish word for a marsh plant (cf. ModDan *flæg*) (Sandred 1986-7: 6).

Even when other classes of name are mapped, Flegg stands out. Does it contrast with the generally dispersed pattern characteristic of East Anglia because it had a different history? Ekwall characterised Flegg as inferior land that was probably less densely inhabited to begin with and which may have been filled in by a later influx of settlers from Scandinavia (1924: 82). Sandred suggested, on the basis of the distinctiveness of Flegg's uncompounded personal names, that its original settlers might have been peasants, in contrast with settlements elsewhere named after members of the landlord class (1986-7: 24). On the other hand, the difference in names could reflect date not class: in the absence of anything in the place-names themselves that allows them to be dated precisely, the distinctive forms and the range of personal names could be taken to indicate that Flegg's names were earlier than most *bý*-names elsewhere in England.

Fellows-Jensen has judged the settlement of Flegg to have been early, on different grounds. In her study of Flegg she suggested that an unusual number of place-names survived there, in contrast with the rest of Norfolk, partly because there had been dense Scandinavian settle-

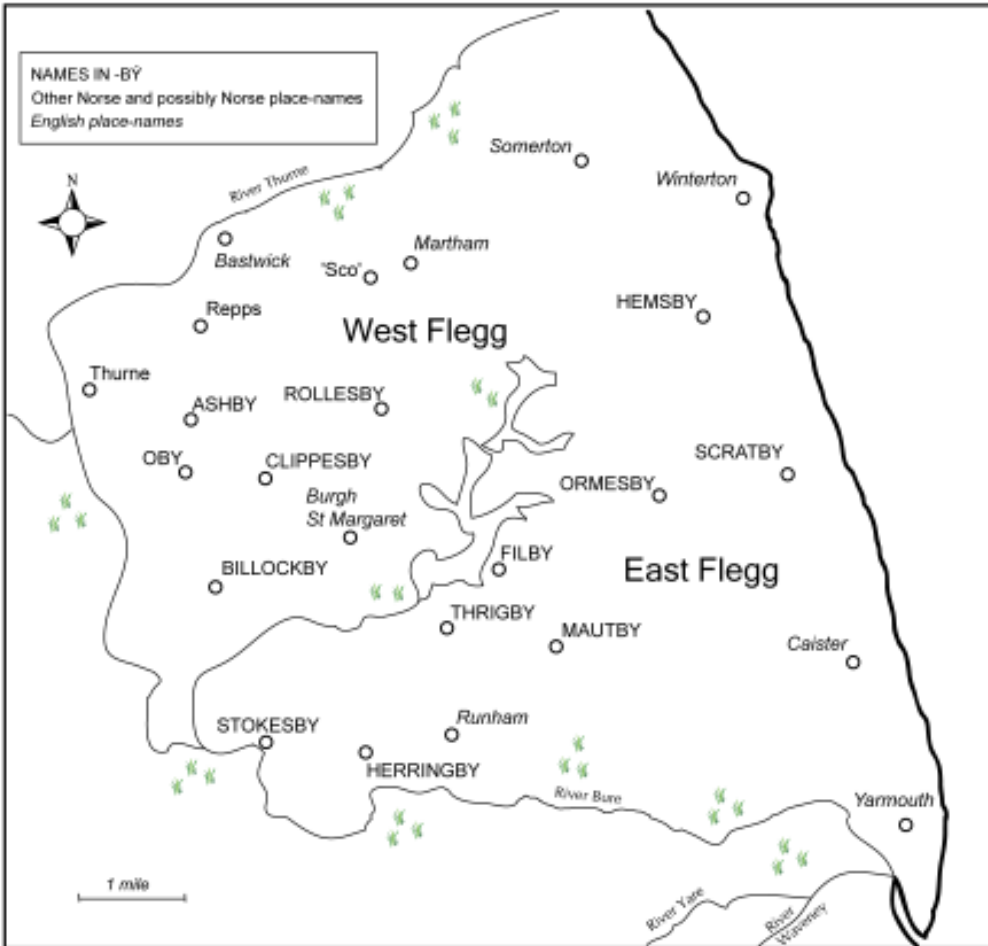


Fig. 2: Flegg, Norfolk: Settlement-Names in Domesday Book

ment and partly because the area had previously been sparsely inhabited by the English. An initial phase of names (with Norse nouns and adjectives as specifics) was followed by a second phase, when names were coined with personal names. She has identified the latter name-type nationally with a process of ‘manorialisation’, when large estates broke up into smaller units associated with particular individuals (2001: 280-2; cf. Sawyer 1998: 111-13). In her view, although Scandinavian activity came to an end in East Anglia in 903 (or 917), a community survived on Flegg because of its isolation. The settlers distributed the lands among themselves and gave them new names (2001: 280-2; 1999: 48-51). Elsewhere in East Anglia Scandinavian place-names were scarce, she proposed, because the occupation had been of ‘comparatively short duration’ and was not followed by further immigration, unlike in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.

Other evidence, however, may question the suggestion that the Scandinavian presence in

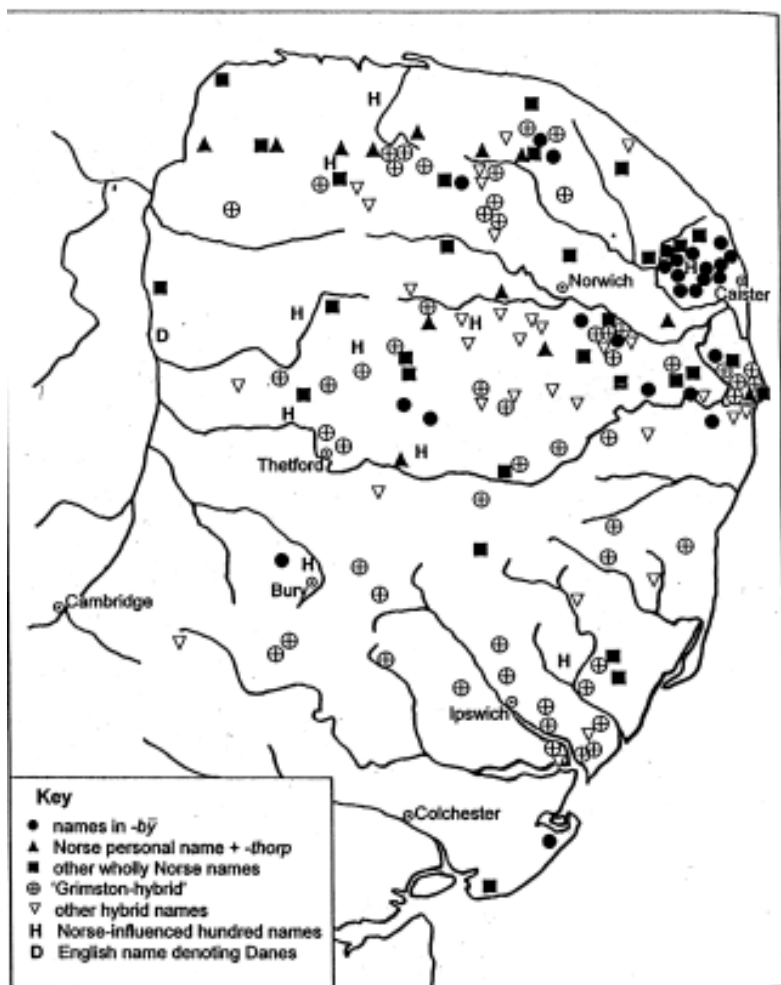


Fig. 3: Scandinavian place-names in East Anglia, aiming to show all names recorded by 1086, plus further parish and hundred names recorded before c. 1300. Reproduced from Abrams and Parsons 2004. (LA-fig3.doc)

East Anglia was largely absent after 917. Although the detailed work remains to be done, it seems that in contrast with the relatively low numbers of major place-names, there is in East Anglia a striking profusion of field-names showing the influence of Norse. It is of course possible that field-names were coined by English speakers, speaking local dialects affected by Norse (Fellows-Jensen 1974; Lund 1981: 157-69). Even if they are late coinings, the vocabulary they incorporate nevertheless attests to the use by everyday country folk of Norse words to describe streams and hills and bogs. This appears to indicate the existence at some time of a substantial number of ordinary people speaking the language.

A significant proportion of the names of landholders in East Anglia in 1066 who are re-

corded in Domesday Book are Scandinavian: 45% in Norfolk and 33% in Suffolk (Parsons 2002, fig. 4). Norse personal names became popular in all parts of England in the eleventh century and were clearly borne by people of English descent at that time (and for some time thereafter). But Norse naming in England is exceptionally varied and dynamic (Fellows-Jensen 1968; Insley 1994). Some names are paralleled in the homelands, but others appear to be Norse-language coinings in England which were developed among Norse-speaking communities before being adopted by the later Anglo-Scandinavian population (Parsons 2002).

Ekwall had interpreted the thin East Anglian place-name pattern to mean that only in scattered places had numbers been sufficiently great to affect local names or to establish new sites (1924: 81-3). He pictured pockets of Scandinavian settlement in the midst of a considerable English population, the immigrants not being numerically strong enough to affect place-name nomenclature very seriously except on Flegg and (less so) in the Suffolk hundred of Lothingland to the south. Yet while lacking the density of settlement-names found in Yorkshire or Lincolnshire, East Anglia, as we have seen (fig. 3), has numerous potentially Scandinavian hundred-names, a respectable number of *by*-names and hybrids, many minor names showing Norse influence, some wholly Norse names, and a large number of names in *-þorp* of Scandinavian origin (Fellows-Jensen 1999: 52-5). It also has a high proportion of Scandinavian personal names in 1086. Perhaps we should reconsider whether this pattern could have been formed without substantial settlement.

Unfortunately, East Anglia's Viking Age is particularly poorly documented, not just with respect to the Viking takeover but in relation to the last stages of East Anglian rule as well. While the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records numerous Viking attacks elsewhere from the 790s, it preserves only two references to East Anglia before its conquest in 869: Vikings 'killed many men' in Lindsey, East Anglia and Kent in 841, and in 866 the army overwintered in the kingdom of the East Angles, who supplied them with horses and made peace with them. In 869 'the raiding army rode across Mercia into East Anglia and took up winter quarters in Thetford. And that winter King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes had the victory and killed the king and conquered all the land' (ASC *s.a.* 841, 866 and 870). Despite the paucity of references, however, it is not unlikely that the coasts of East Anglia saw Viking fleets throughout the ninth century. Under the circumstances, the absence of recorded activity is no indication that there was none. Surviving written sources for this period almost all come from Wessex, and ninth-century East Anglia was both geographically and politically removed from that kingdom. This marginal position (in West Saxon terms) means, for example, that we know nothing of the stages which led to East Anglia's defeat in November 869. The settlement of 880 when 'the army went from Cirencester into East Anglia, and settled there and shared out the land' (ASC *s.a.* 880) is equally obscure. The East Anglian kings between 794 and c. 855, for example, are unrecorded in written sources. Three – Eadwald, Æthelstan and Æthelweard – are known to us only from their coins (Grierson and Blackburn 1986: 293-4). King Edmund (c. 855-69), whose defeat led to the end of independent East Anglian power, is relatively well known only because by the 890s he became the focus of a cult which blossomed in the late tenth century and produced much pseudo-historical writing thereafter (Whitelock 1969). An alliance between East Anglia's Viking conquerors and its defeated royal family may be hinted at by the alleged later presence in Iceland of Edmund's daughter and grand-daughter – the latter, Vilborg Ósvaldsdóttir, married to the settler Þorðr Skeggi (Benediktsson 1968: 48-9 and 312; Pálsson and Edwards 1972: 22 and 119).⁴ Surviving

coins in the names of Æthelred and Oswald (Grierson and Blackburn 1986: 294) suggest that Edmund may have been succeeded by English kings ruling East Anglia under Scandinavian authority, on the model of neighbouring Mercia. If the Oswald mentioned in *Landnámabók* (Benediktsson: 48-9 and 312; Pálsson and Edwards 1972: 22 and 119) as the husband of 'Úlfrún dóttir Játmundar Englakonungs' (Wulfrun, daughter of Edmund, king of the English) was the Oswald who issued the East Anglian coins, he at least may have attempted to claim an association with Edmund's authority by marrying his daughter.

Any such Anglo-Scandinavian regimes in East Anglia would presumably only have lasted until the Viking Guthrum took control some time after his defeat by King Alfred at Edington in 878. The subsequent independence of Danish East Anglia appears to be demonstrated by the treaty between the two kings which regulated relations across their border (Keynes and Lapidge 1983: 171-2). Thereafter we are largely in the dark as to the type of rule in East Anglia. Even the names of Guthrum's successors after his death in 890 are uncertain. One Scandinavian king (whose name and kingdom are unidentified) was seriously wounded after an engagement between King Alfred's army and a combined force of Northumbrian and East Anglian Vikings near the River Colne (ASC s.a. 893). The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that a King Eohric was killed in 903 at the battle of the Holme, and another, unnamed, king leading the 'great army assembled from East Anglia and Mercia' died in 917 at Tempsford.⁵ When the great raiding army of the 890s divided, 'one force went into the North' and the other to East Anglia, perhaps to settle there (ASC s.a. 896). East Anglia is specified as a place of safety for Vikings in the 890s (ASC s.a. 893, 895). Cyril Hart has remarked on the many chronicle-references to military activity throughout England between 885 and 917 that involved Viking armies based in East Anglia. This led him to argue that the Danes must have occupied it in substantial numbers, and that 'for nearly forty years ... they enjoyed complete and effective control of their own territory' (1992: 28). East Anglia, like the other Danelaw regions 'north of Watling Street', may have submitted early to Sven Forkbeard in 1013, before his conquest of southern England, but the Chronicle makes no specific reference to it. According to Hermann's *De miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, taxes 'in regione qui dicitur Flec' were collected for Sven in 1014 by a local man with an apparently Norse nickname, Thurketel Heyng, who returned the money when the king died (Arnold 1890-6: I, 39).⁶

For some historians, there have always been reasons to believe in East Anglia's Scandinavian character and hence to postulate a significant immigrant presence (Hart 1992: 25-113). Tenuarial characteristics that distinguished East Anglia and much of the rest of the Danelaw from non-Scandinavian regions have loomed large in this argument. In particular, Domesday Book and later medieval documents record distinctively large numbers of free peasants or sokemen there who have been identified as descendants of Scandinavian settlers (Stenton 1970: 143-7). There have been many objections to these conclusions, however (Sawyer 1957-8: 1-3; Davis 1991; Hadley 2000: 122-60). Sokes and sokemen are rare in some parts of the Danelaw where Scandinavian place-names proliferate, such as Yorkshire. In other places they have been found to predate the Viking Age. The current consensus is that their presence or absence is unlikely to be an 'ethnic' characteristic, but was probably related to a number of other factors deriving from more local and regional circumstances. More work on the distribution of sokemen in relation to East Anglia's place-name pattern could nonetheless help us to understand its distinctive tenurial structure.

There are other East Anglian peculiarities which have been ascribed to the Scandinavian

presence. Hart has tentatively suggested that the carucates in Little Domesday, for example, were survivals of a Scandinavian method of assessment (based only on arable capacity), but he acknowledged that the evidence was very slim (1992: 95-7, 310-19). We lack surviving distinctive legal provisions for East Anglia after its conquest by West Saxon kings, such as those established for the Five Boroughs in the Wantage Code of King Æthelred (Robertson 1925: 64-71), and none of the existing tenth- and eleventh-century laws spells out whether the region fell under English or Danish law. One clause in a law of King Cnut, a distinction between heriot payments for an ordinary thegn in Wessex, Mercia, and East Anglia (*on Eastengle*), seems to place the last in an English, rather than a Danish, legal context (II Cnut 71.2; Robertson 1925: 210-1),⁷ but too much may have been built on this one peculiarity. Most post-Conquest legal writings, such as the so-called *Leis Willelme* or Laws of William I, simply distinguish between customs in Wessex, Mercia, and the Danelaw, leaving East Anglia's position unspecified (Robertson 1925: 252-75). Twelfth-century lists of England's legal provinces, however, place Norfolk and Suffolk in the Danelaw (Abrams 2001: 130-1), and the *Leges Edwardi confessoris*, also compiled in the twelfth century, refer to a law on compensation in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire as *lex Danorum* (ch. 33; Liebermann 1903-16: I, 660; O'Brien 1999: 190-1). The view that East Anglia did not use Danish law rests heavily on the silence of the pre-Conquest evidence, a silence which may be misleading.

Potentially contrary indications of a robust Scandinavian presence in East Anglia have also been largely negative, however – such as the collapse of episcopal life, the temporary disappearance of monastic houses, and the invisibility of ecclesiastical scholarship between the mid-ninth and mid-tenth century. Material evidence has also proved elusive. The base of a Mammen-style cross-shaft of non-local stone was identified in 1896 on the site of a church in Norwich dedicated to St Vedast (Hudson 1895-7), but East Anglia lacks the local tradition of stone sculpture which elsewhere bears such distinctive marks of Scandinavian influence. Archaeologists in East Anglia and more widely in Scandinavian England have been unable to identify rural sites associated with the settlements, and burials have been equally problematic. Although there are a small number of distinctively Scandinavian burial-finds across the country (including the Norfolk examples from Middle Harling, Santon Downham, and Thetford), it appears that the settlers throughout the Danelaw felt little or no need to distinguish themselves from their native neighbours in an archaeologically recognisable fashion (Halsall 2000; Graham-Campbell 2001).⁸ More clearly Scandinavian is the substantial and important St Edmund coinage issued in East Anglia from c. 895 to 917 (Grierson and Blackburn 1986: 319-20). Some have considered that its Christian character reflects a lack of systematic Scandinavian settlement in East Anglia (Davis 1991: 28), but this needs to be seen in the light of similarly 'Christian' coins issued by the vigorously Scandinavian masters of York. South of the Humber, according to Mark Blackburn (2001), new coinages demonstrate that the economy was reshaped and revitalised by Scandinavian regimes.

Since the early 1990s, the material database has been transformed by increasing co-operation between archaeologists and metal-detectorists. In particular, rethinking of the Scandinavian presence in East Anglia has been prompted by a vast increase in the number of metalwork finds of Scandinavian type, both imports and local imitations. About two hundred finds in Norfolk alone were recorded in the first years of the new policy, which suggested to archaeologists such as Sue Margeson that East Anglia had been more densely populated with immigrants than had been supposed (1996: 48). Like the place-names, the metalwork is spread

across the county. Margeson also pointed out that the finds were generally not elite objects but ordinary everyday metalwork, lost (she argued) by peasant farmers (1996: 50-2). Metalwork finds continue to be regularly reported in Norfolk and Suffolk and in other eastern counties, such as Lincolnshire – though, unlike East Anglia, Lincolnshire's concentrations of finds correlate with concentrations of *bý*-names (Leahy and Patterson 2001). Flegg has not yielded a conspicuous quantity. The metalwork largely consists of stray finds, without archaeological context, but Tim Pestell has drawn attention to a concentration of metal finds of mixed English and Scandinavian character recently discovered near Attleborough, Norfolk – including a Thor's hammer, a Jellinge-style brooch, and a 'Viking' weight – and suggested that it may potentially represent a settlement-site.⁹ Continuing identification and study of such sites may begin to identify on the ground the effects of expansion of settlement in the tenth century. Interpretation of the metalwork is at an early stage. Clearer distinctions need to be made between imported objects and native imitations. Whether it reflects immigration or more indirect involvement, however, both categories of metalwork reveal a striking degree of Scandinavian influence. While the metal objects could have belonged to native East Anglians as well as Scandinavians and their descendants, they bear witness to the popularity of Scandinavian taste as well as continuing contact with the homelands (cf. Thomas 2000).

If there were as many Scandinavians in Norfolk as in Lincolnshire, why would the place-name pattern look so different? It is worth remembering that an area without Scandinavian place-names could nonetheless have been settled by Scandinavians who retained the original names for a variety of reasons. Underlying pre-existing regional variations, now lost from the record, may have been vital in determining the way names were given. Different kinds of landholding or different kinds of land could have influenced naming practices. There may be some significance in the fact that East Anglia when first settled in 880 was ruled by King Guthrum, who though not subordinate to Alfred in Wessex at least began his kingship as his ally, apparently unlike the Viking jarls and kings who took power in Northumbria and Mercia. The formation and survival of place-names would also have been contingent on subsequent developments (Hart 1992: 16). During the midland campaigns of 914-17 King Edward the Elder allowed some Scandinavians to keep their land (Blake 1962: xi and 98-9). This could have affected the later organisation of some estates – and their names – and it seems plausible to suggest that more Scandinavian names might have survived if Scandinavians remained in charge and in possession of estates. Blackburn has pointed out that the coin-evidence casts some doubt on the immediate success in East Anglia claimed in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for Edward the Elder in 917, suggesting that Edward may have failed to establish his authority there as securely as in the east midlands (2001: 138). How East Anglia as a whole reacted to West Saxon conquest is very obscure, but Hart at least is willing to speculate that once securely established the new English kings kept a tight grip on the region (1992: 81). If so, Edward's concessions may not have lasted for long. Perhaps English rule was exercised in such a way in the tenth and eleventh centuries that it minimised East Anglia's Scandinavian look.

When East Anglia was first exposed to Vikings it may have been vulnerable on several fronts. The deaths of two Mercian kings, Beornwulf and Ludeca, on campaign in East Anglia (ASC *s.a.* 825 and 827) must indicate troubled relations with the neighbours. Although Mercia was less of a force after the 820s, the rise of Wessex may have in its turn threatened East Anglian interests and independence. William of Malmesbury's claim in his *Gesta pontificum*

that East Anglia's sees were restructured in the mid-ninth century due to poverty resulting from the Mercian invasions (Hamilton 1870: 148), if true, could indicate that the wars had had a significant impact on East Anglian institutions. East Anglia would have suffered even more if, while fending off aggressors to the south and west, it was also subject to Viking raids on the east coast. These would have been not just destructive in their own right but also a threat to overseas trade. Frankish annals tell us how Continental rulers dealt with similar problems, when internal conflicts and external raids threatened them on several fronts. The establishment of a Viking army led by Rollo at the mouth of the Seine in 911 is a well known example. Frisia provides others.

The Frisian island of Walcheren, at the mouth of the River Scheldt, was ceded in 841 by the Frankish king Lothar to the Viking Harald. The Annals of St Bertin describe this as the grant of a benefice (ASB *s.a.* 841). Ten years later, Lothar made a similar arrangement with Roric, who had been raiding the Frisian coast and up the rivers. 'Since he could not crush Roric, Lothar received him into his allegiance and granted him Dorestad and other counties', say the annals (ASB *s.a.* 850; AF *s.a.* 850).¹⁰ Roric's terms with Lothar included responsibility for the collection of taxes and defence of the area from other Vikings. These agreements clearly established Scandinavians in positions of power, a situation which in West Frisia lasted until the mid-880s. Recent large hoard-finds dating from 850 and the early 880s found at Westerklijf on the former island of Wieringen confirm the reality of the Scandinavian presence on the islands of Frisia (Besteman 2004).

There is no securely documented English parallel to Walcheren, although late Irish sources claim that Æthelflæd gave land near Chester to Ingimund, a Viking expelled from Ireland around 900 (Radner 1978: 168-9; Wainwright 1975: 131-61). It may be going too far to speculate that a grant of territory on the Frankish model, potentially including the delegation of royal responsibility and rights of lordship, took place in England. It is recorded, however, that Viking armies took over both secular and ecclesiastical centres and made them their bases. Asser tells us that in 878, for example, Vikings took over the royal centre at Chippenham (Keynes and Lapidge 1983: 83). An earlier overwintering, in 873-4 at the Mercian ecclesiastical site at Repton, is documented in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Excavations there by the Biddles have revealed that a large ditch was dug to encircle the area between the church and the river, the church being converted into an element of the defences (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001). Ninth-century Vikings were clearly used to adapting existing buildings and sites to their own purposes – with or without the co-operation of the native authorities.

Could this have happened at Flegg and account for the extraordinary concentration of place-names there? James Campbell has also made this suggestion (2001: 18-21). An island refuge would have been particularly useful to waterborne armies.¹¹ Flegg's site is strategic, located at the mouth of the river-systems which allowed access to the heart of Norfolk and northern Suffolk. It would have been on the route of raiding armies moving from southern England to the North, and not far from Viking bases across the Channel. In the ninth century it was surrounded by a combination of water and marsh. A Roman fort, Caister, was located on the island, and it has been suggested that Caister's role in the Roman period was to repel raiders and to control and safeguard trade and merchant shipping from inland Norfolk and across the North Sea (Gurney 1996: 31). The extent to which this fort had retained its stonework in the Viking period is unknown, but at least some of the walls were still standing not just during later Anglo-Saxon occupation but even in the early seventeenth century (Darling

and Gurney 1993: 42 and 6). The post-Roman archaeology has revealed reuse of the fort's interior by a high-status community, including a cemetery (probably in use from the eighth century to the eleventh) on the southern edge of the fort, some 300 m from the later parish church. Vikings appearing off the coast may have been able to occupy Caister, either reconstituting the Roman defences temporarily, as a winter camp, or – and this is rank speculation – taking over an ecclesiastical establishment which had grown up within the Roman walls. The discovery of a post-Roman stylus in Area 4 may hint at occupation by a monastic community (Darling and Gurney 1993: 101), though styli can of course be found on secular sites as well (Pestell 2003: 135-6). Tom Williamson has pointed out that the site of the seventh-century monastery of *Cnobheresburg* granted to the missionary Fursa in 630, according to Bede, which is often associated with Burgh Castle (across the marshes to the south of Caister) could instead have been at Caister itself (1993: 138). But Caister's existence in the ninth century as an ecclesiastical site is very speculative, as is any hypothetical takeover by Vikings.

While written sources provide no support for the presence of Vikings at Caister, there is some slight but suggestive archaeological evidence. Although excavations in the 1950s and 1960s identified both occupation and burials, results were not straightforward. The authors of the excavation report, prepared in 1993 from Charles Green's notes of forty years before, declared that 'the nature of the post-Roman usage of the intra-mural area is impossible to determine from the available evidence' (Darling and Gurney 1993: 37). However, 'the extent of post-Roman disturbance suggested by post-excavation analysis of the finds is far greater than that indicated in the excavation records. It is clear that in Area 1 [inside the fort], there were many areas of post-Roman disturbance which were not recognized during excavation' (Darling and Gurney 1993: 44). The discovery of seven sceattas and substantial quantities of Ipswich-ware suggests regular activity there in the eighth century; lesser quantities of Thetford-ware 'perhaps [indicate] a reduction or shift in occupation in the late 9th to 10th century' (Darling and Gurney 1993: 45). This material evidence for continuing activity at Caister does not of course demonstrate military reuse or Scandinavian takeover – but it does not rule it out either.

Even more suggestive is a male burial within the extra-mural cemetery, found with a coin under the head. While burial with coins is not unusual in earlier Anglo-Saxon contexts, in the ninth century it is rare and, it *could* be argued, generally found in contexts where a Scandinavian interpretation would be appropriate (Graham-Campbell 2001: 115-16). Repton is the classic example, where one burial contained a parcel of five silver pennies of 873 or later, and a further four and a half pennies dated c. 873-4 were recovered from the mass burial in the reused mausoleum (Biddle *et al.* 1986a: 111-23; Biddle *et al.* 1986b: 24-5). The fact that the coin from Caister is an issue of Ecgherht, dating from between 825 and 839 (but circulating until the 850s), might seem at first to dismiss the possibility of a Viking connection, for it precedes the conquest and settlement of East Anglia (and most other ninth-century coin-finds in burials) by several decades. More damaging to the Scandinavian association might be the lack of an accompanying assemblage in the grave, such as the sword and horse at Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, buried c. 893 (Graham-Campbell 2001: 114). But other Viking-Age burials, at Monkwearmouth for example, contained only single coins.

Settlement on Flegg may not have begun until the land was shared out in 880. If the coin in the burial at Caister indicates the presence of Scandinavians there at some time between the 830s and 850s, it could have been associated with an earlier visit to or use by Vikings of this East Anglian strongpoint. On the other hand, fleets need feeding, and the estates of the island

could have been exploited to that effect before the military successes which put Viking leaders in control of the kingdom. This hypothetical takeover could have occurred without the sanction of the authorities (as, presumably, at Repton) or, on the model of Walcheren, it could have received the blessing of the East Anglian kings, hard-pressed by English enemies and rivals on their southern or western front and concerned about trading profits from eastern markets.

Some have ruled out early settlement on Flegg because of its 'remote' location (Ekwall 1924: 82; Williamson 1983: 45-6, 108). But Campbell has noted that Flegg's position near the mouth of five rivers would not qualify as remote in Viking times (2001: 20-1). A higher water-table was once thought to have made much of it uninhabitable until the tenth or eleventh century (Hart 1992: 113). However, there are Roman and early Anglo-Saxon metalwork-finds and other occupation-evidence from several of these settlements which confirm pre-Scandinavian occupation. At Martham, for example, as noted by Fellows-Jensen (1999: 48), there was an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery. At Ormesby, early Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured buildings have been discovered; at Repps, Roman fields and houses were overlain by early Anglo-Saxon features (Beaumont James 2000: 294). H.P.R. Finberg and others described Flegg as marshy and unattractive to settlers (1974: 160), but in fact it has excellent soils (almost the best in the county) and an array of other highly profitable resources, such as reeds, peat, salt, herring, wildfowl, and sheep for wool and cheese (Hart 1992: 113; Campbell 2002: 11-13). In Domesday Book, all the Flegg estates were economically thriving and heavily populated in 1066 – the settlements with *bý*-names even more so than those with English names. Hart has pointed out that 'as a group the *bys* were in no way smaller or more primitively furnished with amenities than the supposedly older villas. ... It suggests that the Danes who gave their names to the *bys* had taken over ownership of established communities and developed their prosperity' (1992: 113). Campbell has recently calculated that Ashby, Oby, Billockby, and Clippesby were more populated in the late eleventh century than in the early nineteenth (2002: 11). This supports Hart's conclusion, that Domesday Book's snapshot of Flegg 'is not the picture one might expect from a group of communities newly settled on inferior sites' (1992: 113).

In the absence of clear narrative evidence, we can only speculate what forces lay behind the coining of Flegg's *bý*-names. Although the cluster of thirteen resembles patterns found elsewhere in eastern England, it contrasts conspicuously with the rest of East Anglia, even when other types of name are included on the map. Furthermore, in addition to their unusual personal-name elements, Flegg's names in *-bý* contrast with the general trend in the rest of England in another significant respect. As has often been observed, *bý*-names are commonly on inferior land (Fellows-Jensen 1978: 332-63; Abrams and Parsons 2004: 421-2). Flegg, however, seems in fact to have been replete with resources, strategically situated, and populous and intensely exploited for some time before 1086. While it may seem illogical to interpret one set of *bý*-names differently from others elsewhere in England, David Parsons and I have argued that all *bý*-names need not derive from the same circumstances (Abrams and Parsons 2004). Even if the hypothesis of a Scandinavian presence on Flegg as early as the mid-ninth century proves to be unsustainable, Flegg's distinctiveness should at least alert us to the need for local – and interdisciplinary – study. Systematic examination of local patterns should allow us to recognise a greater complexity behind the names created in the unsettled circumstances of Scandinavian conquest and settlement and thereby broaden our understanding of its effect on eastern England.

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Notes

- ¹ I am very grateful to David Parsons, of the Institute for Name-Studies, Nottingham, for his generous and unflagging collaboration on this project. All discussion of place-names is based on his expertise and his maps, three of which are reproduced here. Full references to and discussion of the more general issues raised in this paper can be found in our joint article (Abrams and Parsons 2004). I should also like to thank Jan Besteman for information on West Frisia and for sending me a copy of a paper in advance of publication; Bryan Ayers for sending me his latest review of the evidence for urban activity at Norwich in this period; Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, Mark Blackburn, Anne Pedersen, Helen Geake, Andrew Rogerson, and all others who have answered questions on coin-finds in Scandinavian burials; Tom Williamson and Dan Smith for discussions of Flegg; and Tim Pestell and James Campbell for sending me material before its publication.
- ² Statistics and generalisations are all tentative, pending the full publication of the place-

name volumes of Norfolk and Suffolk. Additional information has been supplied by David Parsons. Numbers may change, but the patterns seem secure.

- ³ Further study of this problematic class of names could usefully shed light on questions of social organisation as well as chronology (Abrams and Parsons 2004: 394 and 423).
- ⁴ Jakob Benediktsson was suspicious of the identification with King Edmund. I am grateful to Alex Woolf for this reference and to Judith Jesch for help with *Landnámabók*. The presence in Iceland of members of the dispossessed East Anglian royal family could help to account for later specific knowledge of Edmund's death and martyrdom in historical circles there, as well as the popularity of his cult.
- ⁵ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle does not identify Eohric as king of East Anglia, but William of Malmesbury named him as Guthrum's successor. William also said that from Eohric's death until Edward the Elder's conquest in 914x919, East Anglia was ruled by 'Danish jarls' (*Gesta regum* i.97; Mynors *et al.* 1998-9: I, 144-5).
- ⁶ Hermann wrote in the late eleventh century. Thurketel's will (which survives in a Bury manuscript of c. 1300, where his nickname is recorded), includes bequests of lands in Flegg to family members and the religious houses of Bury St Edmunds and St Benedict at Holme (Whitelock 1930: 70-1 and 180-1).
- ⁷ The code specifies heriots for king's thegns *mid Denum* but not for ordinary thegns.
- ⁸ Metal-detecting and chance discoveries have recently added more burials to the corpus (Leahy 2004: 466-7 – a Yorkshire example).
- ⁹ Pestell (forthcoming), pp. 70-1. I am grateful to Tim Pestell for information on this site.
- ¹⁰ Godfrid, another Viking, made an alliance with Charles the Bald and received 'land to live on' (AF s.a. 850).
- ¹¹ As in 894, when, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us, the Viking army established itself on 'an island out in the sea called Mersea' (in Essex).

Viking-age hoards in Scotland and Ireland: regional diversities

John Sheehan

Introduction

In the concluding section of his publication on Scotland's Viking-age hoards Graham-Campbell wrote: 'It is the intention – and hope – of this first detailed publication of the full extent of the known evidence for the Viking-age silver and gold finds from Scotland that new interpretations and further speculations will follow, now that there is ready access to the totality of the material' (1995: 62). In the present paper, which could not have been written without the publication of Graham-Campbell's excellent study, the structure and composition of the coinless and mixed hoards from Scotland will be examined and the results compared with similar data from Ireland.¹

At the outset it is necessary to summarize the main points of difference between the hoards containing non-numismatic silver from Ireland and Scotland. Firstly, there are far more such hoards on record from Ireland than there are from Scotland; there are records of over 70 such finds from Ireland, deposited before c. 1100 AD, while there are only 23 known from Scotland;² this difference is often explained in terms of the contrasting economies of these two regions, with the predominantly urban and commercial settlements of the Scandinavians in Ireland resulting in greater wealth. Secondly, practically all hoards of this type from Ireland date to the 9th and 10th centuries, with the majority belonging to the period between 850 and 950 AD, while, on the other hand, the majority of these finds from Scotland were deposited between 950 and 1050 AD. Thirdly, the majority of hoards from Ireland that have recorded contexts were found in settlement sites, usually of the native Irish types, while the same material from Scotland tends to have been found in non-settlement contexts, such as mounds or bogs. Fourthly, the object-type that is characteristic of the hoards from Ireland is the Hiberno-Scandinavian broad-band armring (Graham-Campbell 1976: 51-3; Sheehan 1998: 178-80), while its equivalent in the hoards from Scotland is the so-called 'ring-money', a Scoto-Norse product (Graham-Campbell 1995: 57-9); thus, most hoards from both regions are quite different in terms of their trademark contents. Finally, there are also important points of difference in terms of the hoard structure from both regions; for instance, only 24% of the relevant hoards from Ireland contain coins in addition to their non-numismatic contents, while the equivalent figure for the finds from Scotland is 65%.

Despite these differences there are also important links between these two bodies of mate-

rial. Clearly there is a relationship between the pre-950 AD hoards of both regions, as Graham-Campbell has demonstrated by drawing attention to the Hiberno-Scandinavian and Irish Sea background of some of the early hoards from Scotland (1995:26-30). Equally, there is a post-950 AD link, given that several finds of 'ring-money' are known from Ireland (Sheehan 1982).

Building on these points of similarity, it is intended here to compare and contrast the two bodies of evidence on the basis of an empirically defined classificatory system that focuses on the form and internal structure of the hoards. The results of this exercise may demonstrate whether the dynamics that determined the general patterns of hoard composition in the two regions were related, despite chronological and other differences existing between the two groups of hoards.

The classificatory system

The empirical classificatory system referred to above has recently been developed and proposed by the author for Viking-age hoards from Ireland containing non-numismatic material (Sheehan 2001). The basis for the new classification is the composition of the hoards as reflected through the presence, absence or association of the three non-numismatic phenomena that may form part of Viking-age hoards, namely ornaments, ingots and hack-silver. (The presence or absence of coins is not deemed to be of particular significance, as coins could be regarded variously as bullion, ornaments or money during the Viking Age). A fivefold division of the hoards is advanced and the shared characteristics of each of these classes, whether they contain coins or not, are stressed. The non-numismatic components of Class 1 hoards consist of complete ornaments only; those of Class 2 hoards consist of complete ingots only; those of Class 3 hoards consist of a combination of complete ornaments and ingots only; those of Class 4 hoards consist of complete ornaments and/or ingots in association with hack-silver, while those of Class 5 hoards consist of hack-silver only. The principal classes evident amongst the material from Ireland are Classes 1, 2 and 4, which together account for almost 84% of the total number.

The system is capable of accommodating further levels of refinement for the purpose of more detailed analyses. Thus, for example, a hoard which contains hack-silver (i.e. a Class 4 or 5 hoard) may be sub-classified into one of 12 permutations and combinations on the basis of whether the hack-silver is derived from ornaments, from ingots or from both of these, combined with the form of its other non-numismatic contents, if any. This number of potential permutations and combinations is doubled, of course, when coins are also present in the find.

Interestingly, the five principal hoard categories that emerge from the Irish evidence have particular and reasonably discrete distributional patterns. This may be taken as an indicator that these groupings are not simply creations of the classificatory process and that they actually reflect a Viking-age reality. Furthermore, when the broad contextual information pertaining to these hoards – such as chronology, distribution and find location – is added to their proposed classifications it becomes possible to identify and appreciate their social and economic significance more readily. Thus the proposed system facilitates the examination of the various roles that silver hoards and their components played in both Hiberno-Scandinavian and Irish society.³

The classificatory system: Ireland and Scotland

The non-numismatic components of Class 1 hoards consist of complete ornaments only. In numerical terms these hoards form the main bulk of the finds from Ireland, where they account for about 41% of the total number, while they form 30% of the hoards from Scotland. In the majority of cases in both regions the ornaments in such hoards consist of arm-rings of various types. In Ireland they usually vary in number from only two to four examples per hoard, while in Scotland between one and nine rings may occur.

Interestingly, only one of the twenty-nine Class 1 hoards from Ireland contains coins in addition to the ornaments, a fact that emphasizes the structural exclusivity of Class 1 hoards there, while no less than three of the seven finds from Scotland contain coins. Two of the remaining four are composed exclusively of Hiberno-Viking material, and this may be taken as reinforcing the general link between the Class 1 hoard, as a type, with the Hiberno-Scandinavian/Irish Sea area.

In Ireland, the locations of these finds are reasonably well scattered throughout the country, being mainly found in areas that were never under sustained Scandinavian control; this implies, clearly, that the majority of them ended up in native Irish ownership. Indeed, many examples are found on ringforts, the dominant settlement site of the Early Medieval period. Interestingly, few hoards of this type occur in the central midlands/north Leinster region, where a very large proportion of the coin hoards is found.

Kenny has interpreted these contrasting distribution patterns in economic terms (1987: 518). However, the present author has proposed elsewhere that it is preferable to interpret the Class 1 hoards in social rather than economic terms (Sheehan 2001: 60). The ornaments they contain probably functioned primarily as status objects within the native Irish context – though they could also have served an economic role in Scandinavian or Hiberno-Scandinavian milieu – and they can be viewed as indicators of the various alliances that were formed between the Scandinavians and the Irish from c. 850 onwards.

Due to their small numbers, little can usefully be noted about the distributional patterns of the Class 1 hoards from Scotland. It is interesting, however, that there are as many examples from central and southern Scotland as there are from the Northern and Western Isles. This pattern goes against the overall distributional trends of the hoards from Scotland (for which see Graham-Campbell 1995, Fig. 2) and again suggests that Class 1 hoards are oddities and atypical within the Scottish context. The implication is that, setting aside the different chronological foci of the hoards from Scotland and Ireland, the dynamic which pushed the Class 1 hoard to the forefront in Ireland was not as forceful in Scotland, perhaps because of the different political situations that pertained there.

Hoard of Classes 2 and 3 contain ingots and are therefore potentially economic in function. In Ireland, 20% of all hoards are of these types and a significant number of these are found on ecclesiastical sites. This is a characteristic they share with the Irish coin hoards and, interestingly, the Class 2 and 3 finds also tend to contain coins. The clear distinctions between the Class 1 ornament hoards and the Class 2 and 3 ingot finds is reinforced when the distributional patterns of their find-locations are examined: perhaps not surprisingly, there is no clear convergence between the Class 1 and the Class 2 and 3 hoards, but there is a significant overlap between the distribution of the ingot finds and that of the coin hoards. This suggests that there was some degree of correlation between the functions and uses of coins and of ingots, at least in these areas. The strong links with ecclesiastical sites should be understood in

terms of these sites developing market functions at this time, for which there is historical evidence (Doherty 1980: 81-4). In summary, these types of hoards may be interpreted as evidence for a type of economic activity that was largely localized to a specific area with contacts with Dublin, mediated through the ecclesiastical sites and propelled by the dynamics of trade and commerce.

The almost complete absence of Class 2 and 3 hoards from Scotland is interesting. There, the only example is a Class 2 find, deposited c.970-80, from Tiree, on the Hebrides. This rarity may, however, be due to the fact that in proportional terms ingots and ingot fragments are of much less common occurrence in hoards from Scotland than from Ireland, occurring in only seven finds. Interestingly, only four of these contain culturally diagnostic components and three of them – those from Gordon (Berwickshire), Storr Rock (Isle of Skye), and Skaill (Orkney) – seem to have either Hiberno-Scandinavian or Irish Sea backgrounds. The exception is the Burray (Orkney) find, which is later in date than the others and largely consists of ‘ring-money’. So, in terms of the evidence of their hoard associations, ingots do not seem to have been a significant component of Scandinavian Scotland’s silver economy, and it is therefore not surprising that only one Class 2/3 hoard is on record from this region. It is of interest to note, furthermore, that nearly all of the ingot hoards with coin-dated depositions from Ireland date to the second half of the tenth century, and it is possible that the general absence of this type of hoard from Scotland might be explained by the development there during this period of ‘ring-money’.

Class 4 and 5 hoards are characterized by the occurrence in them of hack-silver and, as such, they may be regarded as economically active and as evidence for the use of silver as a means of payment. In Scotland they form the most commonly occurring types of hoard and are found in the expected areas, like the Orkneys and the Western Isles. Typically, they predominantly feature ‘ring-money’ and also tend to contain coins. Examples from Ireland generally do not contain coins and feature hack-silver derived from Hiberno-Scandinavian objects. In the case of both the hoards from Scotland and Ireland, the hack-silver is not highly fragmented. In fact, most so-called hack-silver hoards from the west would not be regarded as hack-silver finds at all in the sense in which this term is generally understood in Scandinavia (for which see Hårdh 1996: 33).

In Ireland, Class 4 and 5 hoards together account for 39% of the total number, while in Scotland the figure is a far more impressive 66%. This is an interesting and a somewhat perplexing contrast. If one regards the presence of high proportions of hack-silver in a region as being indicative of the functioning of a bullion-based economy, then one would actually expect to find the opposite patterns in Ireland and Scotland. Given the differences between the economic strategies that were employed by the Scandinavians in these two regions and, more importantly, the presence of the Hiberno-Norse towns in Ireland, one might have expected to find more hack-silver in Ireland than in Scotland. But, in proportional terms, the opposite is actually the case. Indeed, there are further interesting differences in the Class 4 and 5 hoards of these two regions, not least of which is the fact that coins occur in less than 30% of the Irish hack-silver hoards while they are found in over 70% of the relevant Scottish finds. Does this mean that the silver economy in Scotland was a more sophisticated one than that in Ireland?

This is probably not the case. When the Class 4 and 5 hoards are subjected to more detailed examination, such as breaking them down on a percentage basis into their various

sub-classes, what becomes apparent is how restricted a range and variety of material if found in the hoards from Scotland compared to those from Ireland. There is a greater spread of the Irish finds across a greater number of the range of potential permutations and combinations of these types of hoards. In fact, the range of the material from the Scottish hoards would be even more restricted if those hoards with Hiberno-Scandinavian or Irish Sea connections were excluded from this exercise. This appears to suggest that the hack-silver hoards from Ireland, despite their lack of coins, are more in keeping with what one finds in hoards from Scandinavia – especially southern Scandinavia – than the Scottish finds.

It is the author's opinion that the key to understanding Class 4 and 5 hoards from both Scotland and Ireland lies in setting them against the evidence from Scandinavia. There, hack-silver hoards tend to contain highly fragmented material and nearly always contain ingots, or ingot fragments, as well as a variety of coins. Set against this model, the character of the finds from Ireland is closer to that of mainstream Scandinavian hack-silver hoards. Presumably this is because of the economic importance of Ireland and the Irish Sea area within the Viking World. Scotland, of lesser economic significance, produced simpler hoards and stayed traveling down the 'ring-money' cul-de-sac even after other areas, such as Dublin, had begun minting.

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Notes

- ¹ These terms, both of which refer to types of hoards that contain non-numismatic silver, are used here in accordance with the definitions for them proposed by Graham-Campbell (1976:46-51).
- ² In all, Graham-Campbell lists 34 hoards from Scotland (1995). Of these 7 are silver coin hoards (No's 5, 7, 13, 17, 22, 23 and 34), 3 are coinless gold hoards (No's 15, 25, 27) and one is a gold mixed hoard (No. 8). The remaining 23 silver hoards form the focus of this paper and comprise 15 mixed (No's 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 18, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32 and 33) and 8 coinless examples (No's 2, 6, 14, 19, 20, 21, 26, 31).
- ³ The classificatory scheme, as originally published in Sheehan 2001, has now been further developed and refined. See Sheehan *forthcoming a* and Sheehan *forthcoming b*.

College Green – A Neglected ‘Viking’ Cemetery at Dublin

Stephen H. Harrison

Introduction

Discussions of furnished insular Scandinavian burials (‘Viking’ graves) in Ireland have traditionally been dominated by the finds from Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin (eg. Coffey & Armstrong 1910, Bøe 1940). This dominance is largely due to the sheer volume of finds which have been recovered from what have recently been identified as two separate, adjacent cemeteries (O’Brien 1998a & b). This small area has produced the largest concentration of Scandinavian grave-goods in western Europe (excluding Scandinavia itself), but recent research by Ó Floinn (1998, 135-7) has also demonstrated that it was part of a complex pattern of furnished burials in the lower Liffey valley (fig.1). Work undertaken as part of the Irish Viking Graves Project (hereafter the IVGP) has examined a series of previously neglected documentary sources describing these smaller sites and has also successfully (re)identified almost all of the grave-goods recovered from them. This paper seeks to present and re-evaluate the evidence for one of these cemeteries.

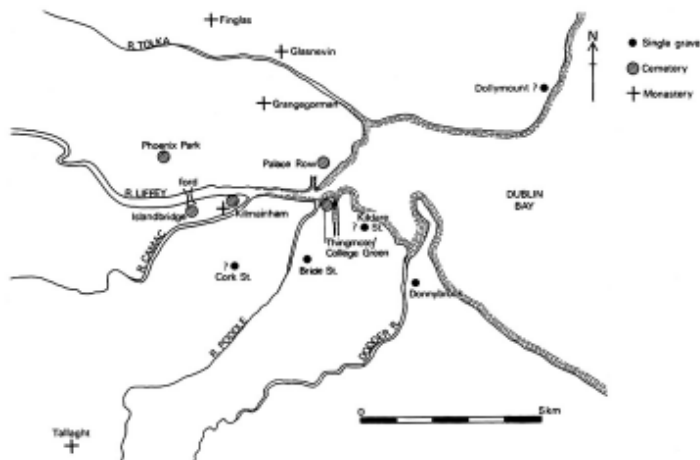


Fig. 1: Furnished insular Scandinavian burials in the Dublin Area. After Ó Floinn (1998), fig.5.1. (SHH-fig1.jpg)

The College Green Cemetery

The modern College Green is an open space immediately to the west of Trinity College, Dublin and south of the headquarters of the Bank of Ireland (O 159 341). It is the last remnant of a much wider open area which was situated to the east of the medieval walled town of Dublin (Clarke 1998, 54). Throughout the middle ages, this area was known as Hoggen Green, a name which has long been linked to the Old Norse ‘haugr’ or (burial) mound, in either its singular or plural form (Halliday 1884, 191-7; Clarke 2002, 3).

The Lintel Grave

Appropriately, the earliest grave recorded in the area (indeed one of the earliest to be recorded in Ireland) was marked by a *collis egestus* (‘lowly hill?’) according to an account of the burial composed soon after its discovery in November 1646. The first edition of Ware’s *De Hibernia et Antiquitatibus Eius* (1654, 103) merely noted that a stone sepulchre covering the bones of a man had been found in the eastern suburbs of Dublin, near Trinity College, but the second edition, published four years later, provided considerably more information, and an illustration (Ware 1658, 123, 348-350; Fig.2). The accounts given in both Molyneux’s ‘Discourse concerning the Danish Mounts, Forts and Towers of Ireland’ (1725, 197-8) and Harris’s *The Whole Works of Sir James Ware* (1764, ii, 145), are entirely based on Ware’s 1658 description.

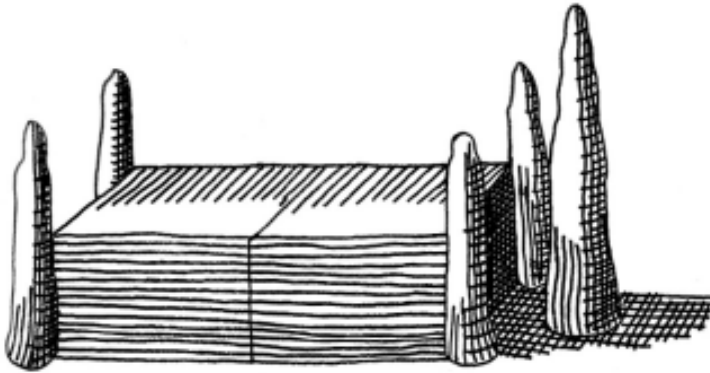


Fig. 2: Contemporary illustration of Lintel grave with associated pillar stones in the eastern suburbs of Dublin, near Trinity College. After Ware (1658), fig. (SHH-fig2.jpg)

Under Ware’s ‘low hill’ was an ancient sepulchre, orientated SW-NE and made of eight black marble stones (*nigri lapides mormorei*), each 3 in (0.76m) thick. Two of these rested on the other six to form a small rectangular chamber 6ft 2in (1.88m) by 3ft 1in (0.94m). The ‘marble’ in question is rather more likely to have been local black limestone or calp, and the description strongly suggests a form of long cist burial; more specifically a lintel grave, where covering stones rest on the side slabs of the chamber. Such cists are normally associated with inhumations, as Ware’s first edition suggests, but the second edition described the contents as ‘a great quantity of charcoal, ashes and human bones; partly consumed (*exusti*); partly, as it were, half-burned (*quasi semiusti*)’ (Ware 1658, 348-350). It is possible that observers confused decayed and burnt bone, or that some cremated animal bone had become mixed with

the inhumation described in Ware's first edition, but no definite interpretation can be made, particularly as no grave-goods were recovered.

Long cists like the one described here are occasionally known from the Irish Bronze Age, and a pair of bronze axes were recovered from Suffolk Street (immediately south of College Green) in the nineteenth century. However, Grogan's statement that these were recovered from a cist burial of the 'beaker folk' (cited in Little 1954, 68-9) cannot be substantiated in any other source, and the longest bronze age cist known, from Kilkenny, Co. Roscommon, is 23cm shorter than Ware's grave (Waddell 1990, 130-1). This burial is perhaps more likely to date from the first millenium, when long cist graves began to occur in some Irish cemeteries. More specifically, lintel graves like this example 'appear to have evolved from slab-lined graves in the Early Christian period (O'Brien 1992, 132)', that is to say, from the fifth century onwards. Isolated slab-lined graves are comparatively common in the archaeological record, and were used for pagan burials as late as the seventh century AD, when literary sources also suggest that cairns were occasionally raised over such graves (*ibid.*, 134). It is possible that Ware's 'hill' may be an example of a related practice.

Further information in Ware's description also suggests an early medieval date. Allegedly, stones 4ft (1.22m) high were placed at each of the four corners of the tomb, and another (*alius*) 6ft (1.83m) high, 'in the shape of a pyramid but of rough work' (*pyramidali forma ses rudi opera*) was placed to the south-west (fig. 2). This latter stone (possibly a cairn?) was made of 'mill stone' (*lapis molarii*) rather than the *niger lapis mormoreus*. Corner stones have no direct parallels in Irish archaeology, but it is interesting to note that a group of burial cairns furnished with 'pillar-stones' at their corners are known from northern Scotland. Occasional associations with Class I Pictish stones suggest these are also of medieval date (Alcock 1992, 128). Despite the surviving illustration, it is possible that Ware may have been describing stones set a slight distance from the lintel grave, perhaps close to the edges of the mound. If there are links between these Scottish monuments and that described by Ware, they are at least as likely to have been established during the Viking Age as before it. Long cists are also known in early medieval Scotland, where they were adopted by the resident insular Scandinavian community, with the practice occurring at sites such as Westness (Kaland 1993), Dunrobin (Ross 1854) and Ballinaby (Edwards 1934). In the absence of further evidence, however, it is perhaps most reasonable to note that the form of this tomb strongly suggests a date in the Early Medieval Period, possibly predating the Viking Age proper and certainly representing a non-Christian burial rite.

The Furnished Burials

Unfortunately, Ware's description does not allow the precise site of the burial to be identified, but as it was both in the suburbs and near Trinity College, it cannot have been more than 300m from the modern College Green. Thus, it was close to the Royal Exchange, a nineteenth century covered thoroughfare that extended south from the Green to Suffolk Street (fig. 3). During its construction in 1819, a group of artefacts were discovered and acquired by Major C. H. Sirr. First described as 'sundry British antiquities' (Anon 1841), they were soon recognised as Scandinavian, and probable grave-goods (Worsaae 1852, 331). Acquired by the Royal Irish Academy (hereafter RIA) in 1844 (PRIA 2, 348-9), they passed via the Dublin Science and Art Museum to the National Museum of Ireland. By 1926, however, not all of them could be identified, and others had been incorrectly provenanced to the site (Bøe 1940, 65-6). As a result of the IVGP, however, all have been re-identified.

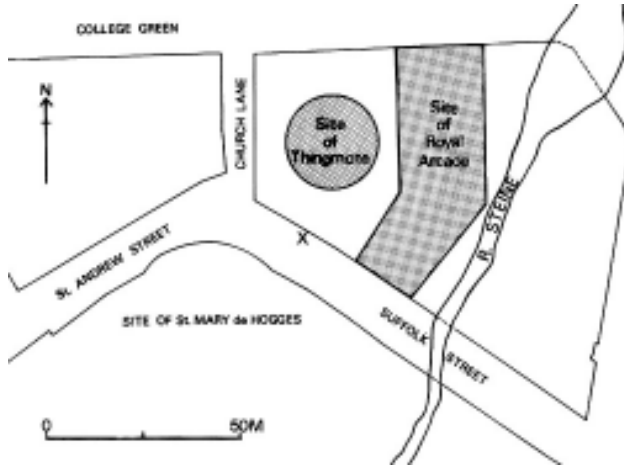


Fig. 3: Map showing the Royal Arcade, the site of a N-S inhumation (X) and the location of the ‘Thingmote’ (Hogges), College Green. After Ó Floinn (1998), fig.5.2. (SHH-fig3.jpg)

Despite subsequent confusion and exaggeration, early records are clear that only eight artefacts were recovered: two swords, four spearheads, a shield boss and a gilt copper alloy buckle. Of these, only the swords have been consistently associated with the site, while the buckle had been broken into its constituent parts and was reassembled by Ó Floinn less than a decade ago. For clarity, the oldest of the minimum of four registration numbers that have been given to the artefacts since their recovery are used here, but a concordance with other registration numbers has been provided as Table 1.

TABLE 1. Concordance of Registration Numbers used to Catalogue the Artefacts recovered from the Royal Arcade, College Green in 1819.

Artefact Type	Sirr Catalogue	RIA Old Register	Wilde Catalogue	Wakeman Catalogue
Sword	Sirr 260	D301	W82	Wk27
Sword	Sirr 261	D306	W83	Wk28
Spearhead	Sirr 262	D305	W58	Wk9
Spearhead	Sirr 263	D304	W56	Wk10
Spearhead	Sirr 264 (a & b)	D303 (a & b)	W57 (a 7 b)	Wk24 / Wk292
Spearhead	Sirr 265	D302	W59	Wk26
Shield Boss	Sirr 266	D307	W45	Wk25
Buckle	Sirr 267	D300	W94	---

Fig. 4: Concordance of Registration Numbers used to Catalogue the Artefacts recovered from the Royal Arcade, College Green in 1819. (SHH-fig6.doc)

Of the two swords, one (hereafter Sirr 260) is double-edged with a hilt that corresponds to Petersen's type H, the most common in both Ireland and Norway (Walsh 1998, 229). The second sword (Sirr 261) is single-edged and an example of the rather less common five-lobed Petersen type K, a form widely believed to be of Frankish rather than Scandinavian origin (*ibid.* 230). Both hilts were originally decorated with silver and copper alloy wire, a detail confirmed by a number of nineteenth century watercolours.

Of the four spearheads, one, Sirr 265, has been identified as an example of Rygh's type (R)521, a long narrow type perhaps most obviously characterised by a series of copper alloy rivets binding the shaft to the socket (Bøe 1940, 94; Rygh 1885, 29, 72). This type is comparatively rare in Scandinavia, but seems to be related to another spear type from Dublin, which Bøe declared 'very rare – if indeed, known at all – in the Scandinavian north' (1940, 26). This latter 'type' also has copper alloy rivets, but the blades are narrower and the sockets shorter than examples of R521. Bøe (1948, 28, 31) identified two other spearheads from College Green (Sirr 263 & 264) as examples of this 'other' type. One portion of Sirr 264 had been incorrectly provenanced when Bøe examined it (*ibid.* 31). When reassembled, this spearhead has both a broader blade and a longer socket than Sirr 265, suggesting a fundamental problem with Bøe's classification. A re-evaluation of these spearheads is beyond the capacity of this paper, but it is clear that three of the four spearheads from College Green are of a very unusual type which has few parallels in other parts of the Viking world. The fourth and final spearhead from College Green (Sirr 262) is missing its socket, but this can be reconstructed using a nineteenth century watercolour. It, too, may form part of this group.

The shield boss, Sirr 266, is also unusual. Only three contemporary examples of similar artefacts are known, all from insular Scandinavian burial contexts, and it has been suggested that bosses of this type are derived from Anglo-Saxon examples (Harrison 2000, 70-74).

Finally, the gilt copper alloy buckle, Sirr 267, originally decorated with three amber studs (two of which survive), does not seem to have any direct parallels with Scandinavian examples (Petersen 1951, 492-3). Although detailed study of this object, like the others described here, has only just begun, it is already clear that the majority of the eight extant artefacts are of unusual types, information which is significant when the burial is placed in context (below).

The surviving artefacts are particularly significant because they represent the only surviving evidence for what are assumed to have been a minimum of two furnished male burials. While the artefacts can be provenanced to a specific property plot, no further information on their original context has been discovered. In the absence of any references to skeletal or burnt material, even the assumption that they represent graves rests solely on the rarity of weapon deposition outside burial contexts (see Solberg 1985, 65).

More tenuous evidence for an additional furnished burial close to the 1819 group is provided by Halliday (1884, 155), who noted that a skeleton had recently been found in Suffolk Street, 'the skull of which being stained by contact with metal ... gave rise to the opinion that the owner had been buried in his armour'. Ó Floinn (1998, 136) suggested that Halliday's 'rust' may have been the result of contact with a shield boss rather than a helmet, as first suggested. Halliday also records that a 'Danish sword' was recovered 'in the same locality', but its relationship to the skeleton is ambiguous, and his assertion that 'the gold ornaments of (the sword's) handle (had) been sold for £70 (1881, 155)' is hardly credible. Less than a dozen years earlier, the RIA had acquired two Scandinavian swords for less than a tenth of this sum (IVGP forthcoming). Independent RIA records of roughly the same date describe a skeleton

which was found at the western end of Suffolk Street (Ó Floinn 1998, 136). As this latter record makes no reference to any ‘rust’ or other grave-goods, they need not correspond precisely, but the fact that this latter skeleton was oriented north-south would suggest that it was not a formal Christian burial either. Thus the evidence from Suffolk Street strongly suggests at least one additional furnished grave in this area, which cannot have been more than 125m from the 1819 finds, and was probably rather less.

This summary of the available evidence suggests that a minimum of two, but more probably three, furnished male graves of Viking Age date were found in the area immediately south of the modern College Green in the nineteenth century. A fourth, unfurnished lintel-grave with pillar-stones which was found no more than 300m away is probably slightly earlier than these burials, although the possibility that they may be contemporary cannot be entirely ruled out. Taken together they provide evidence for a small group of furnished burials, which can now be placed in context.

The Graves and the Hogges

With the exception of the lintel grave, it is not certain how (or if) these burials were marked on the surface, but it is clear that the largest monument in the immediate area was a very substantial earthen mound, situated on a plot of land immediately west of that which produced the 1819 grave-goods, and immediately north of the RIA burial at Suffolk Street was the site of a very substantial earthen mound which survived until the mid-1680s (fig.3). Using a plan which predated its destruction in the mid-1680s), Halliday (1882, 162-6) calculated that it was approximately 40ft (12.2m) high and 240ft (73.2m) in circumference, giving it a diameter of c.22m. The same source (fig.4) suggests that it had a distinctive stepped profile very similar to the current form of Tynwald Hill on the Isle of Man. This evidence, combined with variations of the place name ‘Thengmotha’ used in a number of early Anglo-Norman sources, led Halliday to propose that this was the Thingmote, a ceremonial mound associated with the Thing or assembly at Dublin (ibid 169-71). This interpretation has been accepted by most later commentators, but a recent article suggests that the area of medieval Dublin called ‘Thingmote’ was actually

west of Hoggen Green, and that it was here that the council of

Hiberno-Norse Dublin assembled (Duffy 1998, 82-5). The

term ‘Thengmotha’ seems to be derived from the Old Norse elements Thing and mót, meaning ‘public

meeting’, with the latter word having none of the

connotations of a raised mound associated with

the Norman French / Latin mota. Using a

number of early records, Duffy proposed that

the mound itself was actually called ‘la Hogges’

by the Anglo-Norman inhabitants of Dublin, a

name directly linked to Hoggen Green itself

(ibid., 82).

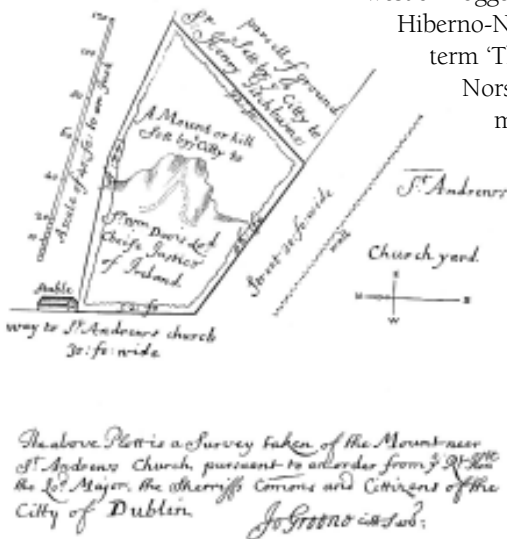


Fig. 5: Survey of the ‘mount near [the post-Reformation] St Andrew’s Church from 1682. College Green is on the left-hand side of the plan. After Halliday (1884), pl. 3. (SHH-fig4.jpg)

Given the general association between the term *haugr* and burial mounds, it is possible that this mound, which we may call the Hogges, also marked a burial in this area. Indeed, this has been postulated by a range of authors since the mound was first discovered (eg. Halliday 1884, 198; Little 1957). More recent work by Ó Floinn (1998, 136) has been more cautious, but has not eliminated the possibility. As he points out, however, the mound is on the same scale as those at sites such as Borre, Oseberg and Gokstad, which places it completely out of proportion to known examples of grave-mounds in western Europe. Given its scale, the fact that no internal structures or grave-goods were noted at the time of its destruction must be considered highly unusual, although such negative evidence does not allow any definite conclusions to be drawn.

It may also be premature to suggest that the Hogges had no associations with the Hiberno-Norse assembly. The area identified as Thingmote by Duffy was less than 200m west of the Hogges (fig. 5) and the role of raised areas or mounds in public assemblies is a feature of early medieval life not just in Scandinavia, but also in Ireland, where similar raised mounds form a key part of many Irish medieval inauguration sites (Fitzpatrick 2001, 360). In Anglo-Saxon England too, many hundred assembly places were marked by mounds which many assumed represented burial sites. Interestingly, recent excavations at a number of these sites have suggested that they were purpose built to mark such sites, and do not necessarily contain burials, although this has often been assumed in the past (Adkins & Petchy 1984). Similarly, it has been proposed that Tynwald Hill was originally a prehistoric burial mound, although there is no direct evidence to support this fact (eg. Cubbon 1994, 42).

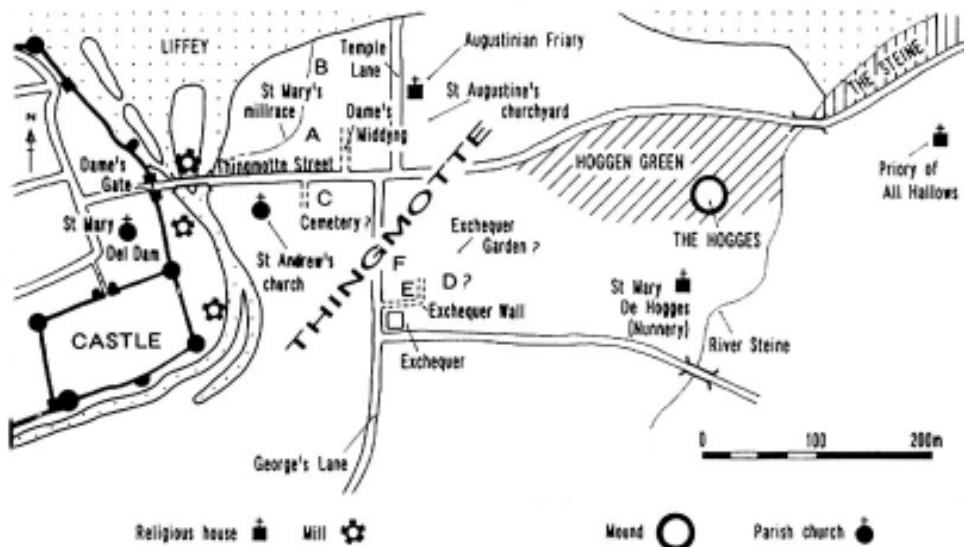


Fig. 6: Map showing the relationship between Duffy's Thengmote and the Hogges. After Duffy (1998), fig. 1. (SHH-fig5.jpg)

If there is no evidence for burial within the Hogges itself, however, it seems clear that it occupied a site which was a focus for burial at one time. Apart from the two bronze axes from

Suffolk Street, the eight artefacts from 1819 were found immediately to the east of the mound, while the RIA's skeleton was found immediately to the south. It is not certain that the Hogges postdates the associated furnished burials, but their close proximity suggests that they were related in some way. The furnished graves may have been marked on the surface in some way, like the lintel grave, but an early Anglo-Norman source strongly suggests that the Hogges was the largest monument in the area. In 1171, Domnall Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóc stood there to watch a battle between Anglo-Norman and Hiberno-Norse forces (Orpen 1892, 170-1, cited in Duffy 1998, 82), and it would have been equally visible in the Hiberno-Norse period proper.

Recent excavations on the west bank of the river Poddle have confirmed that a bank marking the edge of the town was established there in the early tenth century (Gowan with Scally 1996, 11-14). This was replaced by a series of later boundaries which eventually culminated in the stone wall of c.AD1100. The Hogges stood some 400m east of this wall, on an area of flat ground between the Poddle and Steine on the south bank of the Liffey. Immediately to the east, the Liffey estuary began to broaden considerably, and the monument would have been particularly prominent to anyone approaching the settlement from the sea, although the ridge. While cannot be certain that the burials surrounding the Hogges were remembered by subsequent generations, the scale of the monument which they surrounded and its possible association with an assembly suggests that the area had symbolic importance for the citizens, an importance which may have been consciously exploited by Henry II in the winter of 1171-2 (Duffy 1997, 85).

The Graves, Kilmainham and insular Scandinavian Settlement at Dublin

Despite the prominence of this location and its association with the Hogges, however, there is no direct evidence to suggest that this site was seen as a particularly prestigious burial ground, or that it was associated with the kings of Dublin in particular (Clarke 2002, 3, 5). While any comparison of material collected in the nineteenth century must make allowances for differing standards of retrieval, the quality of artefacts from Kilmainham, particularly those from the lower part of the cemetery close to the Liffey, are at least as impressive as those recovered at College Green. There are also very substantially more of them. Equally importantly, there is no evidence to suggest that there is any difference between the dates of the two cemeteries, with the artefactual evidence suggesting they are contemporary.

Indeed there are very strong similarities between the material from the two sites. While type H swords are very common, the type K sword from College Green (Sirr 261) has distinctive low lobes, and a remarkably similar pommel has been found on a double-edged sword from Kilmainham (D355; Bøe 1940, 24). Similarly, the Kilmainham site has produced numerous examples of the copper alloy riveted spearheads which dominate the College Green corpus, and which mystified Bøe (*ibid.*, 26ff). There are no direct parallels with the College Green shield boss in Ireland, but the small conical bosses which dominate the Kilmainham assemblage are rarely found elsewhere in the Viking west (Harrison 1995). Gilt copper alloy buckles have also been found at Kilmainham, as has a small amber stud very similar to those used to decorate the College Green buckle (R2378; Bøe 1940, 57). Thus, the evidence of grave goods suggests a remarkable similarity between the two cemeteries, and at the same time confirms the distinctive nature of much of the Dublin corpus when compared to other insular Scandinavian burial sites. Similarities between the two cemeteries also extend to site,

in that Kilmainham, like College Green, is situated on the south bank of the Liffey close to a confluence with a tributary, although in the site 3.4km upstream, the cemetery is situated on sloping ground. The lack of direct evidence for any mound covering the furnished burials at College Green can also be compared to Kilmainham and indeed the Irish corpus as a whole, where no single certain example of a grave mound covering a furnished insular Scandinavian burial has ever been established.

Of course, there are also important differences between the cemeteries. While College Green contained a minimum of three furnished burials, current estimates of the cemetery at Kilmainham suggest rather more than forty (IVGP, forthcoming). College Green fits into a pattern of much small cemeteries on both sides of the Liffey, which include sites such as Islandbridge, Parnell Square and Phoenix Park, all of which are only a little larger than single burial sites such as Kildare Street, Bride Street, Cook Street and Dollymount (fig.1). An explanation for this complex pattern is beyond the current paper, but must go beyond simple chronological progression, as burial at Kilmainham seems to have been contemporary with that at all the smaller sites in the surrounding area. It is interesting to note, however, that while Kilmainham and several other sites in the area had strong Christian associations, College Green had none, and the Hiberno-Norse community may even have been aware of pre-existing 'pagan' associations. Other explanations for the burial pattern relate to dispersed settlement in the area (Ó Floinn 1998, 137), and recent excavations in the Temple Bar area are shedding new light on the chronology of settlement at Dublin (Gowen with Scally 1996; Simpson 1999). Given the complexity of the evidence for Scandinavian activity in the Dublin area, explanations for the distribution and variety of burials are unlikely to be monocausal, and will be debated for years to come.

For many years, detailed studies of furnished burials in the Dublin area have been hampered by a lack of reliable published information, and have been further hindered by the publication of a number of inaccurate synopses. Despite these disadvantages, it has always been clear that the Dublin corpus is distinctive, if only due to the volume of artefacts recovered in the area. It is now becoming increasingly obvious that the artefacts themselves are often highly unusual. This paper represents an attempt to summarise the available evidence for one of the smaller Dublin cemeteries, and to demonstrate ways in which the interpretation of this evidence may alter our perceptions of burial in the Dublin area. The study of the relationship between Viking Age burial sites and the landscape, both geographical and cultural, is one which has also been neglected, but which can also provide new insights to our understanding of the siting of cemeteries in the period. This paper represents work in progress, and much of the evidence will remain tenuous, but by identifying primary sources wherever possible, the IVGP hopes to provide the most detailed catalogue of information possible, while eliminating the many errors that have crept into the record through the years. As a result, it is hoped that the project will facilitate many future investigations both of the furnished burials of Dublin, and the artefacts that accompanied them.

Acknowledgements

Large sections of this paper have been based on research carried out on behalf of the IVGP between 1999 and 2001. I am grateful to the Project for permission to publish some of this material in advance of its own catalogue. I am also grateful to Ragnall Ó Floinn for constant assistance and support. Any errors, particularly those relating to the interpretation newly discovered evidence, are unfortunately entirely my own.

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Name borrowing among the Vikings

Henrik Williams

There are many sources that tell us about the personal names used by Scandinavians in the Viking Age, not least the Old Norse sagas and the runestones of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The names, as such, in these sources are readily available for study, the former most easily by consulting Erik Henrik Lind's dictionaries of Norwegian-Icelandic first names and bynames (1905-15, 1920-21, 1931) and the latter by using Lena Peterson's Internet dictionary of Runic names.

Also naming customs are mentioned in the Old Norse literature, although it is uncertain how dependable this material is. Thus sources may flow abundantly, yet I would claim that we know comparatively little about many aspects of names and naming among the Viking Age Scandinavians, or the Vikings, as I shall call them hence-forth.

One area that requires much more research is name giving: not just why a certain person was given a certain name, but also when in life names were given – was it only in the first year or could a person's name be changed later in life, perhaps more than once, and who got to decide this?

The relationship between the first name and possible bynames also touches upon the problem of naming. In medieval times the use of bynames was very common, probably because the denser population in the cities made it necessary to distinguish between people with the same first name, especially since some first names of Christian origin became extremely common.

The medieval bynames were often of a non-flattering character, *Ingrid Thieves' fingers* just to name one example. But the use of these negative names was not neutral, we often find them in sources where the name-bearers or the name-bearers' relatives couldn't "control" the form in which they were referred to. It is more startling, however, to find that on the runic memorials these superficially negative names were also frequently used, even though the memorial was commissioned by a family member. Furthermore, the use of the byname was almost often exclusive, that is: a person was referred to only by what looks like his byname. A single example should suffice. The name *Óþveginn* is used on three Swedish runestones, all of them in Uppland. In the first *Óþveginn* is one of the five siblings commemorating a parent, in the second *Óþveginn* is the name of the stone carver, and in the third *Óþveginn* is the father being commemorated.

Now, the name *Óþveginn* means 'unwashed, dirty' and couldn't really be considered a very positive name. Yet it was used without shame by the name bearers themselves and for their

honored dead. Elsewhere (Williams 1993), I have argued that superficially negative names may have been given as nicknames to participants in Viking expeditions where such names can acquire a positive aura (cf. McClure 1981:72, 74). These and other names are also indicative of “later” name giving, i.e. names not necessarily given to babies, although many may certainly be the result of naming a person after somebody else (Swed. *uppkallelse*).

I introduce my talk in this way because I want to emphasize that we know very little indeed why any one person bears a certain name. This uncertainty is contested by no one, as far as I know, yet it does not seem to have been considered in due extent at least within one other area of onomastics, i.e. the question of name borrowing.

My reason for choosing to talk about name borrowing is simply that during my research on personal names in the past decade, I have come across a number of names that have brought the question of borrowing in focus.

To reveal the not-so-grand conclusion at the very outset of my talk: I have come to doubt that the borrowing of personal names was a common method of naming people in the Viking Age.

I should begin by defining what, exactly, I mean by name borrowing. I use this term to refer to a practice where a child, or perhaps a grown-up, in pre-Christian Scandinavian tradition would be given a name, taken from *outside* this person's own family.

Thus I exclude two important ways of naming from what I call borrowing. The first is where foreign names are given to a Scandinavian simply because his or her family has a foreign background. I imagine that most or all Celtic names, for example, were originally introduced into the Scandinavian onomasticon, the stock of names, because the first bearers had a Celtic or part-Celtic parent.

The second naming practice I exclude is the giving of saints' names. These are indeed an example of outside names introduced into the Scandinavian personal nomenclature, but they cannot, of course, be seen as part of the original, pre-Christian, naming practices. Besides, the Christian names occur late and seldom in the Viking Age, at least in eastern Scandinavia. Of the more than 1,300 individual names occurring in Swedish runic inscriptions only half a dozen, found on stones after 1050, are saints' names (Williams 1996:70).

Consequently I take the term *Name borrowing* to denote two other, very different phenomena. The first relates to certain names in runic inscriptions that are assumed to be borrowed from fictitious persons in contemporary or older literature. Some of these are presumed to have been imported from the Continent: e.g. *Atli*, *Erlingr*, *Hagbarðr*, *Högni*, *Ingjaldr*, *Magnhildr*, and *Uffi*. Other names occur only as mythological names in Old Norse sources. Some of these might seem somewhat odd: e.g. *Beinviðr*, *Ennibrattr*, *Fáinn*, *Fjölvarr*, *Fúlñir*, *Hjörvarðr*, *Hornbori*, and *Róta*, but others look natural enough: *Faðir*, *Nefr*, and *Pegn*. Especially the three last examples should constitute a warning to us not to underestimate the richness of the Nordic onomasticon, nor to assume that all names were spread evenly over Scandinavia. We may very well find that fictitious names in the Old Norse literature were current as actual personal names in Viking Age Denmark and Sweden, and why not? On the other hand some names do certainly seem as if they were borrowed. It is easiest to tell with the names that derive from Continental sources (e.g. *Uffi*, cf. Peterson 1996:142), even if I think they are thought to be too many. It is more difficult to tell whether a name in for example Sweden is borrowed from Danish or Norwegian.

The second kind of name borrowing deals with perfectly normal names in one Scandinavian country that some scholars believe have been imported from another.

One can, for example, find statements to the effect that a reasonably common name in the Viking Age must necessarily have been given because some famous person had that very name. These famous persons are usually kings and I would like to discuss a few instances of this alleged practice.

One clear example is found in the corpus edition of Sweden's runic inscriptions from the province Västmanland, where Sven B. F. Jansson has the following to say about the name *Knútr*, which appears on the runestone from Lilla Kyringe (Vs p. 49):

Knútr is not a common name in our runic inscriptions from the eleventh century. If you disregard the cases which refer to Canute the Great, there are only six instances [and he names half a dozen stones around the Lake Mälaren]. It seems very likely that the name was put in use by naming after Canute the Great. (In that case the naming is also testimony of the participation of Swedes in the Viking raids to England.) The occurrence of the name on the runestone from Lilla Kyringe has therefore been used when dating the inscription and the carvings of Balle in general.¹

In fact, there are two further instances of the name *Knútr* in Viking Age Sweden, on the runestone from Spånga church (Jansson 1953:266-68) and the fragment from Fivelstad church (Gustavson 1997:28). But the question is whether these eight name-bearers were all given the name because their father or perhaps grandfather had served with Canute the Great in England. It is certainly possible, but I don't see that it has any bearing on the dating of Swedish runestones which no one has suggested be dated to the 1030's or earlier.

Also *Hákon* is a distinguished name, used by Norwegian nobility and kings. It was common in Norway, but not in Iceland. In Sweden it was also common, or even very common, since at least a score of Swedes are recorded on the runestones as having had the name *Hákon*.

The name *Haraldr* must be very old, since already Tacitus mentions a name *Chariovalda* (Peterson 1984: 18; cf. the possible place-name *Harjavalta* in Finnish (*op. cit.* p. 6, note 2), which must have been imported in the Proto-Norse period). The name is also found in Old High German and Old English. One would surmise that since *Haraldr* was a common Germanic name it is only to be expected that a fair number of Scandinavians also bore it. But in western Scandinavia the name is concentrated to the royal family, although possibly borrowed from the Danish, and is found already in the ninth century. Many kings, especially Norwegian of course, were called *Haraldr* but few other Norwegians before the 13th century and the same is true of Iceland.

There are also some seven Swedish name-bearers in the Viking Age with a more southern provenance than *Knútr*. If all men named *Knútr* had "borrowed" names the same should be assumed for the men named *Haraldr*, I suppose, but this hasn't been claimed by anyone to my knowledge.

Finally I want to mention the name *Sveinn*. The most famous *Sveinn*, of course, is *Sveinn Forkbeard*. Now, in the Middle Ages *Sveinn* was a most common name in mainland Scandinavia and owes nothing to its popularity to the church. Its etymology is clear, it means young man, and the name seems to be perfectly comparable to for example *Steinn*. Nevertheless, as late as in 1983 Staffan Hellberg (p. 78 f.) claims that the name *Sveinn* was popular in Sweden because of Danish influence:

Since the entire fashion of runestones, with the younger runic script, is considered to be

imported from Denmark, it is close at hand to [...] see the high frequency of the name *Sveinn* as a manifestation of a Danish fashion in Sweden.²

He does not explain why this would be so, but the reference to a new way of writing runes would date the influence very early indeed, to the ninth or tenth centuries, and could then have nothing to do with *Sveinn Forkbeard*.

It is quite interesting to take a look at the distribution of the name *Sveinn* in the Viking Age inscriptions. There are more than 90 Swedish inscriptions with this name and 14 Danish. But the Danish inscriptions are not spread all over Denmark. Almost all of them are found in Skåne or on Bornholm, areas very close to Sweden, whatever this name means at that time. If the Swedes felt a need for importing a popular and common Danish name one would expect a more general pattern of distribution on its home soil. But, of course, one could explain the distribution pattern by assuming that *Sveinn Forkbeard* deserves all the credit for the name's high fashion, and by the time this happened few runestones were carved in Denmark proper; at least the Bornholm ones are decidedly later.

I want to round off this paper by a few observations.

It seems likely that at least some personal names in Scandinavia became popular within royal families; at least *Haraldr* and *Knútr* belong to this group. From then on it could have worked in two ways: either the names spread to other groups or just the opposite that is they were more or less monopolized by the high and mighty.

But, in either case the name borrowing by "ordinary" people was affected primarily in the country in which the particular name was adopted by the royalty. If *Knútr*, for example, enjoyed a favorite position among Danish kings, other Danes may have felt encouraged to name their sons *Knútr* or contrariwise were discouraged to use this exclusive name. But Scandinavians outside Denmark were most likely not so affected. It is instructive to note that in Norway and Iceland the name wasn't used almost at all in early times. In Iceland there were one or two early name-bearers, but the name never became popular. In Norway the name was not used before the twelfth century, but did become rather common after the year 1300 (Lind col. 698 f.), probably because it had become a saint's name. In Sweden, on the other hand, there were some eight men named *Knútr* already in the tenth century. Obviously the name pattern does fluctuate in different Scandinavian areas.

Secondly, one must question whether the assumption of name borrowing between the Scandinavian peoples can ever be used when discussing from where a certain individual got his or her name. Even if a name was borrowed across the borders, once established in a new country it could take on a life of its own, growing in popularity for other reasons than its original royal connections, being handed down by other means of transformation.

The question of name borrowing between the Scandinavians has never attracted much attention. My reason for raising the topic here is that occasionally there will be a statement assuming such borrowing to be an established fact which I very much doubt it to be. Possibly the problem deserves more attention.

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- Vs = *Västmanlands runinskrifter*. Granskade och tolkade av Sven B. F. Jansson. Stockholm 1964 (Sveriges runinskrifter 13).

Notes

- ¹ *Knutr* är icke något vanligt namn i våra runinskrifter från tiohundratalet. Om man bortser från de belägg, då namnet åsyftar Knut den store, finner man det endast sex gånger: Sö 217, U 38, U 92, U 818, U 1149, Vs 15. Det förefaller mycket sannolikt, att namnet har kommit i bruk genom uppkallelse efter Knut den store. (I så fall är också uppkallelsen ett vittnesbörd om svenskars deltagande i Englandstågen. [—]) Namnets förekomst på Vs 15 har därför använts vid dateringen av inskriften och av Balles ristningar över huvud taget [...].
- ² Eftersom hela runstensmodet, med ny runrad, anses ha kommit från Danmark, ligger det nära till hands att [...] se också den höga frekvensen av namnet *Sveinn* som ett utslag av danskt mode i Sverige.

Kiloran Bay revisited – confirmation of a doubtful boat-grave

Jan Bill

The Viking burial at Kiloran Bay is situated in the high sand dunes at Kiloran Bay on the north-west coast of the Colonsay-Oronsay twin island, off the coast of western Scotland (fig. 1 and 2). It was found and partly excavated, apparently without archaeological expertise being present, in June 1882 by Malcolm McNeill from Colonsay House. The following year it was re-excavated by William Galloway, an architect and well-known amateur archaeologist. The grave can be provided with a *terminus post quem* by two coins, minted by Æthelred II between 841 and 844 and by Archbishop Wigmund of York between 837 and 854. Both coins are perforated, so a somewhat later date has to be expected, and recently researchers have suggested that the burial took place in the late ninth century or around 900.¹



Fig. 1: The location of Colonsay and Oronsay (rectangular box) on the west coast of Scotland. (JB-fig1.tif)

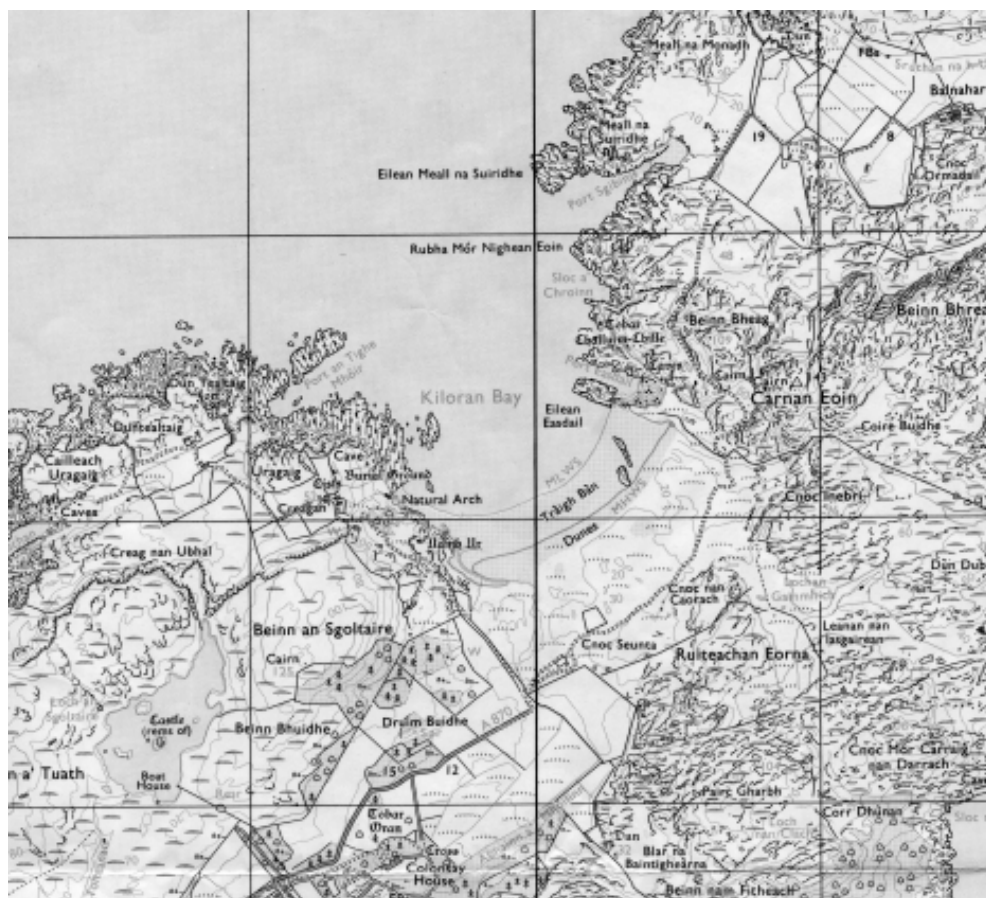


Fig. 2: Kiloran Bay and its surroundings on the northwest coast of Colonsay. The precise location of the grave is not known, but it was situated in the southern part of the dunes overlooking the beach. Map by courtesy of the Ordnance Survey. (JB-fig2.tif)

The surviving records about the excavations are sparse, and originate from the hand of William Galloway.² They consist of two plans, one from the 1882 excavation (fig. 3), which must be based on information that he had from Malcolm McNeill, and one from the 1883 excavation (fig. 4). Apart from that, we have two manuscripts: One from Galloway's exhibition of the find at the International Fisheries Exhibition in London over the summer of 1883, and one from a lecture given by him for the Society of Antiquaries of London in June 1885 on the 1883 discoveries. Apparently this manuscript was prepared already in the year following his excavation and will here be referred to as the 1884 manuscript. It appears from the manuscripts that William Galloway was, at the time of the Kiloran Bay excavation, not an inexperienced archaeologist. During 1881 and 1882 he was, with the permission of Malcolm McNeill's father, Sir John C. McNeill, carrying out archaeological excavations in Caisteal-nan-Gilleann, a Mesolithic shell mound on Oronsay. It thus appears likely that, even if Galloway had not been

directly involved in the first excavation at Kiloran Bay, he would very soon have been informed about the spectacular find and he most likely visited the place shortly after or even during the excavation.

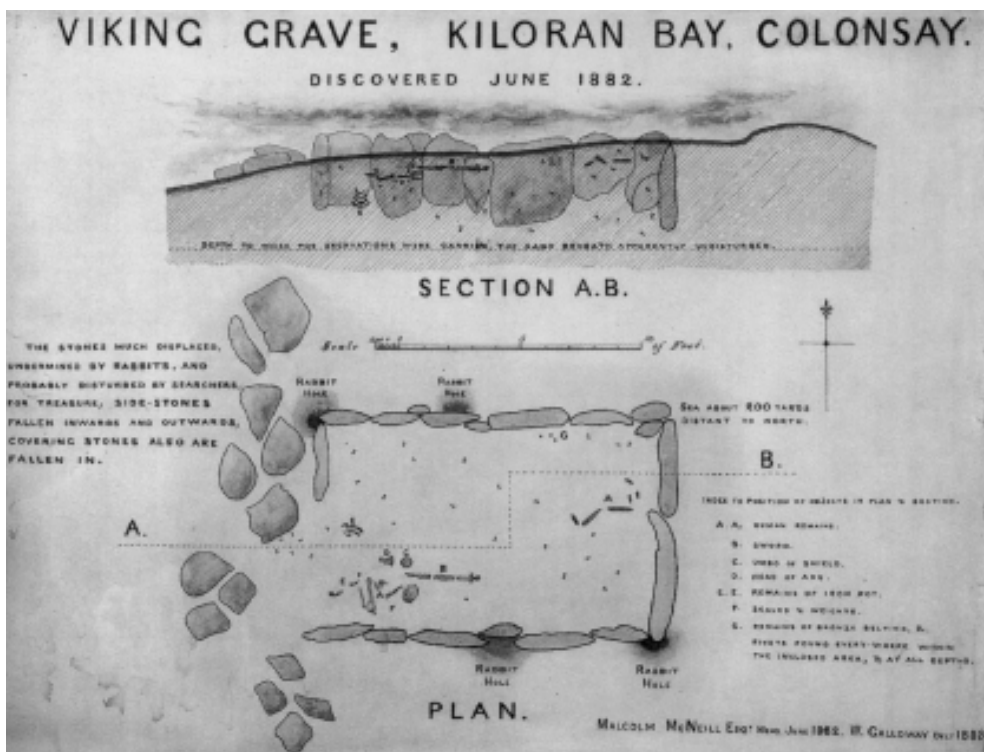


Fig. 3: Galloway's 1882 excavation plan. Courtesy of the National Museums of Scotland. (JB-fig3.tif)

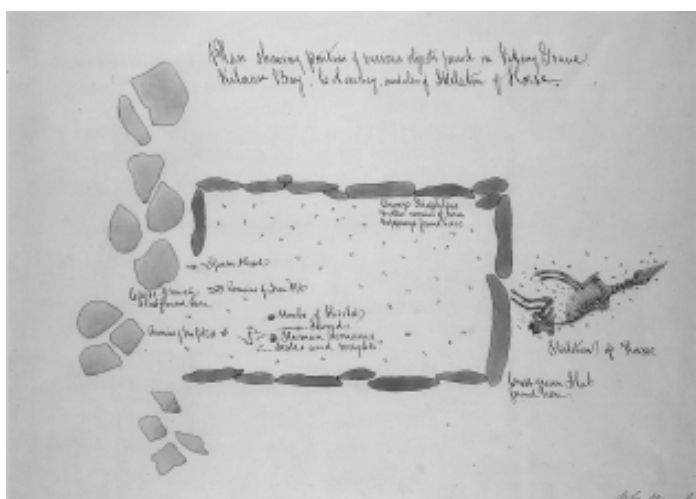


Fig. 4: Galloway's 1883 excavation plan. Courtesy of the Society of the Antiquaries in London. (JB-fig4.tif)

The finds from the grave are rich. They include, apart from the coins mentioned above, a third, illegible coin, a sword, a shield, a spear, an axe, two arrows, an iron-handled pan, a chest, a pair of scales with a set of weights, a horse with a saddle, a bronze-mounted harness, a silver cloak-pin and three knives. The remains of the deceased himself show him to be a strongly built, more than 40-year-old man of modest height. All finds, apart from the horse and saddle, were made within an east-west oriented, stone-built enclosure, reported to be rectangular in shape and measuring c. 4.6 by 3.1 metres. At each end of the enclosure a slab with a crudely incised cross was found (fig. 5). Furthermore about 130 nails and nail fragments were found, many of which were rivets. Because of these, Galloway immediately saw a boat being present in the grave and, after the 1883 excavation, he was not in doubt that the find was a boat-grave. He did, however, reject the possibility of an “ordinary” boat grave, where the deceased together with the majority of the grave goods are placed inside a boat, standing on its keel. Instead he suggested that a boat had been capsized over the grave, as a roof. This layout of a grave lacks well-documented archaeological examples, but a couple of presumed similar graves were mentioned in Norwegian archaeological journals a few years prior to the Kiloran Bay excavations, and it can be shown that these journals were known and read in Scottish antiquarian circles at that time.³ Thus these findings may well have served as inspiration for Galloway. In spite of its controversial character, Galloway’s interpretation was not critically discussed until the renewed publication of the find in Graham-Campbell’s and Batey’s *Vikings in Scotland* from 1998.⁴ Here it is argued that the grave is more likely to be a normal boat-grave, and that it is a close parallel to the Balladoole burial from the Isle of Man. The authors stress, however, that there is a need for further analysis in order to reach a more certain conclusion about the character of the Kiloran Bay grave.

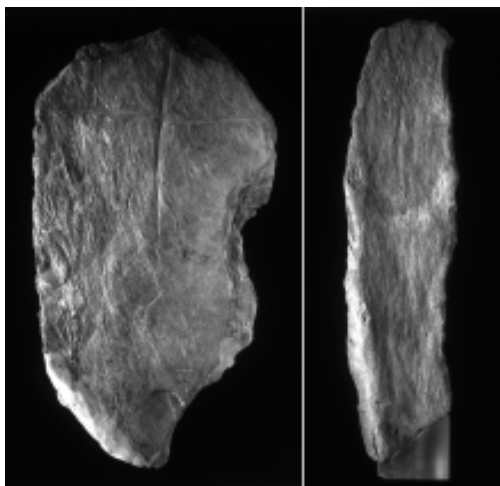


Fig. 5: Slabs from the burial, with incised crosses. Photo by courtesy of the National Museums of Scotland. (JB-fig5.tif)

The aim of the present paper is to attempt to throw some further light upon the character of the Kiloran Bay grave by bringing in some new evidence directly relating to its interpretation as a boat grave. This is provided by an investigation of the nails and nail fragments from the find. Analysis of this material makes it very likely that a boat was present in the find and that it was placed keel-down, and not inversed as in Galloway’s interpretation. What is not

completely clear, however, is whether this boat *contained* the burial, as is normal, or whether it was placed *above it*, as is known from rare examples such as Sutton Hoo 2 and Hedeby.⁵

The paper will be divided into three parts. First, the main arguments in the discussion about the layout of the grave will be outlined. Then comes the analysis of the nail material, while the final section discusses the results and attempts to reach a conclusion.

The discussion up till now

When Galloway in his 1884 manuscript opted for the interpretation of the grave as an inversed boat grave, and thus started the discussion that we shall try to bring forward here, he did that because of his observations during his re-examination of the site in 1883. On this occasion, he found and excavated the horse skeleton directly east of the enclosure, in what appears to be a previously undisturbed area. The way that the nails had - in Galloway's words - *permeated the skeleton in every way* and also the perfect order in which the skeleton was found convinced him that the horse could not have been deposited *within* a boat, but that a boat must have been placed *over* it. The nails would then be falling down on the horse as the wood rotted away, and the skeleton would not be disturbed during the process, since the decaying wood had not supported it. He further underpinned this argument by claiming that the skeleton of the deceased himself, and his grave goods, were found in such an undisturbed order they could not have been placed inside a boat that later rotted away. A further argument is that during the 1882 excavation, nails (according to the 1883 manuscript) "*were found strewn indiscriminately and at all depths through the body of sand filling the grave*".

One more argument can be added: The stone enclosure, measuring 4.6 by 3.1 metres, would have required quite a substantial vessel if it had been erected inside the boat. Such a vessel would inevitably have extended well beyond the horse skeleton, as illustrated in fig. 6 in an artist's interpretation of the find. But Galloway reports no further nails in that direction, although it is highly unlikely that he did not extend his excavation until no more nails were found.



Fig. 6: Artist's impression of the burial, by Alan Braby. (JB-fig6.tif)

Graham-Campbell and Batey have the following counter-arguments:

1. Galloway makes no note of nails being found *upon* the horse skeleton, as would be expected if a boat was capsized over the grave. The boat grave from Balladoole, Isle of Man, illustrates that nails may very well be found mixed with the skeleton remains, even if the dead body is placed within a boat. It also shows - as do many other boat graves - that the decay of the boat normally does not lead to significant disturbance of the content of the grave.
2. The finds from within the enclosure cannot be said to be undisturbed - quite the contrary. The 1882 plan shows rabbit holes at several places, and the remains of the deceased were also found at two different places in the grave.
3. The decay of a boat *in situ* would have led to the finding of nails "at all levels".
4. Some nails may occur from other objects inside the enclosure, for example a chest.
5. Some nails were reportedly found at levels we must consider too deep for them to have been falling down from above.
6. Galloway apparently was not present at the first excavation. The seemingly random distribution of the nails may thus be the result of a poor excavation standard.
7. There are reports of displaced stones encountered already at the first excavation. The plan of the enclosure is thus necessarily flattering our image of the site, and the stone setting may have looked quite different.

On the basis of this, Graham-Campbell and Batey tend to reject Galloway's interpretation, and to see the grave more as an ordinary boat-grave and as a parallel to the contemporary Balladoole grave on Isle of Man.⁶ This grave consisted of a low, ship-shaped mound of stones, beneath which the remains of a boat of app. 11 m length and 3 m width was found. In the boat were the remains of a man and a woman, and male grave goods, including a harness. The interpretation of the Kiloran Bay boat grave as a parallel to Balladoole is not completely unproblematic, however. Even when looking at the evidence in a very critical manner, we must assume that some kind of enclosure was present when the first excavation took place in 1882, and not just a heap of stones - even when taking the note on the 1882 plan into consideration. The presence of the undisturbed horse skeleton to the east of the burial also seems to prohibit the possibility of the fore and aft of the vessel being filled with stones, as we see, for example, at Westness and Scar.⁷ It is not completely obvious that the find can be understood as a misleadingly documented, but in its nature quite traditional boat grave.

It is important also to take into consideration that there are more possible interpretations of the Kiloran Bay grave than the two presented above. One is that no boat was present in the grave at all. The nails and rivets in that case would have originated from old planks, reused as a roof over some form of enclosure and over the horse. This would be so far a unique find in pagan context, but reuse of ship timbers is well known from other contemporary graves, and to use them for the construction of a grave chamber in an area with limited wood resources like the Inner Hebrides does not seem completely unlikely.⁸ A second alternative could be, as mentioned above, that of a boat-chamber grave like those known from Sutton Hoo 2 and from Hedeby in Northern Germany. In that case the boat would have been placed over the enclosure and the horse, but not in an upside down position. It would not have served any practical function as roof, but only the symbolic one as a grave gift and perhaps as a grave marker. The German archaeologist Egon Wamers has seen this grave type as an expression of mixed pa-

gan-Christian symbolism in princely graves of Scandinavian societies under conversion to Christianity.⁹ This theory immediately brings to mind the two cross-engraved slabs found by Galloway during the 1883 campaign. Graham-Campell and Batey have suggested that they may have been reused, early Christian grave markers from a nearby cemetery, but understood in the light of Wamers' theory, they could have had a symbolic significance in the grave.

Both the reused timber theory and the boat-chamber grave theory have the same advantages and weaknesses as Galloway's inversed boat theory: They fit well with the presence of the enclosure, the horse skeleton and the distribution of most of the nails, but they do not account for the nails found at a great depth, and they both represent rather exotic burial costumes with few or no archaeologically known parallels. For both theories, we may need quite convincing evidence in order to favour one of them over the less controversial interpretation of the grave as a normal, but richly equipped boat-grave.

The nails

At this point we shall turn to the investigation of the nails.

Nail finds, especially when containing large numbers of nails, can be examined in several ways. Studies of the preserved nails' morphology make it possible to calculate the maximum and minimum numbers of nails present in a find. They also allow for a typological determination of the individual nails, and thus to describe the composition of the find. This often gives a first clue to their origin. A high ratio of rivets, for example, indicates that boat material or a clinker-built wagon body is present in the material. If rivets are less common, but pointed nails frequent, the material is likely to originate from chests, doors or other settlement-related structures. Some special types of nail have very limited use: for example, the so-called anchor-shaped rivets, whose only known use, so far, is to fasten the upper end of the frames in some smaller boats. Finally nail fragments may show signs of secondary working, most commonly in relation to dismantling of the nails.

Nails can also be investigated with regard to their dimensions. The diameter of heads and shafts, the length of shafts, and the dimensions of the sides and diagonals of roves are all measures that can be easily taken. Statistical analysis of the dimensions recorded for a collection of nails can indicate whether they originate from a single object or from several different objects. This is because the production of nails requires a certain degree of standardization. The dimensions of nail heads and roves are limited by the size of the iron rods from which nails and roves are produced, and the diameter of shanks is decided by the tools used for producing the nails. Nails produced by the same smithy for a specific purpose are therefore much more homogeneous than a collection of nails from different objects and smithies. For finds of boat nails, nail dimensions give also a rough indication of the size of the vessel, as bigger ships needed bigger nails.

Finally, corrosion frequently preserves the remains of the material into which a nail has been driven. The study of wood fragments on nails reveals not only what species of wood were used, but also, by the orientation of the wood grain, how the timbers, kept together by the nail, were arranged. In some cases the orientation of the meeting surfaces of the joints, together with any luting material present, can be identified.

Applying these tools to the nail assemblage from Kiloran Bay, we may try to answer the following questions:

1. Do the nails originate from one or more objects?

2. Was a boat present?
3. If so, what size did it have?
4. How was it situated in the grave?

In the Kiloran Bay find, 130 nails or nail fragments were preserved, and according to the sparse information preserved, this appears to be more or less the numbers found. Of these, 27 were complete rivets, while two pointed nails and one clenched or double-hooked nail were found. There were approximately equal numbers of heads with broken shafts and roves with broken shafts, indicating that most of the broken nails had been rivets. The find contains the remains of a minimum of 69 rivets and three pointed nails, but there may be several more rivets represented among the smaller fragments. A ratio of 23:1 between these two nail types strongly indicates the presence of a clinker-built object, but at the same time it has to be said that 69 rivets are far less than what is necessary for a clinker-built boat of any size.

Looking at the dimensions of the nails, we see that there is an apparent homogeneity, even if the maximum and minimum values within each dimension may vary significantly (fig. 7). All dimensions recorded have a sample standard deviation below 10 %, which means that variations within the sample do not indicate that they originate from more than one source. In other words, the same smithy may well have produced them for the same purpose. The homogeneity also becomes visible if we present the data graphically (fig. 8). The 127 records of shank thickness demonstrate a perfect bell curve, where 80 % of all records fall within the interval 5.25-6.75 millimetres. A uniform shank thickness is a prerequisite for nails produced for riveting, and we here recall that almost all the nails in the find appear to be rivets.



Fig. 7: Ten of the best preserved rivets from Kiloran Bay. Courtesy of the National Museums of Scotland. (JB-fig7.tif)

	Head, diameter	Shank, diameter	Rove, short side	Rove, long side	Rove, short diag.	Rove, long diag.
Mean value of variable in sample (mm)	20.87	6.07	18.35	19.97	19.74	31.89
Maximum value of variable (mm)	29	8	22	25	28	38
Minimum value of variable (mm)	17	5	16	17	17	26
Number of observations of variable	71	127	55	63	54	57
Sample standard variation coefficient (%)	9.27	9.45	7.36	9.85	9.85	8.05

Fig. 8: Table showing the maximum, minimum, average and sample standard deviation for the shank thickness of the Kiloran Bay nails. (JB-fig7.doc)

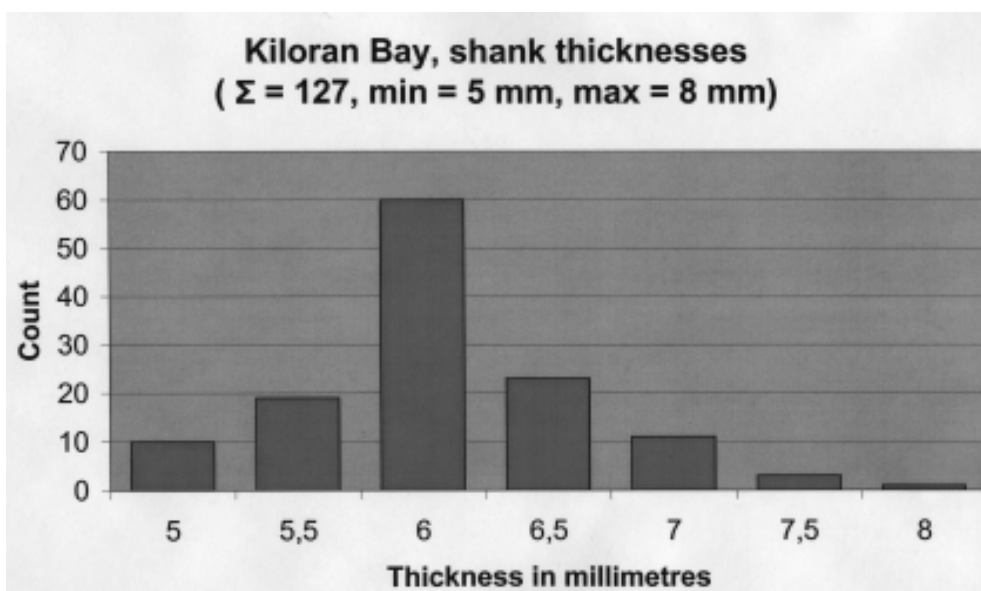


Fig. 9: Histogram showing the distribution of shank thicknesses among the Kiloran Bay nails. (JB-fig8.tif)

The diameter of the head was recorded in 71 cases. The histogram in fig. 9 shows these together with the head diameters recorded in the planking of a twelfth century ship fragment excavated in Dublin. In the Dublin case, all nails that could be proved to originate from repairs to the vessel were omitted, and the picture therefore reflects the variation in the original nails. The Kiloran Bay and the Dublin TG9 finds both produce a very similar picture.

Looking at the sides and diagonals of the roves in the Kiloran Bay find (fig. 10), a similar homogeneity is seen. This is especially important, since the dimensions of the roves are not so restricted by function or manufacture as those of the head and shaft. Instead their shape was

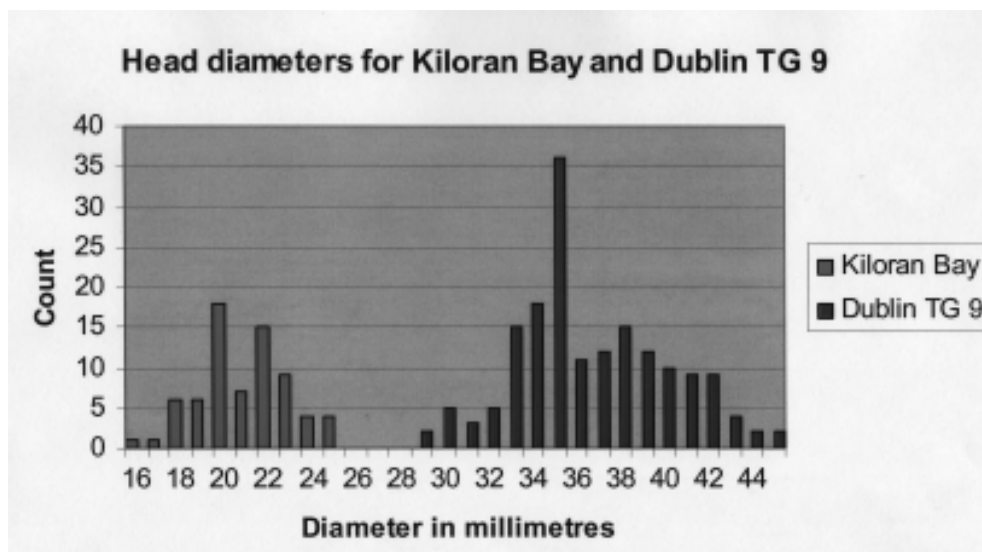


Fig. 12: Histogram showing the diameters of the preserved nail heads in Kiloran Bay, compared to those found in a twelfth century ship fragment from Dublin. (JB-fig9.tif)

a matter of design. The roves of the find therefore strongly indicate that the majority of the rivets were produced on one and the same occasion, and therefore that they were part of one object in the grave.

The measurements of the nails from the Kiloran Bay grave strongly suggest that they were virtually all made for one purpose and on one occasion. Was this occasion the building of a boat? The composition of the find, with a clear predominance of rivets over any other type of nail, is in accordance with a Nordic type of clinker-built vessel. The variation of the length of the 27 preserved rivets supports this interpretation, with the bulk of the rivets (with lengths between 27 and 35 mm) being ordinary lap-strake fasteners. The single very short rivet should be from a plank scarf, a lengthwise joining of one plank to another (fig. 11). In the Viking Age such plank scarfs were made with short, oblique cuts and flush surfaces; their fasteners therefore attained the thickness of only one plank or approximately half the length of the ordinary lap-strake rivets. The single long rivet could be either from the fastening of the frame construction or from keel, stem or stern scarfs.

An investigation of the remains of wood on the nails strongly supports this interpretation of the material. Such remains were left on a total of 115 nails and nail fragments. On all ordinary rivets, as well as on all fragments with roves or heads preserved, the wood fibres, when present, were arranged according to a pattern, where one set of fibres ran over the inner surface of the heads, and another set ran parallel with this on the inner surface of the roves, parallel to the longest diagonal. Where the meeting surfaces between these two sets of wood fibres could be observed, they ran parallel to the direction of the fibres and slightly at an angle to the inner surface of the head or rove. This arrangement of wood fibres fits perfectly with the nails being used to put the planks together in lap-strake or clinker construction. However, it is the two unusual rivets that imply boat construction most directly. The short rivet had the

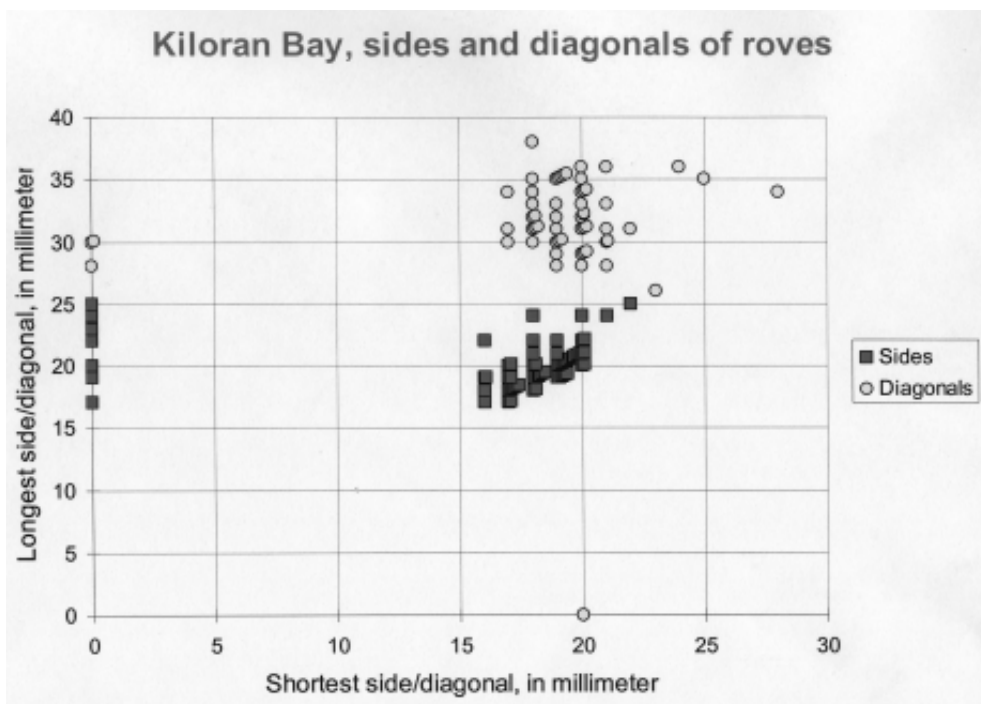


Fig. 13: Scatter diagram showing the variations in the side lengths and and diagonals recorded on the roves from Kiloran Bay. (JB-fig10.tif)

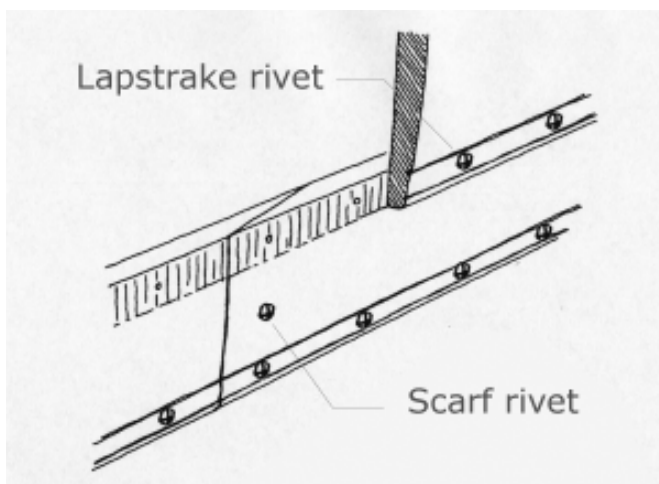


Fig. 14: The use of lapstrake and plank scarf fasteners (drawing: Morten Gøthche). (JB-fig11.tif)

two sets of fibres arranged along the short diagonal of the rove and - even more important - their meeting surfaces cut off the fibres at an oblique angle comparable to that of a lengthwise scarf. The same phenomena could be seen on the extraordinary long rivet, strongly suggesting

that this was derived from a keel-stem or keel-stern scarf (fig. 12). Such an interpretation also fits in with the fact that this particular nail was the only one to have a diameter as large as 8 mm for the cross-section of the shank. Unfortunately its head and rove did not survive to an extent that allowed any further observations to be made, and so we cannot compare those elements with the rest of the assembly. Neither the presence of plank scarfs, nor that of heavier, lengthwise scarfed timbers fits in well with the other known uses of rivets in Viking Age carpentry: wagon bodies, doors or chests. The most reasonable explanation for the traits so far identified in the Kiloran Bay nails is that they originate from a clinker-built vessel. The homogeneity of the find also seems to exclude the presence of many other objects containing nails in the grave: only one nail - a double-hooked, pointed nail keeping three pieces of timber of parallel orientation together cannot be identified as a typical ship nail. Taken together, the nail material strongly points to the presence of a boat in the grave and, again with reference to the keel-stem rivet, rather to one that is standing on its keel than one turned upside down.

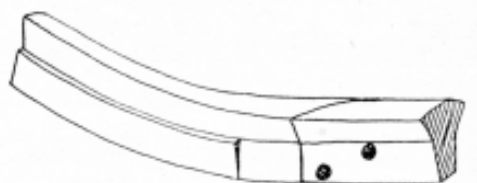


Fig. 15: Example of diagonal scarf between stem and keel on Valsgårde 14, a Viking Age boat from a 9th century boatgrave from Uppland in Central Sweden. After Bill & Johansson 1987, p. 19. (JB-fig12.tif)

Can anything be said about the size of the boat? With an average shank diameter of slightly above 6 mm, the Kiloran Bay nails are not larger than those known from wagon bodies and boats 12 m or less long. The comparative material at this stage, however, does not include the boat graves excavated at Scar and Westness, and it is possible that a comparison with this material could refine this result further.¹⁰ The plank thicknesses of 14-18 mm indicated by the length of the preserved rivets do not point to a large vessel either. The early tenth-century Gokstad boats, measuring 4.5 m and 9.75 m in length, had planking 12-15 mm thick, and the same thickness is found in the even smaller Årby boat. Further support for assigning a modest size to the Kiloran Bay boat can be found in the thickness of the keel at the keel-stem or keel-stern scarf, if the interpretation of the extraordinarily long rivet is correct. A dimension of only 48 mm at this point resembles those found in the Gokstad boats mentioned above.¹¹

The distribution of the nails also points to a length not exceeding or only marginally exceeding 12 m. The most extreme find position possible for the presumed keel-stem scarf rivet is at the eastern end of the horse skeleton. If we assume that the enclosure had been centrally placed in the boat, this indicates a maximum keel length of about 10 metres, since Viking boats were symmetrically built. Adding room for stem and stern, the maximum length thus reaches 12-12.5 metres.

The analysis of the nail material leads to the conclusion, that a boat was probably present in the grave as the only item containing many nails, that it was standing on its keel, and that it was of modest size not exceeding an overall length of 12 m. No support has been found either for the upside-down theory or for the reused timber theory, and these therefore have to be dismissed as exotic. Are we able to produce evidence for or against either the boat-chamber

grave or the ordinary boat grave theory? Unfortunately not. The collection of nails makes up only a very small sample of what was originally present, if indeed a boat was there. Even a boat of 10 m length easily contains 500 rivets or more, so most likely only 10-15 % of the rivets in the original boat are extant. We may claim that more rivets should have been found, had the burial been situated inside the vessel, but given the conditions on the site and the history of the excavation, we cannot exclude the possibility that large numbers disappeared before reaching museum collections. A solution to the dilemma concerning the low number of nails preserved may be offered, however, by the model of the Scar boat grave.¹² Here stones were found not only inside the boat, but also on the outside, where large flagstones, 15-80 cm across, were packed around the outside of the boat to keep it in position. The stone packing was concentrated towards the two ends of the boat. Inside the boat, a division of the space was achieved by setting a large stone slab (0.6 m wide by 0.5 m high) on edge across the width of the boat, supplementing it with a smaller flagstone. The apparently rectangular, but very disturbed grave chamber that Malcolm McNeill believed he could see during his excavation in 1882 could have been formed by an almost identical construction: flagstones on the outside of the boat on both sides - but here along its central part - in order to keep it upright in its trench in the sand dune, and some more flagstones placed inside the boat to serve as dividers between the grave chamber in which the deceased was placed, and the fore and aft of the vessel, in one of which the horse was deposited. Such a construct, wrongly perceived by an excavator unfamiliar with making archaeological observations and passed on to us only through a reconstruction made by a second-hand witness, may well account for the captivating regularity of the excavation plans. Since it is also in agreement with all the archaeological information, sparse as it is, that we have about the grave, it seems to be a more likely explanation than that of a chamber grave below a boat. The only question left is that of the two cross-marked slabs - why are they there? All the flagstones used in the grave were brought to the place from some distance, as they do not occur naturally in the sand dunes. Therefore they may have been taken from one of the early Christian cemeteries known elsewhere on the island, or they may have originated in a lost churchyard situated elsewhere in the dune landscape. Alternatively the crosses may be later additions to the story about the Norseman resting at Kiloran Bay, just as this study is.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my gratitude to the National Museum of Scotland and its staff for making this study possible and to Dr Trevor Cowie in particular for his information, all his help and his comments on the manuscript. I want also to thank Professor David Carlson at the Anthropology Department of the Texas A&M University for encouraging discussions about the statistics of small numbers.

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Notes

- ¹ Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 122
- ² The find was first published after Galloway's death, but on the basis of his notes, by the Keeper of the Royal Scottish Museum, Joseph Anderson Anderson 1907.
- ³ Joseph Anderson held a series of Rhind Lectures, Scotland in Pagan Times: The Iron Age in 1881, which were printed in 1883. These lectures are likely to have been a main source of information for William Galloway and their printed edition contains a description of the Tune and Gokstad burials, as well as several references to *Aarsberetning. Foreningen til Norske Fortidsminders Bevaring*, in the 1873 and 1874 issues of which reports of boat graves with capsized boats can be found.
- ⁴ Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 118-122
- ⁵ Carver 1998; Wamers 1995
- ⁶ Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 122; Bersu & Wilson 1966
- ⁷ Kalland 1993; Owen & Dalland 1999: 26-31
- ⁸ See, e.g.: Lund, Sweden: Lundström 1976; Caister-by-Norwich: Myres & Green 1973
- ⁹ Wamers 1995
- ¹⁰ Bill 1994: 60.
- ¹¹ Dammann 1983: Taf. 16 and 17.
- ¹² Owen & Dalland 1999: 26-27

Farming and farming systems in Norse societies of the North Atlantic

Ingvild Øye

All the Norse societies of the North Atlantic were rural, living mainly off their land – farms and farmsteads.¹ So far, agrarian studies of these communities have mainly concentrated on settlement, particularly farmhouses and dwellings, or special aspects of agrarian economy, rather than a broader spectrum of structures and farming systems. A more or less pronounced precondition of these studies has been that the settlers brought old farming systems and methods – a whole package of domesticated plants and animals as well as farming expertise – from their homeland to their new life in the west (Thorsteinsson 1991:20; Amorosi 1991:272). As the larger part of them seem to have emigrated from the Norwegian coastal areas, conditions in the settlement areas may also reflect the Norwegian situation prior to, or contemporary with the first colonisation, the *landnám*, and bilateral relation to the homeland was frequent during the whole period. From the late twelfth century Shetland, Orkney and the Faeroes were all of them Norwegian tributary lands and from the 1260s the Norwegian dominion comprised all the Norse island communities of the North Atlantic from Greenland to Orkney (fig. 1).

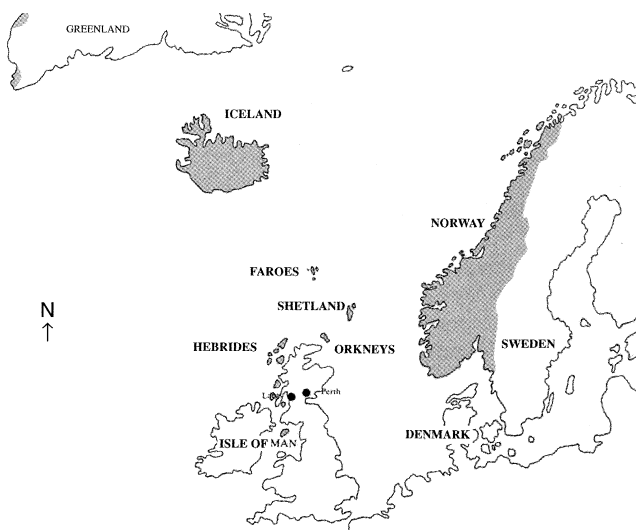


Fig. 1: Norway's territorial power reached its peak in 1265, the year before the Hebrides and the Isle of Man were ceded to Scotland at the Peace of Perth. (IO-fig1.tif)

The questions that will be addressed in this paper concern both methodological and empirical aspects: Is it possible to transplant a whole culture, farming systems included, to areas with other climatic, ecological and demographic conditions? What elements would be transferred – whole structures and systems, such as the whole concept of a farm, or only elements? Can we expect the same kind of agrarian development to have taken place in different environments? To answer such questions it is necessary to discuss tradition and diffusion versus adaptation and innovation.

The terms farming and farming systems are used in a broad sense. The concept of farming system (Brush & Turner 1987) represents an approach by which the different components relate to others – such as land use, organisation of the resource areas, farming methods and environments. The concept also includes the socio-political aspects of ownership and management.

However, an uneven state of research on the various communities and a partly incongruous source material make comparison a difficult task. Imprecise or lacking datings from the earliest phases do not help the situation. Altogether representativity is a problem – varying extent and quality of the archaeological investigations, including archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological evidence, and an uneven state of preservation and research with regard to old agrarian structures, as well as dissimilarities in the selection of excavated sites. For instance, more high status settlements than average or small farms have been investigated in Shetland and Orkney. My brief and tentative overview will therefore only focus on the major characteristics of the systems and does not claim to be exhaustive.

These Norse areas were not homogenous, even if they had important conditions in common. Orkney was significantly more fertile than most parts of Western Norway, and both Orkney and Shetland had been farmed since the Neolithic, while the colonists in the other Norse island communities had to cultivate virgin soil. Greenland and the north-eastern parts of Iceland were the only areas where cereals could not be grown with any success. All islands had only limited cultivable areas but vast areas suited for pastures and considerable marine resources. When the Norse settlers arrived in the ninth and tenth centuries, they enjoyed a more favourable climate than today (Lamb 1995:pp.165) and consequently better conditions for settlement and farming.

Farm structure and settlement patterns

The terminology for various agrarian settlement structures is often confusing. Different terms may stand for the same phenomenon and meanings of some of them may vary. An all-embracing concept of a farm as a complete resource territory within its boundaries (ON *innan stafrs*) only existed in the form of the *farm's name*. The separate elements or structures of the farm territory were, however, marked out by their own terms. The common noun for the inhabited and cultivated area was ON *bær*, *býr*, derived from *búa* (dwell, reside) or the synonyms *ból* and *bólstaðr*. The nucleus of the habitation area was called *bæli*, (dwelling place) or *tún* (from which town is derived) as in Old English referring to the residential area and the space between the farmhouses – the farmyard. A central farm was called *hofudból*. The farm territory was termed *jorð* or *land* (including both the infield and outfield in Norway). ON *garðr* (etymologically identical with English 'yard') originally denoted the fenced-in settled and arable land (fig. 2). Its secondary, extended meaning of a settled, economic and agrarian unit² does not seem to have originated before the thirteenth century, and appears to have been most frequently used in East Norway and Trøndelag (Holmsen et al. 1956:29).

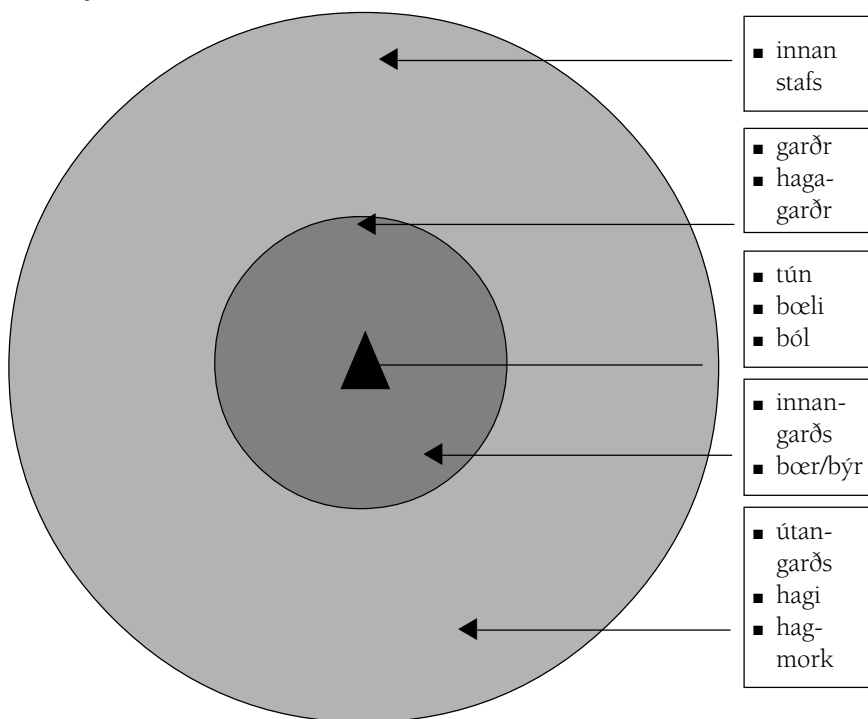
Farm's name - *jorð*, land

Fig. 2: Terms for agrarian settlement structures. (IO-fig2.doc)

All these terms – and their derivations, such as *bóli*, *bú*, *býlingar*, *bister*, *toun/tun*³ – are also used in the Norse settlement areas of the Western Ocean, and with an identical meaning, which implies a parallel way of structuring the farm area when the areas were colonised.⁴ The various terms imply a concrete way of thinking, but a more abstract generic term for a farm is lacking. It only appears at a later stage when the farm clearly was defined as a land-assessed unit.

In the Norwegian research tradition, the concept of a farm covers a whole range of settlements – from the small separate one-family holding to large multiple units. Regardless of its size and degree of subdivision the farm covered a defined territory, comprising all land used for agricultural purposes: the residential area, infield and outfield, and partly even forest and mountain areas (Sandnes 1979:166). One problematic aspect of such a wide farm definition is that it does not clearly distinguish between farm and holding on the one hand and between hamlet or village on the other. In this respect Scandinavian terminology is rather vague and fluid (Widgren 1997; Øye 2000).

In modern terminology the *holding* (Norw. *bruk*) is a unit of production occupied by one household, normally a family. A corresponding term is lacking in medieval usage, which may be due to looser and less defined property rights and a higher degree of joint farming practises at that time. The holdings of a multiple farm might each have their own residential area or

they might be clustered together in a common *tún*, resembling a hamlet. The households of the farm could thus be localised in the same *tún* or in separate *tún*-units within the farm's boundaries.⁵

The genesis of clustered multiple farms is still vague and unclear. There are, however, indications of such farms in Norwegian coastal areas in the early Middle Ages. What is the situation in the Atlantic settlements? Settlements in Orkney as well as Shetland and the Faeroes seem to have consisted of both singular and multiple farms in the Middle Ages. Groupings of multiple farms tended to lie adjacent to the most suitable land and could develop into townships. Jarlshof may perhaps demonstrate how a single ninth century farmstead had evolved into a multiple-farmstead complex by the early Middle Ages (Hunter 1996:109) and Húsavík in the Faeroes in the Late Middle Ages resembles clustered farms in Western Norway (DN I nos 589-92, 605-6; Øye 2000). In Orkney and Shetland satellites of smaller farms surrounded a central farm (Thomson 1995:pp.342), like in Western Norway (Iversen 1999; 2002). The main settlement feature in Iceland seems to be the individual farm and a dispersed settlement pattern (Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992:7; Einarsson 1995:118). Farms were usually run by one farmer or household, but two and even more households occurred, often sharing the same house (KLN M V:632) The Norse settlements in East Greenland may have consisted of several holdings, but this kind of subdivision cannot be fully substantiated by the archaeological evidence (Keller 1989).

An infield-outfield structure had been established in Western Norway by the Early Iron Age, and is clearly described in the normative sources from the twelfth century onwards. The fence (*garðr*) separated the arable on the inside the fence (*innan garðs*) from the outfield on the outside (*utan garðs*). The relation between infield and outfield was, however, not static throughout the period. The fences could be of wood, bush-wood, turf or stone – only the two latter are excavated archaeologically (Øye 2002:pp.296). Many farms also had a cattle path leading from the residential area to the outfield. The division in infield and outfield should be seen in a mixed farming context, including both cultivation and animal husbandry, but even farms without the former had to protect meadows in the summer season.

A similar binary division and structure can be substantiated in most of the Norse-colonised areas. The dating is, however, problematic, and in the Faeroes it has even been suggested that this structure may represent a secondary stage of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Mahler 1991:70). Surveys of abandoned Icelandic farms have, however, documented turf enclosures and embankments that divide infields from the outfields, some of them older than ca 1000, and probably from the oldest settlement period (Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992:15, 91,157; Einarsson 1995:101). A division of the agricultural land into an enclosed and cultivated infield, and an outfield used for grazing is known both in Shetland and the Faeroes from the thirteenth century at the latest,⁶ probably also from Orkney (Owen 1995:334). Traces of a physical division into infield and outfield are even found in Greenland, but only rarely (Albrethsen & Keller 1986:99).

Whether settlement in remote and barren areas should be interpreted as separate farms or shielings is a rather complex problem that will not be discussed in this paper. Suffice it to say that farms with an extensive utilisation of grazing land and decentralised seasonal habitation in the form of shielings may have occurred in the Faeroes, where it was abandoned as early as the eleventh century (Mahler 1991:68) as well as in Iceland (Sveinbjarnardóttir 1991;1992) and Greenland (Albrethsen & Keller 1986; Keller 1989; Christensen 1991). So far this has not

been archaeologically documented in Shetland and Orkney. Place names do, however, indicate that the decentralised farming economy based on shielings was a widespread part of the Viking-Age *landnám* economy (Mahler 1995:488, with references). This far the oldest archaeological dating of shielings in Norse territory is from the late Viking period and from the Faeroes (Mahler 1991:61).⁷ Both in the Faeroes and Iceland the distance between the farms is shorter than in Norway, often no more than 3-5 km (Sveinbjarnardóttir 1991: 86; Mahler 1991:68). In Iceland the earliest shielings are located in low-lying areas within the farm's territory, and should not be located on communal grazing land. Several of them seem to have developed into regular farms (Sveinbjarnardóttir 1991:pp.71)

In Western Norway there seems to be a clear concurrence of intensified cultivation of the infield and an expansion of the outfields and wasteland in the late Viking period or early Middle Ages (Øye 2003). Shielings could then be established both in the outfields within the farm's boundaries (*innan stafs*) like in Iceland, and in the commons.

The physical layout and structure of the farms thus seem to have been organised according to a more or less common, general concept, with a division of the farm in an area that was used more intensively than the larger outfield territory. The division is probably as old as the farms themselves, although the boundaries may have changed over time. The archaeological evidence is, however, scanty, as archaeological research on farm structure in the north Atlantic region is rather fragmentary.

Farming practises

The Norwegian agrarian economy in the Viking Age was based on mixed farming: cereal production and animal husbandry, with the keeping of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, geese, and perhaps hens. In the Middle Ages the crop-growing repertoire was extended, including winter rye, different herbs, vegetables, textile plants, such as flax and hemp, and fruit (Øye 2002). Animal husbandry comprised the same breeds as in the Viking Age, and based a varied production on an extensive use of grazing land.

The conditions for cereal production varied in the different Norse-colonised areas,⁸ with the most marginal conditions in north-east Iceland and Greenland. Angelica is documented in Greenland, and seems to have been cultivated in both Iceland and the Faeroes. The Norse settlements in Greenland were largely situated north of the 'cereal border', though some grain growing was apparently attempted at least in the earlier settlement stages (McGovern 1986:129-130). Except for Orkney (Kaland 1995:311; Owen 1995:334) and Shetland which had both the same species as in Norway,⁹ there was a tendency towards monocultivation of barley. A general decrease in grain growing occurred throughout the Middle Ages – contrary to what happened in Norwegian agriculture.

The animal husbandry of the Norse island communities comprised the same breeds as in Norway (Degerbøl 1943:261; Hansen 1991:52, Batey & Morris 1992:38; Christensen 1991:158)¹⁰ except for Greenland where there are no traces of poultry. High percentages of cattle and relatively high proportions of pig bones have everywhere been documented in the earliest settlements.¹¹ The early high percentage of cattle in Iceland and Greenland concurs with a low proportion of sheep and goat bones, also suggesting that farmers gave priority to cattle breeding in the earliest centuries.¹² Oxen and horses were used as 'energy slaves' in some of the areas, horses to carry manure, turf and seaweed, and oxen for ploughing (Young 1979:102; Gelsinger 1981:9).

There was a difference between the Eastern and Western settlements of Greenland in that conditions for agriculture were more marginal in the Western settlement and goats dominated over cattle. Both the Greenlandic settlements are atypical in having a larger proportion of goat bones than common in the other medieval north Atlantic archaeofauna. This would seem to indicate less emphasis on wool production, though probably sufficient to satisfy the local demand for wool (McGovern 1986:133; 1992:199, 219). The age structure of the cattle suggests that it was kept for producing milk rather than meat (McGovern 1986:124). It also suggests that Norse farmers were often too short of milk or other food in spring to allow the calves to live, or alternatively there was a high rate of dead birth due to undernourishment or otherwise poor conditions. Altogether, the age structures of Greenlandic cattle demonstrates the marginal conditions of cattle-keeping (McGovern 1986:125). In Shetland and Orkney, too, the mortality of young calves appears to have increased, in Orkney at the early Viking Age and in Shetland around the 12th century (Bigelow 1992:19; Barrett et al. 2000:23). It may represent a culturally defined herd management strategy introduced during the Norse colonisation - trying to feed as many cattle as possible over the winter, a system also used in Norway. The early settlers seem to have kept a different mix of domesticates from that of their descendants (Amorosi 1991:281).¹³ As grain production decreased in the most marginal areas, as in the Faeroes and Iceland, animal husbandry also changed. Scholars have suggested that an increase in the number of sheep proportionate to that of cattle occurred around 1200 in Iceland, at a time when the climate is thought to have started to grow colder (Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992:9). In Shetland a corresponding change took place between 1000 and 1300; animal husbandry was intensified and became more specialised at the same time as deepwater fishing increased (Bigelow 1992:pp.19).

These changes should, however, also be seen in a wider socio-economic perspective, including taxation and exports. The importance of sheep and to some extent cattle is demonstrated by the payment of products such as butter, wool and textiles (*vaðmál*), in taxes and tithes and by the exportation of the same commodities, especially from Iceland, but also from the Faeroes and Shetland (Gelsinger 1981:pp.12, 11; Þorláksson 1991), less so from Orkney (Barrett et al. 2000:23).

With changed farming practises larger areas were needed for subsistence in terms of food. Larger sheep herds, and an increased and less diverse utilisation of the resource areas could easily lead to over-exploitation. Restrictions of the joint use of outfields in the Faeroese 'Sheep Document' of 1298 should be seen in this perspective.

Permanent cultivation was the most laborious of all cultivation systems, but gave the highest yields, in terms of energy. As this system was practised in Western Norway it required soil nutrients to function (Øye 2002:pp.337, with references). Dung from the cattle, seaweed, turf and ashes were used as fertilisers both in Norway and the Norse island communities. Turf and ashes are documented from the Viking Age in the Faeroes (Mahler 1991). The productivity of the arable land in Orkney was also maintained and improved by adding seaweed, animal dung and turf stripped from the uncultivated land. Small plots of such 'Plaggen' soil have been identified, especially clustered around farms with Norse farm names, and the datings imply that the accumulation began in the Middle Ages (Barrett et al. 2000:21). To what extent the infield was fertilised in the other Atlantic areas is not quite clear, but in Iceland cow dung could even be used on hay fields (Buckland et al. 1992:259; Albrethsen & Keller 1986:99). Indications of early permanent cultivation are found in the Faeroes, but it was succeeded by

rotational systems with longer periods of fallow (Thorsteinsson 1991:21),¹⁴ a shift that may be related to changes in the animal husbandry and increased sheep breeding. At Sandnes in Greenland irrigation channels covering most of the former homefield had the effect of extending grass growth and moderating temperature effects (McGovern 1992:216). Drainage, irrigation, and slope modification were other measures to improve soil conditions.¹⁵ The methods are known in the areas, but the dating is still somewhat unclear. In Norway slope modification is documented as early as from the Early Iron Age (Austad, Øye et al. 2001). In Iceland a network of long and deep drainage ditches defined the land (Buckland et al. 1992:254).

The innovations in Norwegian medieval agriculture were not adopted in the North Atlantic farming systems although they were certainly known – probably because they were regarded as inappropriate.

The old farming systems were, however, modified, tending to become more extensive than in the earlier phases. As cattle breeding and cereal growing decreased, a more specialised and intensified animal husbandry based on sheep farming developed at the same time as fishing gained importance – at least this seems to be the case in the Faeroes and in Iceland (Amorosi 1991:280-281). The growth of Norwegian commerce in products as dried fish may have had spread effects in the Atlantic region, and dried fish were exported to European markets via Norwegian ports.

Egalitarian or stratified societies?

Labour was a primary input in farming systems and a critical factor as many agricultural tasks exceeded the capacity of the household. Factors that govern resource use and availability and labour should therefore also be taken into consideration, e.g. land ownership and tenure.

It seems that the economies in both Norway and the Norse settlements of the North Atlantic were stratified in the earliest centuries (Gelsinger 1981:pp.26; Durrenberger 1991; Einarsson 1995:42; Keller 1991:126). The colonists brought with them slaves, semi-free and free followers, meaning that the relationship between a settler and those who worked for him was unequal. As late as the end of the thirteenth century measures were taken to tie farm servants in the Faeroes to their master,¹⁶ which indicates shortage of farm labourers. The trend towards more extensive and less labour consuming farming methods can also be seen in this perspective.

In a global perspective the distinction between control of and temporal access to land is generally indicative of stratification and inequality (Turner & Bush 1987). The origins of tenancy in Norway are not known, but it appears as a rather developed system in the Gulathing law. Smaller and more marginal farms connected to larger estates indicate that the system of dependent farming is much older, but it may have taken other forms than the tenancy systems of the high Middle Ages (Iversen 1995). Tenancy was also common in the other Norse societies in this period.¹⁷ The Gulathing law mentions short-term leases of one year. It is therefore interesting to notice that Icelandic leases were apparently also based on short time contracts (Lindkvist 1978:88), a system that generally favoured the landowner in times of shortage of land. The Faeroese Sheep Document of 1298 also implies time-limited contracts and mobility among tenants (Young 1982:101).¹⁸ The hereditary and more permanent tenures generally seem to have been established at a later stage, parallel with a more egalitarian economic farm structure, as an instrument for securing the conditions for both landowner and tenant in farming systems where labour represented a deficit.

Final remarks

This brief overview indicates that the first settlers did in fact transfer whole farming structures and systems, not only elements. The concept of a farm, its layout and land use, was transferred to the settled areas, even to the most marginal ones for agriculture. Climatic, ecological and demographic conditions were, however, influential, modifying and changing the farming methods. Population growth and socio-economic development worked to develop more intensive farming methods in Norway. The development of farming in the Norse communities of the North Atlantic seem to have taken another direction, resulting in more extensive and less laborious farming systems than in the initial phase. The farm structure itself was maintained, but the farming methods seem to have been more flexible, responding not only to different environments but also to changing socio-economic conditions.

The methodological implications seem to be twofold: First, one should be cautious in suggesting similarities between different areas based on separate elements only, without regarding them as integral parts of their farming systems. Secondly, one should refrain from using retrospective methods based on later conditions without taking into consideration the full systems and their contexts.

It is also evident that much more research is required before the development of farming systems in the Norse island communities can be reasonably well understood and compared with the Norwegian situation.

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Notes

- ¹ The only town is Kirkwall from the 12th century.
- ² Often associated with a more regulated and divided farm structure, comprising infield and outfield NgL V:230
- ³ *Bister*= *bustaðir* Common in farm names in Shetland and Orkney. *Byling Overtoun* in Burrey (Thomseon 1995: 344)
- ⁴ Shetland: e.g. DN I no 89, 1299 "Bú" and "bær" occur more than 30 times in *Orkneyinga saga* as well as in many place names (Owen 1995: 320). The term "byling" occurs frequently denoting settlements in the Faeroes.
- ⁵ In Iceland *tún* seems to have been used in an extended meaning about the infield.
- ⁶ Thorsteinson 1991; E.g. farm name Gaila of ON *geil* in the Fair Isles (Hunter 1996:113). Conveyance of land in Unst: *innan gard and utan gards*, DN III no 310
- ⁷ In Iceland no shielings have been dated to the earliest *landnám* period so far. The Greenland ruins also lack firm archaeological dates.
- ⁸ Bigelow 1992:21: There is little evidence of vegetation patterns in Shetland during the Viking and medieval period. From Orkney there is evidence of barley, oats and flax in the Viking period, and even wheat (Batey 1992:38; Hunter et al. 1995:281; Barret et al. 2000:22). The main cereal in the Faeroes was winter-barley sown in the autumn, probably also white turnips. The only kind of cereal in Iceland was barley, grown in south and west, but less so in north-eastern part (Zutter 1992, Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992:14).
- ⁹ Westness, Orkney: barley, rye, oats, flax; Marwick: *Hordeum* and *Avena*. Shetland: based on oral information
- ¹⁰ Bones of cattle, sheep, goats, horses, pigs, and even geese, have been documented in all the areas in the earliest layers (Degerbøl 1943: 261, Hansen 1991: 52: Toftanes, Shetland; Batey 1992: 38, Orkney; Christensen 1991: 158)
- ¹¹ In the Faeroes and Greenland evidence of pigs and goats terminates in the Post Reformation period (Thorsteinsson 1991: 21). In Orkney: bones of cattle, sheep, pigs, horse and hens are recorded in Viking Age layers (Batey & Morris 1992). Pigs were seldom more than two years of age; slaughter age between 12 months and 3-4 years; for cattle 4,5-6 years (Brough). The bones show that meat and hides were preferred. Increased weight on pigs in later phases (Morris 1995: 299). Unst, Shetland
- ¹² Amorosi 1991. In some areas the relation of sheep to cattle was 2:1 (Einarsson 1995: 101). In Greenland a difference between coastal and inland settlements is recognised with higher ratio of cattle compared with sheep double amount in the inland group (McGovern 1986: 133).
- ¹³ Larger farms in Greenland also kept pigs and small horses at the early settlements. (McGovern 1986: 138)
- ¹⁴ Rotation with one year sown and six years or more with grass.
- ¹⁵ In the Faeroes the cultivated infield was drained by deep ditches, which split the land up into tiny pieces of different levels and with the infield marked by a dry-stone wall (West 1972:11-12). Irrigation systems are documented in several areas in the Eastern Settlement in Greenland (Albrethsen & Keller 1986)
- ¹⁶ People had to pay fines if they sheltered farm-servants who had tried to escape from their master.
- ¹⁷ Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992: 11 Tenants – *leiguliðar* – and chieftains are mentioned in the Ice-

landic family sagas. By the end of the 1350 nearly all productive land in the Eastern Settlement in Greenland was owned by bishop or the local churches (Keller 1991: 135). In the Faeroes only 1/3 of the land was privately owned in the late Middle Ages, implying that tenants, like in Norway, ran about 70% of the farms (Thorsteinsson 1991)

¹⁸ The Sheep Document of 1298

Research report: Dictionary of proper names in Scandinavian Viking Age runic inscriptions

Lena Peterson

Dear Delegates to the Fourteenth Viking Congress, those of you who attended the Twelfth Viking Congress at Hässelby near Stockholm in 1993 will perhaps recall that on that occasion I presented a research project called “A Scandinavian runic-text database” (*Samnordisk runtextdatabas*) (Peterson 1994). The project has since proved successful and its results have been of great use. The first version was published on the Internet in 1997, and in May 2000 an updated version was published.

My purpose today is to present a research project which is based on the Scandinavian runic-text database, namely a project called “Nordiskt runnamnslexikon”. In English I refer to it as a “Dictionary of proper names in Scandinavian Viking Age runic inscriptions”, a title which is more apt (the project is not about names *of* runes, but about names *written in* runes). The Swedish title has a long history, and I now regret that I did not change it when formulating my application for financial support (see Peterson 1999, pp. 99 f.). Incidentally, up to the end of this year (2001) the project has been funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (*Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*). The name *Nordiskt runnamnslexikon*, abbreviated *NRL*, has however already been adopted by runologists and onomasticians, at least in Sweden.¹ And, as I noted in the new book by Judith Jesch (Jesch 2001) which I laid hands on just a week ago, it is cited by her as *NR* – to my great delight.

The aim of the project has been to collect all the proper names—both personal names and place-names²—occurring in the Scandinavian Viking Age runic inscriptions, the Viking Age defined here as encompassing the period from c. 800 to c. 1100 (which I know is not uncontroversial). This work has been in progress since January 1999, and is now nearing completion (the third, revised version was published on the Internet in May 2001).

The runic-text database now comprises some 6,000 inscriptions. Of these about 3,300 are from the Viking Age (defined as above), and are to be found mainly in the three Scandinavian countries, as well as in the Faroes (two), Great Britain (49) and Ireland (15). As is well known, Sweden (within its medieval boundaries) provides the majority, around 2,700, while Denmark has 400 (including runic coins) and Norway 129 (including four from Bohuslän).³ (Cf. Jesch 2001, pp. 12 ff., where only inscriptions on stone are counted.)

The number of personal names in this corpus is about 1,500; to be more precise, that is the number of entries for different lexical names. It is impossible to give an exact number of names, because many instances—more than a hundred—have been interpreted in different ways, and one cannot tell with certainty which alternatives are the correct ones. It may also be a matter of dispute whether two or more phonologically related name forms are to be treated as one name or different names. At all events, for these roughly 1,500 names I have provided etymologies—to the best of my ability, I must add, because it has not always been easy, in spite of the large body of literature consulted. Besides these names, the dictionary contains around 160 articles on name elements occurring in dithematic names, first elements and second elements, all with etymological explanations, and, in addition, lists of attested compounds.

I must refrain here from presenting charts etc. of the commonest names; instead, I would refer to a forthcoming article of mine (Peterson forthcoming a). Just a hint will be given: the three commonest male names in the whole corpus are *Sveinn* (148 persons), *Björn* (118) and *Þorsteinn* (90), while their female counterparts are *Þóra* (26), *Ása* (25) and *Guðlaug/Gullaug* (24). We find the same pattern in both categories: two monothematic names top the lists, followed by a dithematic name. If anybody were to ask about the proportions of male and female names, I would say that female names make up about a quarter (25 %) of the material.

Among the large number of Old Scandinavian names, we find a small handful of Celtic names. These occur in Scandinavian inscriptions in Great Britain and Ireland (11 names in all), and most conspicuously on the Isle of Man. These names are fine attestations of the intermingling of Scandinavians (probably Norsemen) with the local people of these areas during the time in question (see, for example, Page 1995, pp. 222 f.).⁴ Old English names also occur in the corpus (there are fewer than 10, and the name forms often diverge from standard Old or Middle English): these are the names of minters found on Danish coins.⁵ Interestingly, some of these English names have left traces in Danish place-names (Lerche Nielsen 1997, pp. 74 ff.). The number of personal names of Christian origin in the corpus is roughly the same: seven, of which *Jón* (*Jó(h)an*) is the commonest.

Place-names are not very common in Viking Age runic inscriptions, compared with personal names; only 137 are entered in the dictionary. Most frequent are names of farms and villages in the close vicinity of the runestones on which they are recorded. A number of very important first records of place-names can be noted, records which in many cases can be decisive for the etymology of the name in question. Names of more remote places, such as *England*, *Garðar* (= ON *Garðaríki*) and *Serkland*, testify to the mobility of Viking Man. I should add that, in the case of the place-names in the dictionary, etymological explanations have had to be excluded, as they are often very complicated and would have required a great deal of time and space, but I hope that the references to relevant literature will help the interested reader.

My account of the contents of *Nordiskt runnamnslexikon* would be incomplete without a few words about the “fetstilsbelägg”, i.e. names which have not been interpreted at all in the separate editions of inscriptions, but merely rendered in transliteration (bold face). Such “bold-face instances” are listed after both the “Personnamn” (227) and the “Ortnamn” section (20). I hope that *Nordiskt runnamnslexikon* will prove useful for various disciplines, and, as I say on the front page of the Internet version, comments are welcome.

Postscript

After the submittance (in February 2002) of my paper given at the Viking Congress in Tórshavn in July 2001, two of the references given above (Peterson forthcoming a, Peterson forthcoming b) have to be updated. These updated references are to be found in the following Bibliography. Further, I would like to draw my readers' attention to the following: (1) A fourth, revised version of *Nordiskt runnamnslexikon* appeared in February 2002 (also published as a cd-rom by Språk- och folkminnesinstitutet, Uppsala). (2) To be added to footnote 3: A new, updated version of *Samnordisk runtextdatabas* appeared in October 2004, now with several inscriptions from areas not included in the former database. (3) See now reviews of *Nordiskt runnamnslexikon* by Henrik Williams (in *Studia anthroponymica Scandinavica* 21, 2003, pp. 129-31) and Jan Ragnar Hagland (in *Namn och bygd* 91, 2003, pp. 182-85).

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Notes

- ¹ I should perhaps explain why the title of the paper I gave at the XXth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences in Santiago de Compostela in September 1999 was “A dictionary of the personal names in the Scandinavian Viking Age runic inscriptions” (Peterson forthcoming b): at that time I was very unsure whether names other than personal names would be included in the dictionary. (See also Peterson 1999, p. 102.)
- ² There are no names of weapons, vessels or the like in the Viking Age corpus.
- ³ It should be noted that the database is not quite complete. For example, as regards Viking Age inscriptions, there are some finds from Schleswig and Starigard/Oldenburg (Lerche Nielsen, Stoklund & Düwel 2000) which have not yet been included. A couple of inscriptions from Eastern Europe are also lacking (for such inscriptions, see for example Düwel 2001, pp. 125 f.).
- ⁴ Not being a Celticist, I have had difficulty formulating correct headwords and correct etymological explanations of the Celtic names. I would welcome any help in this respect.
- ⁵ Plus one coin stamp from Norway, N598.

Cognition, Culture and Context: Observations on the 'New' Viking Archaeology

Neil Price

Introduction

There are many senses in which the Viking Congress is a celebration of the disparate branches of research into the world of the early medieval Scandinavians, combining their various scholarly contributions into a nuanced experience of the one thing that we are all essentially studying: the Viking mind and the marvellous variety of its products. The long series of Congress publications therefore preserves a sort of informal history of our discipline, a constantly updated review of the Viking world as we have understood it every four years or so. However, on occasion this process becomes more formalised, and we are fortunate to enjoy a good and healthy tradition of taking stock of ourselves at intervals. Over the last twenty years there have been several such assessments made in archaeology, history and Old Norse studies by Patrick Wormald (1982), the late Christine Fell (1993), David Wilson (1996), and others. The 2001 Congress seemed an appropriate opportunity to continue in this spirit of self-reflection, coupled with some brief observations on the directions that Viking archaeology may be taking in the future.

All the individuals whose earlier surveys I have mentioned are, of course, distinguished scholars in their respective disciplines. By contrast, I make absolutely no claims to be in a position to present an authoritative survey of the field – this is no retrospective view from the heights. My remarks are instead highly contextualised, working outwards from my own experiences as a researcher, teacher and excavator based in Sweden, and more specifically Uppsala. From that platform I want to draw out three of the major trends that I see as characterising our subject at the moment, namely cognition, culture and context.

Cognition

We can begin with cognition, and in particular with what is often called cognitive archaeology. This is a very broad and rather vague term, but the variety of approaches collected under this label undoubtedly forms one of the primary branches of mainstream archaeology today. Essentially, this concerns the archaeology of the intangible as inferred from the material – the archaeology of religious belief, identity, ideology, perception, power relations, and so on (see Johnson 1999: ch. 6 and Gamble 2001: ch. 4 for recent overviews).

In one sense, of course, this is nothing new, a theme that I shall return to shortly. Through-

out the post-war history of archaeology, this concern for individual consciousness has run as a common thread from Mortimer Wheeler's 'archaeology of people' (1954) to Colin Renfrew's 'archaeology of mental processes' (1994). However, although scholars of the Viking Age have studied these aspects of early medieval life for many decades now, I feel that this has recently taken a new form, perhaps best expressed as a recognition, or rather an acknowledgement, of the *sophistication* of the Viking world.

In our interpretations of material culture we are ready to perceive new levels of subtlety, from the small-scale of objects and technology, through architecture and settlement patterns, to larger questions of landscape, economics, social structures and the *longue durée*. Above all, we have begun to recognise what archaeologists call the *meaning-content* of material culture: the fact that the form, ornamentation and daily use of artefacts – or buildings, or landscapes, or many other things – may contain more dimensions than the merely functional. To take just a few examples, here we may think of Anne Stine Ingstad's re-reading of the Oseberg ship burial (1995), Anders Andrén on Gotlandic picture-stones (1993), Mikael Jakobsson on military ideology (1992), or my own studies of ethnic and political statements encoded in Icelandic buildings and Russian landscapes (Price 1994, 1995, 1998). If we follow the development of one subject through the 1990s, such as the study of runestones, it is apparent that we see them now as art, as signals of prestige, as indicators of gender roles and status, as documents of inheritance systems and land ownership, as evidence of widespread literacy or alternatively as coded messages pointedly accessible only to a literate elite, as social phenomena intimately related to the regional patterns of power, as an index of the varied progress of Christian thinking and its differing local interpretations; we see runestones as all these things and many more (e.g. B. Sawyer 2000; Gräslund 2001; Lager 2002).

In a sense, this is the same trend that scholars such as Peter Sawyer (1962) opened up in historical debate forty years ago, and which have long been present in linguistic studies. After all, no-one studying Old Norse literature and poetry has ever been in the slightest doubt as to the complexity of the Scandinavian mental landscape. To archaeologists, however, this has introduced a new dimension to our understandings of the period. We should not be surprised by these things, any more than by the acuteness of the Scandinavians' political acumen and strategic thinking, the advanced logistics that characterised Viking operations in north-western Europe.

I would argue that all this is bringing about a profound change in the way we look at the Viking Age, but at the same time we must also be sure of the relationship between this newly-acknowledged sophistication and our existing models of the period. Of course, there is no sense in which a cognitive archaeology is proposed as anything other than a necessary complement to empirical studies, a complement that has only become possible as a result of the sheer wealth of detailed information that we have assembled about the Viking Age. The work of art historical analysis, typological study, chronological refinement, settlement studies and all the other elements of what might be called 'traditional' Viking archaeology (I shall return to that word later) obviously remains as important and as fundamental as ever, and will naturally continue to be so. The real benefit comes when we combine all these approaches, and this prospect is matched by a similarly broad shift in perspective at a more fundamental level still: that of how, and in relation to what, we define 'Viking' culture itself. This forms the second category of my title.

Culture

Over the last twenty years there has been a significant increase in the number of cultures or 'peoples' that we admit to be part of the Viking world – a statement that requires some explanation.

This process began at home, so to speak, with a revolution in the way that the native population of Fenno-Scandia was perceived. Over the last two decades, the patient work of a small handful of scholars has succeeded in placing another culture on the Scandinavian map besides the Nordic inhabitants, and I am of course referring to the Sámi people. It is hard to over-emphasise the importance of this. The 'cultural border' for the distribution of Sámi settlement remains as controversial as ever, and difficult to assess considering that it refers to the mobile range of a largely nomadic population, but after twenty years of excavations, genetic studies and now DNA work we can be *sure* that in the Viking Age the Sámi people operated very much further south than their modern settlement area (this work is summarised in Zachrisson 1997, with an excellent bibliography). Whether the Sámi really lived as far south as Oslo and Uppsala is irrelevant besides the fact that they certainly were present within a few tens of kilometres of these places, and that their sphere of movement extended similarly eastwards along the same latitude through almost all of Finland and north-western Russia as far as the White Sea. All of us now have no choice but to deal with the fact that for much of the region, 'Viking Age Scandinavia' means a place with two ethnically-distinct populations, apparently living together in relative harmony.

I have talked and published a lot on the implications of this, on the different levels of interaction between the two groups and the many tiers of social distinction within them, and I will not repeat myself here, except to say that if our view of the Viking homelands has changed so fundamentally, then we must be prepared for the effects that this has on the rest of the 'Viking' world (e.g. Price 2000a & b; in press). The interpretation of the Nordic population's material culture in central Sweden and Norway *must* now be viewed in conjunction with that of their Sámi neighbours.

Obviously, the concept of the Viking Age is itself partly defined by a particular form of cultural contact – not just the Viking raids, but by extension the whole sphere of international interaction within which the Scandinavians moved. Many of the peoples involved in this process appear in other contributions to this volume, concerning the distinctive hybrid cultures of Anglo-Scandinavian England, Hiberno-Norse Ireland and so on. However, the reason I place so much emphasis on the Sámi is because of the wider, and essentially unrecognised, cultural orbit into which they draw our perspectives on the Viking Age. The Sámi are, of course, part of the circumpolar cultural complex, along with other arctic and sub-arctic peoples such as the native inhabitants of Canada, Greenland, northern Finland and northern Russia. We are used to discussing the Vikings in the East, in the context of Rus' expansion along the river systems, and the Vikings in the West, in the context of the Greenland colonies and the elusive Vínland. However, we are less prepared to trace their encounters with the peoples of the White Sea, the high arctic of Canada and the ancestors of people such as the Beothuk and Mi'kmaq of the North American seaboard. Three transatlantic events in the millennial year have spotlighted as never before the breadth of work that is going on in these latter regions: the major symposium held in Newfoundland and Labrador (Lewis in press), the Smithsonian's travelling exhibition on the Vikings in the North Atlantic (Fitzhugh & Ward 2000), and the Canadian *Full Circle* exhibition on contacts between the Norse and Native

Americans in the sub-arctic zone (McAleese 2000). This research has implications that extend even back to Europe, in relation to the trading economies of the North Atlantic settlements, the demand for commodities such as walrus ivory, and the links that this established between the Old World and the New.

All these themes of culture contact typify the Viking experience in the North Atlantic area, with its complex population of Picts, Scots, Irish, Manx, the various peoples of the Northern and Western Isles, the Late Dorset Culture and ancestral Inuit, Native Americans, and naturally the Norse, perhaps even the Sámi too. Many of the projects that have recently transformed our knowledge of this region are related in this book, but we should also remember that we have now added another realm to the Norse world: in addition to their contacts with other peoples, the North Atlantic region forms one of the Viking frontiers with the circumpolar cultures, a complex that is also an integrated part of Scandinavia itself in the form of the Sámi.

Context

This re-orientation leads me to my third aspect of Viking archaeology, that I have chosen to call 'context', and by this I mean the circumstances within which we pursue our archaeological studies. Here too, there have been dramatic changes in recent years, changes which affect not just the way we work, but the scope of the work itself.

One of the most encouraging aspects of this archaeology is that there seems to be room for everyone. Not long ago there were signs of serious divisions in Viking studies, of an impasse between different – I will not say opposing – ways of viewing the past (see Wilson 1996: 25), but happily these problems have now themselves receded into the history of our discipline. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this is a new and more generous pluralism in Viking studies. Every conference usually ends with a plea for greater inter-disciplinary collaboration, but attempts at this have often been drowned from all sides in criticism of those who overstep the borders of their own fields. However, this is beginning to change, especially among younger researchers. Increasingly, we are finding that the same bodies of archaeological or written material are employed by scholars from different disciplines, but – and this is the crucial point – with the acknowledgement that the specific focus of each discipline embraces not only the type of material under discussion but also the research agendas involved.

For example, many Viking archaeologists now routinely make extensive use of written sources in their interpretations. To some degree, of course, we have always done so, and we should be aware that the moment a small T-shaped object becomes a 'Thor's hammer amulet' then written sources are being employed. Beyond this, however, a new kind of heavily text-reliant archaeology is developing at several places in Scandinavia and elsewhere. Examples here could include the numerous works incorporated in the Danish *Fra Stamme til Stat i Danmark* project (Mortensen & Rasmussen 1988; 1991) and the Swedish Uppsala-Stockholm collaboration *Svealand in the Vendel and Viking Periods* (Norr 1998; Herschend 1997; 1998; Sundkvist 2001 amongst others); a general overview of this work has also been provided by Dagfinn Ske (2001: 1-3).

This is far from being uncontroversial, but it is also here that the question of perspective becomes critical: *by definition*, an archaeologist will ask different questions of a text than a historian, philologist or a historian of religion (on the broader textual archaeology of literate societies, see Andrén 1997 and Olsen 1997, developing ideas in the spirit of Hodder's classic *Reading the past* from 1991). This can be illustrated with a religious example, for it is only

through archaeology that we can challenge the rather monolithic vision of Old Norse belief conjured by the textual sources. The material culture strongly suggests that Viking 'paganism' was not a consistent orthodoxy such as writers like Snorri tried to present, and may never have been systematically understood by those who practised it. Such a conclusion is all the more in need of critical discussion – a discussion in which archaeologists have no choice but to engage with historians of religion, and vice versa, while both these groups need philological guidance.

For archaeologists, the key factors must be an acknowledgement of our own limitations, a commitment to take advice where needed, and finally a belief in the value of a discipline which seeks to probe the interpretational boundaries of its material. This closely follows developments beyond early medieval studies, in the archaeological community in general – something with which Viking archaeology could profitably strengthen its ties (one should be aware that the central message of this paper would have been seen as self-evident in mainstream archaeological theory by the early eighties). It is no exaggeration to say that archaeology can now legitimately concern itself with almost any aspect at all of past cultures, not forgetting the ways in which they are perceived and interpreted in the present. Again, this is of relevance to Viking studies, as a field which has particularly suffered from political appropriation in the twentieth century.

This approach can also be expressed as a greater fluidity of boundaries, in a way that is reflected not only in our inter-disciplinary researches but also back onto the material itself. The peoples of Viking Age Scandinavia before the coming of Christianity did, after all, live in a culture that accepted a more ambiguous division between our world and the next, and between the world of humans and the world of beasts. This raises obvious questions about cultural attitudes to animals and the 'natural world', and by extension what it may have meant to Viking Age people to be human beings. Constructions of gender and sexuality form an integral part of such negotiations, as some of the building blocks of which these 'cultures' are composed. Many scholars are not only looking at women in the Viking Age in the sense of practical reality, but also in terms of archetype and image, something which is rather new to archaeology and is a perspective perhaps imported from literary studies (e.g. Jesch 1991; Jochens 1995, 1996 Göransson 1999). Others are extending this range to the way in which the image of the Viking woman has been perceived in later periods, down to our own times (Arwill-Nordbladh 1998). All these discussions are also pursued across sexual boundaries and into more challenging concepts of gender. There is no doubt that we now see 'Viking' women in an equal light alongside 'Viking' men, and we are learning to be cautious in our terminology.

We are back to cognition – the sophistication of mind that I discussed earlier is taken up here again, in a sense of flexibility and a refusal to use our archaeologies to create a Viking Age that is falsely homogenous. We have learned to emphasise regional variation, even at the smallest scale, and to explore changes over time within that diversity. The archaeology of the Viking Age is now richer, interpreted on a more shaded palette, than ever before. Quite simply, we have begun to accept that the various roles, identities and social positions adopted by the men and women of the period were every bit as varied as those that we ourselves possess.

This brings me to my final point, the relationship between this current state of research, as I see it, and what came before.

The 'New' Viking archaeology?

It is no accident that inverted commas have been placed around a word in the title of this paper – the 'New' Viking Archaeology. On the one hand, the distinction often made between the 'new' and the 'traditional' is an unhelpful one, I believe, because it obscures the deep traditions that lie behind much of what is allegedly innovative, and also the constantly-renewed innovation within much that is supposedly traditional. An important, though frequently absent, dimension of this new Viking archaeology must be the acknowledgement that many of its ideas are not new at all if we look at them in the wider context of Viking studies as a whole. All these themes that I have talked about are in fact deeply rooted in the research traditions of our discipline, often as far back as its very beginnings.

A perfect example is one of my own specialisms, Viking religion, and in particular the work I've been doing over the last few years on the possible shamanic overtones of the well-known *seiðr* rituals (Price 2002). To archaeologists in particular, shamanism and the Vikings is often seen as a rather esoteric combination, and yet this is a debate that goes as far back as 1877, when Johan Fritzner first raised the possibility of links between the shamanic belief system of the Sámi and the rituals of Óðinn. That discussion has been going on ever since, perhaps best personified in the 1930s by Dag Strömbäck, a familiar figure at past Viking Congresses. In all, there have been over 300 published academic contributions to the debate – it is simply that archaeologists have come to it relatively recently.

This presents us with a curious phenomenon, whereby subjects or themes that have long been acceptably commonplace in the work of philologists are suddenly regarded with suspicion, by those same scholars, as soon as they are taken up by archaeologists. At times it almost seems that there is a reluctance to believe in the very *possibility* that these things might not merely be literary motifs, but instead represent 'prolonged echoes' (Clunies Ross 1994-98) of a genuine ancient reality – and one that left physical traces in the material culture explored by archaeologists.

Another important element of the future of Viking archaeology must be a greater breadth of scope in our teaching. In most of the Scandinavian universities the activities of the Vikings *outside* the Nordic region are hardly taught at all, an astonishing fact given the circumstances by which the very period itself is defined. Although there are now several centres specifically for Viking and early medieval studies – such as those at the universities of Oslo, Aarhus and now Uppsala – these are clearly exceptions to the rule, and if we look at the teaching for the later Iron Age on general archaeological courses we find that it hardly ventures across the Scandinavian national borders, let alone further afield. By contrast, British and Continental teaching could benefit from a deeper input of Scandinavian material, especially with regard to the centuries preceeding the Viking Age in which the social impulses that characterise the period were rooted. There is clearly a problem of language, but we may also point to the relative lack of synthetic overviews for Norway and Sweden (Denmark being well-served here). Similarly, Scandinavians and Anglo-Continental alike would benefit from more extensive insights into the Finnish archaeology of the Viking period, which remains invisible on almost all university syllabuses.

We should take care to preserve our links with the traditions of our subject, and to be proud of them. We should equally embrace the fact that, as academics, constructive disagreement is what we *do* – it is what propells our subject onwards. With this kind of constant renewal, the future of our discipline is in no danger. The contents of the present volume

demonstrates the breadth of work in progress, specifically in the North Atlantic region and more generally beyond, and I think we have every reason to be confident in the healthy progress of Viking research. Naturally, the trends that I have isolated here are not written in stone. Another archaeologist, and certainly someone from another branch of Viking studies, might have chosen quite different themes. That is all to the good, and the same will undoubtedly be true in the future. I hope that at the Twentieth Viking Congress, more than twenty years from now, someone who in 2001 had not yet even started their university studies will be presenting a quite different review of a subject that continues to develop: the future of another 'new' Viking archaeology that is always regenerating itself while remaining rooted in the academic and cultural traditions that provide the unchanging foundation for all our work.

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Uppåkra in the Viking Age

Birgitta Hårdh

Introduction

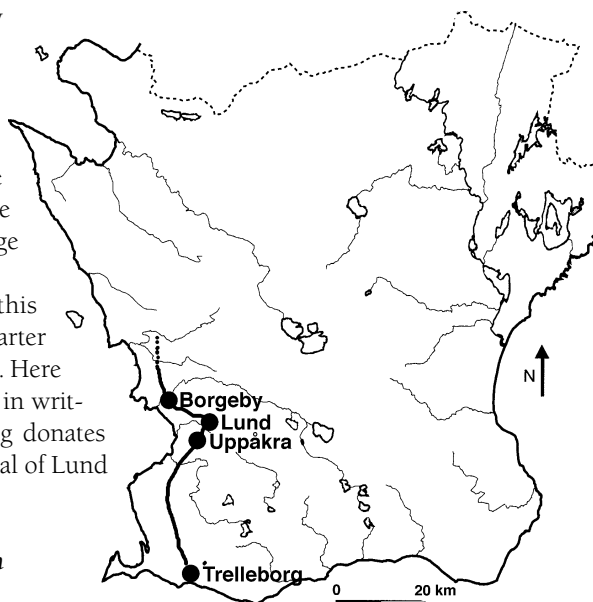
Since the 1970s there has been a revolution in research on the Iron Age in South Scandinavia. Investigations with metal detectors, first and foremost in Denmark but since the end of the 1990s also in Scania, have uncovered a quite new group of settlements with abundant metal finds (known as productive sites). The finds from these sites indicate a variety of functions, with trade and handicrafts obviously being important elements. The metal objects also frequently show a widespread network of long-distance contacts and prestigious quality products which give several of these sites an aristocratic character. Sites of this kind are often called central places, a rather general term, which is now being debated and problematised (Fabech 1997, Näsman 1998, Sørensen 2000; Hårdh 2002 a,b, and others).

Since an excavation in the 1930s, Uppåkra has been known as a very big settlement, unusually rich in finds and dated to the Roman Iron Age and the early Migration Period (Stjernquist 1995; Larsson 2001a).

As the settlement is situated only four kilometres south of the medieval city of Lund, there has for a long time been speculation as to whether Uppåkra was a predecessor of Lund. However, the problem was that finds from the Late Iron Age and the Viking Age were almost non-existent.

A document, important in this connection, is the Donation Charter of King Cnut the Holy from 1085. Here the name Uppåkra is mentioned in writing for the first time as the King donates estates in Uppåkra to the cathedral of Lund (Riddersporre 1998:173).

Fig. 1: Scanian sites mentioned in the article. (BH-fig1.tif)



The central place Uppåkra

Uppåkra is, as mentioned, situated about four kilometres south of Lund on a distinct height, 34 m above sea level in the middle of the Lund plain, with a wide prospect in all directions. Seven kilometres to the west is the strait of Öresund. Through augering, phosphate mappings and the distribution of finds from searches with metal detectors, it is manifest that the extent of the settlement is 1100x600 metres. In 1996 the investigations with metal detectors were initiated in Uppåkra and have become a regular yearly activity. Between 1996 and 2003 about 20,000 finds have been registered.¹⁾ These finds show beyond doubt that Uppåkra must be seen as a multifunctional central place during the entire first millennium A.D. A number of small, and from 2000, also big excavations have completed the picture in a manifest way (Larsson 2001a).

It is reasonable to maintain that Uppåkra was a centre of more than local importance for more than one thousand years. The exceptionally thick cultural layers were mainly accumulated during the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period. Glass sherds, some 50 Roman denars, an unusually large number of brooches, more than 150 of them, show, together with large amounts of ceramics and more, a large and unusually rich settlement from the Birth of Christ to c. 400 (Hårdh 1998, 2000, 2002a; Branca et al. 1999; Stjernquist 1999; Helgesson & Stjernquist 2001). Most striking from this period, however, is waste from extensive production of objects of antler and bone (Lindell 2001). The record corresponds to what is usually found at trade and craft centres from the Viking Age, but this is 400 to 500 years earlier. Combs were an important product. Similar production has been documented so far only from two Danish sites, Lundeborg, the harbour site of Gudme on Funen, and Hørup on Zealand.

From the Migration Period, 400-550, the material from Uppåkra is varied, abundant and striking, also by international comparison. Glass and ornaments, including several gilded garnet brooches, show contacts with various parts of continental Europe. Traces of handicraft indicate that an advanced metal handicraft was carried out at the site. Uppåkra was probably a centre where, for example, gold bracteates, gold foil figures, advanced relief brooches and more were produced (Watt 1999; Axboe 2001; Magnus 2001; Hårdh 2002b; *in press*). Metallurgical analyses show that metal handicraft was at an advanced level at least from the Migration Period at Uppåkra (Kresten et al. 2001).

A building, still under excavation, has attracted special attention. It is a house with marked wall grooves and deeply dug corner posts. The four roof-bearing posts were also of unusually big dimensions. In post-holes and in the wall grooves c.110 gold foil figures have been found together with gold fragments and other finds. Centrally situated in the house, a deposit consisting of a two-coloured glass bowl and a metal beaker with gold foil bands with figures was found. The house obviously had ceremonial functions and might be referred to as some kind of temple. It also seems to have had an unusually long continuity, from the end of the Roman Iron Age to the early Viking Age (Larsson 2001b, 2002).

The objects from the Merovingian and Viking Periods derive mainly from the plough layer. The cultural layers from these periods are almost totally destroyed by the plough. However, the number of brooches from the Merovingian Period is greater than from any other Scandinavian settlement site. All the typical South Scandinavian types, such as S-shaped and animal-shaped brooches, bird brooches, beak-shaped brooches and equal-armed ones, are present (Arrhenius 1999; Branca 1999; Hårdh 1999, 2001; Rundqvist 2003). In all cases the investigations in Uppåkra have multiplied the number of earlier known brooch types in Scania.

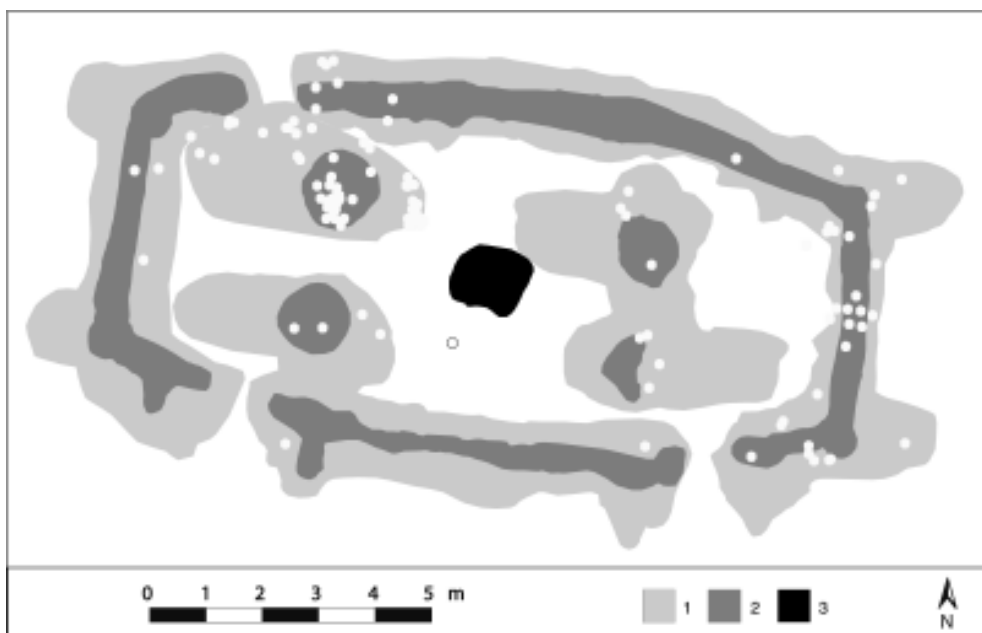


Fig. 2: The cult building at Uppåkra. 1. construction layers, 2. post holes and wall groove, 3. fire place. Small dots = distribution of gold foil figures, circle = deposition of metal beaker and glass bowl. Plan by K.-M. Lenntorp. (BH-fig2.pdf)

It is also manifest that there was extensive production of the various brooch types at Uppåkra. Corresponding brooches have also been found in graves and elsewhere in the region. A possible suggestion is that the craftsmen of the site produced brooches and other products, used in exchange to benefit the integration of the central place with its surrounding region, for example, to procure provisions, service etc.

Viking Age Uppåkra

As already mentioned, the name Uppåkra appears in a document from the late 11th century. When the new investigations started in Uppåkra in 1996 hardly anything was known of a Viking Age settlement at the site. A number of fields with the name "toft", known from cadastral maps from the 18th century could be a memory of a Viking Age settlement and King Cnut obviously had estates there (Riddersporre 1998:173 f.). Now, some traces from the Viking age have been excavated. So, a sunken floor building with a collection of loom-weights also contained a complete oval brooch, double-shelled, with Borre-style decoration, type P 48. In 1997 there was an opportunity to conduct a small excavation under the sanctuary in the present church, built in the 1860s. Foundations from the Romanesque medieval church under the present church were traced and beneath them, in a layer with occasional fragments of ceramic of Viking Age type, a skeleton in a stretched position with an east-west orientation was found. This could indicate an interment of Christian type before the medieval period. It is plausible to consider the possibility of a still older church on the site. Not far from the present

church a big encolpion, probably made in Germany around 1000, has been found (Staecker 1999). It could have belonged to a Late Viking Age church.

The main share of the Viking Age record comes from detector investigations. The distribution of the finds covers the entire cultural layer, thus approximately 40 ha. Just as in earlier periods, the number of Viking Age finds of various types from Uppåkra surpasses several times what previously was known from Scania. The site appears to have been one of the richest Viking Age settlement especially as regards ornament types. For instance, more than 100 fragments of oval brooches have been found. The majority of these are from the latticed upper shell of younger types. As many as 40 trefoil brooches, complete and fragments, and 43 equal-armed brooches have been registered so far (Tegnér 1999; Callmer 1999; Skibsted Klæsø 2001). A category worth attention is a group of about 40 round, cast and gilded bronze brooches and pendants with spiral or Terslev decoration and, in one case, animal decoration in Jelling style. This type of brooches and pendants is known mainly from places like Birka, Hedeby or Tissø on Zealand (Svensson 2001).

Several of the ornaments are fragments and it is probable that they were intended to be remelted and thus are to be seen as raw material for the metal handicraft. Some patrices found at the site, together with moulds from one of the excavations, show the presence of metalwork also in the Viking Age (Capelle 1999). There are also a couple of lead models for making moulds for ornaments (cf. Kresten et al 2001).

A total of 380 weights have been found. A rather large share of them, 69, are of the cubooctaedric type and 50 of the cylindrical type with flat poles. The rest are cylindrical. Some of the latter may very well belong to earlier periods but probably the majority of this type should also be dated to the Viking Age. It is suggested that the two first types were used in exchange whereas the third type also was important in metal handicraft to achieve the right proportions for alloys (Gustin 1999). Some fragments of balances have also been found.

Coins found in Uppåkra and dated to the Viking Age number 277. The predominant group is Arabic issues, about 250 coins. Their composition is early, with mainly Abbasid coins from the 8th and 9th centuries. From the 10th century there are 40 Samanid dirhams up to c. 950 A.D., while from the second half of the 10th century and the 11th century the number of coins is considerably smaller. There are some German, English and Danish coins but although the number of coins has decreased, the entire late part of the Viking Age is represented (Silvegren 1999; 2002).

There are many manifestations of the uniqueness of Uppåkra in the Viking Age. A small silver statue in the shape of a fantastic lion-like animal with two snakes was probably made in West Europe around 800 (Fig. 2c). The best parallels to the animal are to be found among the illustrations in *The Book of Kells* (Helgesson 1999).

There is a collection of ornament and mountings of West European, mainly Carolingian origin (Fig. 2g) (Capelle 2001; in press). Enamelled mountings derive from the British Isles, probably from Ireland (Helgesson 2001).

A now well known little statue represents a one-eyed man with horns on his head (Fig. 2f). The figure is closely associated with horned figures with weapons on, for example, coins, stamped metal foils or patrices for these (cf. Arrhenius 1994:211 ff.). There are also a couple of close parallels in Tissø. Apparently it is a representation of Odin (Bergqvist 1999, Figs 7, 8).

A small gilded silver head (Fig. 2b) has its best parallels in the famous caskets from Kammin

and Bamberg as well as on the belt mountings from the tomb under the church of Jelling. It is of course not possible to tell whether this highly prestigious object was made in Uppåkra, came there as scrap silver or shows the presence of some person connected to the Jelling court. It indicates, however, direct or indirect connections to the uppermost social levels in 10th-century Denmark (Hårdh in press b).



Fig. 3: A collection of Viking Age objects from Uppåkra. Photo B. Almgren, LUHM. a. 39 mm, b. 34 mm, c. 44 mm, d. 61 mm, e. 66 mm, f. 47 mm, g. 39 mm, h. 25 mm. (BH-fig3.tif)

Conclusions

As regards the variety, number and quality of finds, Uppåkra is fully comparable to the biggest Viking Age central and trading places like Birka, Hedeby or Tissø. A severe obstacle for the interpretation is, however, the damaged cultural layers, which means that traces of constructions are almost completely missing in Uppåkra. A central question is of course the character of settlement. The inland location, seven kilometres from the coast, indicates that the place hardly was a site with shipping trade as the main activity. In contrast to several of the Viking Age central and trading places, Uppåkra is not the result of a royal foundation in the Early Viking Age. At the beginning of the Viking Age Uppåkra had already existed for at least 800 years and kept a position as an exceptional site, a centre for centuries. Thus it is obvious that Uppåkra is not a parallel to Birka or Hedeby. Tissø on Zealand is characterised as an aristocratic residence. It is a manorial farm with abundant finds of prestigious objects, traces of high-quality handicraft and external contacts. The site has also continuity back into the Migration Period (Jørgensen 1998). The settlement of the central place Gudme on Funen covered a vast area but was obviously not dense. Instead the record has been interpreted as a collection of about 50 farms with dwelling houses and outhouses. This is a model which is also possible for Uppåkra, especially as the site is located centrally in a most fertile agrarian region. It is also appropriate to consider that the earliest settlement of Lund, from the 11th century, has been reconstructed as a collection of spacious plots with a settlement structure rather similar to concentrated rural farms (Carelli 2001:107).

In the 990s Lund was established a few kilometres north of Uppåkra. In this case it is a foundation, initiated by the king and with the church as an active and powerful partner. It is also most probable that the localisation of Lund is connected to the presence of the mighty Iron Age centre. Here an infrastructure, roads and other communications and a large population were already present. Whether the king had influence in Uppåkra or whether he saw it as a competing power is hard to know. About one hundred years later, as the above-mentioned donation charter shows, the king possessed substantial estates in Uppåkra. It is obvious that Uppåkra was a part of the power political game in eastern Denmark in the decades around year 1000. Two fortresses, Borgeby and Trelleborg, are dated to this period. Borgeby is situated at the estuary of the rivulet Lödde Å, the entrance to Scania from the strait of Öresund, and Trelleborg is situated in the present town of Trelleborg on the south coast of Scania. Both sites are also situated at a communication link that connects the south and west coasts of Scania and which runs in a north-south direction, through Uppåkra as well as Lund. It is probable that the two fortresses also played an important part in political matters, even if it is too early yet to state how.

During the medieval period, from the 12th to the 16th centuries, there was a considerable settlement of agrarian character in Uppåkra. Excavations north of the church have revealed traces of houses and a large number of objects, not least coins, have been recorded.

The Uppåkra site is important in several ways. The mighty centre in south-western Scania is of the utmost importance for understanding societal development in the region as well as the relations with centres and regions in Scandinavia, the Baltic area and beyond. The vast amount of objects found during the last few years is a manifest contribution to material culture studies, for the Viking Age as well as for earlier periods. Contact network patterns, for example, have been made much clearer. The huge number of different object types is also an important contribution to the understanding of conditions for metal handicraft. First and

foremost, however, the investigations in Uppåkra have shown the complexity of centre formations during the entire first millennium.

Note

- 1) Numbers of objects from Uppåkra given in this article refer to the totals of registered objects in 2003.

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See also other articles in Uppåkrastudier 1-9. Acta Archaeologia Lundensia, Lund. 1998-2003.

Kyrksundet in Hitis, SW Finland. A Viking Age resting place and tradingpost on the sailing route to the East

Torsten Edgren

One of the oldest written sources dealing with the archipelago in south-western Finland is a description of a sailing route, generally referred to as “the Danish itinerary” (FMU I:100). The manuscript is part of the *Codex ex Holmiensis A 41*, also called “King Waldemars land register”. *Liber census daniae*, a Latin copy, describes the route from Utlången in south-eastern Blekinge along the east coast of Sweden up to Arnholm in Roslagen, from there over Åland’s sea to Lemböte (*Lynæbōtæ*) near Mariehamn, and further on via Föglö (*Fyghelde*), Kökar (*Thiychækarl*), Aspö (*Aspæ Sund*) and Ørsund – of which Ørsund can be identified as Kyrksundet – to Hangö (*Hangethe*), the southernmost point of Mainland Finland. From there you could cross The Gulf of Finland by sailing directly, or via the Porkkala (*Purkal*) Peninsula, further to the south-east to *Raeuelburgh*, i.e. Tallinn in Estonia. (Aspelin 1901; Dahlström 1945; Andersson 1961; Ericsson 1984; Zilliacus 1989; Gallén 1993; Westerdahl 1995; Breide 1995).

Despite its name the itinerary is, however, not a true description of a route which contains sufficiently precise information about distances and directions that could be used in problem-free navigating. Rather it provides an account of the general route through the outer archipelago and registers resting places and harbours which were available during early medieval times. People travelled during the day in the shelter of the wide and, as far as navigating is concerned, rather complicated archipelago and overnighted in natural harbours. During stormy days and in bad weather conditions the stay could be extended for several days (e.g. Edgren 2000a). It has also been stressed that the Itinerary enumerates inhabited places where the Franciscans were in action (Gallén 1993; Edgren & Hiekkanen 1993). The dating of the document seems to be early 14th Century but it certainly describes an earlier route, probably used for centuries.

It can, however, be noted that most of the areas referred to in the itinerary were good harbours for relatively small and easily navigable ships of shallow draught. In some of these harbours chapels where you could pray and, if necessary, be buried, were later erected by early missionaries (Nordman 1940). Towards the end of the 14th Century only few of the resting places were replaced by real harbours which could accommodate larger and deeper going cargo vessels, most of them were simply forgotten. One reason was that some of the

routes were changed to deeper waters during the same period (Dahlström 1945; Andersson 1961).

Archaeological investigations related to the itinerary have earlier been carried out only in exceptional cases at the end of the 1930-ties. In stead the research activities in connection with the harbours of Finland in the Viking and the Middle Ages have been concentrated on historical sources and studies related to place names (Niitemaa 1964). The only exceptions of extensive research are those carried out by Kenneth Gustavsson on Hamnö in Kōkar on the Åland Islands – one of the places mentioned in the itinerary – as well as my own excavations in the 1970-ties on the island of Jurmo far out in the open sea, which is also referred to in the itinerary. Extensive research has also been carried out on Hōgholmen in Hitis, a fortified site on a little island close to Kyrksundet (Edgren 1977; 1979; 1999a; Ericsson 1989; Gustavsson 1995a; 1995b).

Kyrksundet in Hitis

In in other words, the itinerary refers to a place called Örsund beeing situated between Aspö and Hangö. Such a name is not amongst those currently used. It can however clearly be demonstrated that Örsund refers to Kyrksundet in Hitis, a place which appears in written sources for the first time in August 1347, when the Swedish king Magnus Eriksson visited the place on a trip to Finland. He signed two letters in "*Kyrkioswndh resp. Kirkiusund*" (FMU I: 522, 523).



Fig. 1: Aerial view of Kyrksundet in Hitis in Dragsfjärd, Southwestern Finland. Photo: National Board of Antiquities/ Hannu Vallas. (TE-fig1.tif)

The place name Kyrksundet was not restricted only to the narrow sound and the bay between the islands Rosala and Hitis. Rather it covers a larger area called Kyrkosundsskär, equal to the former parish of Hitis, nowadays the parish of Dragsfjärd. It is obvious that King Magnus visited Hôgholmen outside the village of Hitis where you can find impressive jetties dated by dendrochronology to the 14th Century (Edgren 1979; 1999a; Ericsson 1989). At Kyrksundet there are also some remains of a rejected chapel, visited already in 1871 by early antiquarians. A very limited area was excavated in 1938 and 1939 (Nordman 1940) while more extensive excavations were carried out by H. Edgren in 1993-1997. The chapel is surrounded by a 35 x 30 m stone wall. Between the chapel and the wall several graves have been excavated. The find material consists mainly of coins – some fifty are found – which correlates well with the history of settlement and trade in the area. The oldest graves so far can by radiocarbon be dated to the second half of the 12th Century. The chapel was abandoned in the beginning of the 17th century and a new church was erected in the village of Hitis in 1637.

“The Viking Age harbour or resting place” at Kyrksundet

In 1990 a collection of Viking age items was discovered with a metal detector in the immediate neighbourhood of the chapel ruins, dating the restingplace/harbour of the itinerary already to the Viking age. Excavations, although only on a limited scale, have been carried out during the summers 1992-1997, but only some 400 m² of perhaps 40 000 m² have up to now been excavated. (Edgren 1992; 1995; 1995b; 1997a; 1999a) Prospecting of the area with metal detector indicates, that there are sporadic but clear signs of human activity along the northern shore of the sound along a stretch of at least some 550 m, but no building constructions, not even simple pithouses, have been observed. Pottery is rare on the site. A fragment from a rough clay pot comes from a Slavic or Vendish pot imported in the 12th Century or even earlier from the south coast of the Baltic Sea. Some pots of the same type are found on the bottom of the sea near Purunpää a few miles further to the north (Edgren 1997b). Underwater archaeological investigations in Kyrksundet have shown that there are no rests of posts and jetties. This fact can be of chronological significance in that they are also absent from the Viking age harbours of Gotland – the so called “lagoon” harbours of which Paviken is a good example (Lundström 1981). The sound has also been dredged around 1960.

The only construction so far related to people living on the site is a very dark and soothy culture layer found in 1995 at a distance of 150 m from the chapel. It was situated in a low concavity in the rock and covered some 25-30 square meters. It can best be interpreted as the remains of a workshop. The finds include bronze bars and scrap metal for casting, a matrix of slate for the production of thin ornamented metal sheets, raw glass, glass and mosaic beads, small whetstones, a spinning whorl of clay, amber, iron ship rivets and small pieces of silver, probably for the production of jewelry. The majority of these pieces are tiny fragments of silver coins, mostly anglo-saxon struck during the reign of Ethelred II (978-1016). There are also German Otto Adelheid pennies (983-1040) and Frisian coins minted by Bishop Konrad I (1076-99) in Deventer and Egbert II (1068-90) in Dokkum just to name some examples. The workshop seems to have been in operation at the end of the 11th Century. As there are more examples of bronze casting among the finds from Kyrksundet, it is obvious that bronze technology and production of jewellery was an important activity for the people living on the site.

A large number of metal objects have been found during the investigations in Kyrksundet,

the majority of them being collected in connection with a systematic prospecting of the area east of the chapel ruins with a metal detector. This has made it possible to localize and collect bronze items, which may otherwise not have been noticed in the rough and very hard packed moraine. This applies, for example, to small droplets of bronze, originating from casting, and to the small pieces of silver coins from the workshop. Despite the rather systematic prospecting, our knowledge of some of the important parts of the area is still limited due to its large size.

Of the coins collected on the site, excluding the workshop mention should be made of fragments of half a dozen Samanid dirhems. Of these coins the oldest is struck in North Africa already before 815 AD, two were minted by Ismail ibn Ahmad in Andaraba (892-908), while a third is an imitation of a dirhem struck in Tashkent, probably from the Volga-bolgarers area and dated to the 10th century. All of these types are well known from Finnish and Scandinavian Viking age hoards (Talvio 2002). There are also German coins, minted by Otto III during his caesar period (996-1002), as well as some German Sachsenpfennig from the end of the 10th century. Some anglo-saxon coins are also present. In a similar manner to the above-mentioned coins being connected with trading, there are also more than twenty loads or weights which were found scattered around the area. The material includes both small polyheder-shaped weights of bronze and ordinary iron weights, with and without bronze covers most of them with dots marking their weight.



Fig. 2: Four spherical weights carrying weight marks. Kyrksundet in Hitis. Photo: National Board of Antiquities/ R. Bäckman. (TE-fig2.tif)

Among the finds of personal ornaments are several penannular brooches of bronze, some of them of rare Gotlandic types, a bracelet with long thin outdrawn ends and a lancet-shaped plate decorated with circles, of a type which appears in central Sweden, while a large ring brooch or pin actually represents a western Scandinavian form. Three bronze key shafts of a shape which has been found e.g. in Birka in Central Sweden, but most frequently in 10th



Fig. 3: Upper end of a bronze pin decorated with a bull's head from Kyrksundet in Hitis. Photo: National Board of Antiquities/ R. Bäckman. (TE-figr3.tif)



Fig. 4: Trefoil brooch from Kyrksundet in Hitis. Photo: National Board of Antiquities/ P. Pykälä-Aho. (TE-fig4.tif)

Century graves on Gotland, are of special interest and unique in Finland (Edgren 1997a, 1999b). A key-shaped pendant with attached chain has a counterpart among finds from the Province of Häme (Edgren 1999. See also Kivikoski 1973:772). A small bronze fragment originates from the outer surface of a Scandinavian oval-shaped brooch, a trefoil brooch is Scandinavian too as is a fragment of a guilt ringed pin. A comb-shaped chaindivider and a comb-shaped pendant with tin ornamentation represent Baltic and domestic forms. A west Finnish round convex brooch of Appelgrens type B belonging to a woman's dress, can be dated to the beginning of the 9th Century (Kivikoski 1973:657). It was found hidden between two boulders together with bronze spirals from a belt.

The iron objects are usually badly corroded except for a heavy axe typical for the Viking age and our knowledge on the use of iron and iron production on the site is therefore sparse. Iron slag is also nearly unknown on the site. A well preserved sword of Petersens type H/I with a magnificent pommel with silver inlays has however been found.

Regarding the jewellery, it can be noticed that several fragments from heavy bronze bracelets have been chopped with a chisel to return them to raw material; they have in other words been recycled. There are more examples of this custom from the Viking age. If they had been collected from a Finnish cremation flat cemetery, of which we have examples from elsewhere (See Taavitsainen 1991), they should have a patina caused by fire. As this is, however, not the case, they must come from inhumation graves or, more likely, from military looting expeditions carried out to northern Estonia. Several bracelets represent Estonian types. In addition

to scrap bronze, the material from Kyrksundet contains several bronze bars of Viking age type.

Harbour, trading place or outer archipelago settlement

The majority of the above-mentioned archaeological artefacts can be dated to 800-1100 AD, which indicates that Kyrksundet was frequently visited long before the first chapel was erected at the site and long before the route was described in the Itinerary. It is obvious that the site, which still lacks a typical culture layer and distinct manmade structures is more complex than was originally thought. It seems for instance that some archaeological observations can shed new light on the interesting question of the origin of the placename *Hiiti*. It is derived from the Finnish word *hiisi*, which refers to an “offering site” or “holy grove” and is an example of the many Finnish place names found in the archipelago of Finland Proper (Tallgren 1933; Kerkkonen 1954; Koski 1967). In the center of the site and close to some large boulders, a sword, a spear, a chain-holder broken into pieces (cf. Kivikoski 1973: 765), the already mentioned Finnish convex round brooch and a dress pin decorated with a bull's head were found. The ornaments were discovered in only slightly coloured – but not sooty – soil several meters from each other, whilst the weapons lay in an area of perfectly clean sand. As no burned or unburned bones were found to indicate that a body was buried there, none of the objects can be said to originate from a grave. The round brooch seems moreover to have been bound with a thread ornamented with bronze spirals and then hidden under a stone slab. These objects can perhaps be interpreted as gifts to *Hiisi*, one of the Gods of the forest according to Mikael Agricola in his list of old Finnish heathen gods, included in the first translation of the bible into Finnish in 1542 – “*Hiisi Metzeleist soi woiton*” which means “*Hiisi was the one to provide game*”. It is obvious that the site was of ritual as well as mercantile significance in the 9th Century.

One should also recall that in the sagas of both *Njál* and *St Olav* the coastline of Southern Finland is called “*Balagårdssidan*”. The name obviously refers to the custom of lighting fires on high rocks to warn the population against Viking attacks. In the saga of *St. Olav* you can read how *Olav* sailed to Finland after returning from a plundering expedition to *Eysyssla* (Saaremaa, sw.Ösel) in Estonia:

Then he sailed to Finland, went ashore and embarked on destruction, but all the inhabitants escaped in the forest, taking along with them all their belongings from the area. The king went far inland and through some forests: there were some valley district called Herdalar. They took some property but captured no men. At dusk the king returned to the ships. But when they entered the forest, people gathered from all directions to meet them, they were shot at and severely harassed. The king told his men to seek shelter, but before he found his way out of the forest he had lost many men and many more were injured. He reached the ships in the evening. At night the Finns raised a storm in the sea with their spells. But the king ordered the anchors to be weighed and set the sails; they tacked along the shoreline in the night. The king's good luck was then, as often, more effective than the spells of the Finns. During the night they managed to tack along the coast of Balagård and out to sea. But the Finnish troops followed by land as the king sailed along the coast.

If one considers that the archipelago is ecologically one of the most productive zones of the country, with excellent shore pastures, waters teeming with fish and possibilities for seal hunting, it is natural that the inhabitants of the coast and the inner archipelago made the most of these resources, at least on a seasonal basis. The silver coins and weights indicate that

people also traded, and the many examples of bronze casting indicate that craftsmen also were present. If one considers that the optimal sailing season is after all rather short – maybe from early May to mid October – it appears likely that living in Hitis was tied to the seasons. In such a case one can assume that Kyrksundet was inhabited by people from iron age farms to the north in the parishes of Halikko, Kimito (fi. Kemiö) and Bjärnå (fi. Perniö), who during the summer moved south to the eastern route and traded with travellers and benefitted from the favourable economical conditions of that time. This trade was more international during the 11th and 12th centuries than in previous centuries as reflected in the rich grave finds from those regions, especially Halikko. Gradually there was a need for more permanent facilities for the travellers which led to a more stable settlement. The spinning whorl clearly indicates that women were also present on the Kyrksundet-site.

The examples of bronze casting mentioned above, together with the important workshop find, suggest that itinerant craftsmen gradually established themselves in the vicinity of the sound, thereby giving the settlement a somewhat more permanent character. This also led to the need of a cemetery, which was established on the same spot where the medieval chapel later was erected. It is not impossible that these events might reflect the first stages of that

Swedish colonization of the southwest Finnish coast, (e.g. Orrman 1990 with references) which came to dominate the following decades. On the other hand, immigrants and transients from all directions may have gradually formed the basis of a multiethnic population as happened for instance in Staraja Ladoga and on other well frequented resting places and trading posts.

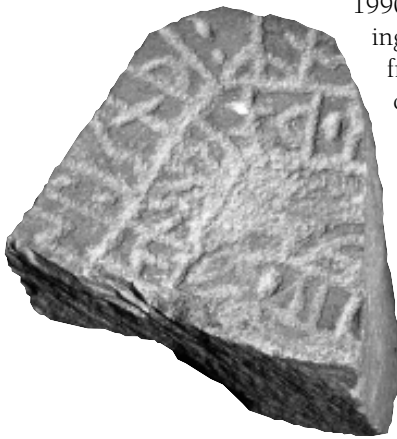


Fig. 5: Upper corner of a Rune stone found in the sea close to An important find related to the settlement in Hitis is the Island Stora Ångesön in Hitis, Dragsfjärd. Photo: National Board of Antiquities. (TE-fig5.tif)

An important find related to the settlement in Hitis is a recent find of a fragment of a Scandinavian runestone, the only so far found in Finland (Åhlen & Tuovinen 1997; 1998). The ornamented stone was found in a sheltered bay but despite underwater archaeological prospecting on the find location it is still an open question how it got there. It is not out of the question that the stone may have belonged to ships ballast. Of the fragmentary text you only can read a mans name *torfast*.

There are good reasons to believe that most of the Scandinavian seafarers on their way to Gårdarike, Aldeigjuborg, Holmgård, and the big Russian rivers leading to Miklagård and the eastern Mediterranean world used the route described (Edgren 2000b with references), rested for a day or two in the shelter of Kyrksundet and left all kind of trading goods behind them. On the contrary, there are only few finds of eastern origin in Kyrksundet. Perhaps the seafarers found it wise to take an outer route on their way home, just to avoid looting Finns and save their luxury goods for their people at home. On the other hand it is a common trend that the

eastern trade gradually diminished in the 11th Century (Kivikoski 1937; Nordman, C.A. 1942; Hirviluoto 1978). According to historical sources, the interaction between the outer archipelago and the settlement located in the protected bays of the mainland further to the north continued into the 17th Century, when people from Halikko seined for Baltic herring on the islands west of Hitis. As we can see this interaction has ancient roots.

The flourishing economy in Viking Age Finland cannot as a whole be explained solely through foreign contacts and trade relationships. On the contrary, the changes appear to emanate from a domestic economical evolution, which included e.g. a definitive shift to permanent fields – as opposed to shifting swiddens – and the birth of village communities. At the same time, it is apparent that the rise in the standard of living affected an ever larger portion of the population. Viking Age grave finds point to an egalitarian society of the type that usually characterizes affluent farming communities (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1991; Edgren 1992). None of the graves differ from the others – whether in construction, location or grave goods – to the extent that they could be thought of as belonging to leaders with exclusive political power.

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The Metal Detector and the Viking Age in Denmark

Anne Pedersen

It is more than 20 years ago that the metal detector was introduced on the archaeological scene in Denmark. At first it was rejected by professionals, especially when in the hands of amateur archaeologists or non-expert treasure hunters, as the possible risk of misuse and damage to archaeological sites overshadowed the potential of the detector in locating metal artefacts (Fischer 1983). Since then the metal detector has proved its efficiency and it is now an indispensable tool in field-walking and on excavations. A working relationship has been established between land owners, amateur archaeologists and museum professionals, often altering the roles of the participants, as the amateur archaeologist can be the more experienced detector user and by his/her efforts contribute considerably to the study of artefacts and identification of archaeological sites (cf. Lund & Ørsnes 1982; AUD 1984ff.).

Danish legislation has played an important role in this development. The so-called *Danefæ Section* in the Danish Museum Act - which states that objects from the past found in Denmark, i.e. coins, objects made of precious metals, and objects of particular cultural significance to which no one can claim ownership, are *Danefæ* and as such belong to the state - has ensured the collecting and recording of thousands of objects from Danish prehistory, the Viking Age and the following centuries. The principles of the section go back to the general regalian rule of the Middle Ages, "that which belongs to nobody, belongs to the king", and the oldest known written versions of the rules on precious metals date from the 13th century (cf. Moesgaard 1999 with references). Over the past centuries the definition of *danefæ* has gradually expanded, in part as a result of increased royal and antiquarian interest in artefacts from the past. Whereas gold and silver was the main target of the early legislation, precious metals being also a source of income to the crown, an ordinance of March 22, 1737 stated that *danefæ* covered "gold, silver, metal and all other treasure found in earth, wood, field or house, or elsewhere..." (Ørsnes 1980, 18). The consequences of not complying with the law were given in a public notice of August 7, 1752: "Whosoever shall find old coins and the like, which because of age and special character be considered of some rarity, he shall send the same to Our exchequer, for which according to its worth he shall receive full payment from Our privy purse ... And anyone who dares conceal that which is found shall be subject to rightful punishment" (*op.cit.*). Since then the provisions concerning *danefæ* in Danish Law have been

modernized but the basic principles are still included in the present Museum Act passed in 2001.

One of the periods to benefit greatly from the use of metal detectors by professionals as well as by private individuals subject to the rules and regulations concerning *danefæ* and the protection of archaeological sites in general is the late Iron Age and Viking Age.¹ However, the steady increase in the number of settlement finds and stray finds is not without problems. Unlike the early decades of archaeology, when finds were relatively few, artefacts today appear by the thousands, creating a need for *inter alia* new methods of analysis and new means of recording and storing information. The purpose of this paper is to present some of the results and on-going discussions in Denmark.

Settlement sites

Surface stripping, a method especially efficient on sites where all culture-layers have long since been destroyed, has been employed in the excavation of Viking-Age settlements in Denmark since the 1960s. Usually very little remained of past buildings and structures on the sites, and finds were often limited, the main result of the excavations being the physical layout of buildings, farmsteads, and villages. This was to change with the introduction of the metal detector. Initial results from the settlement of Gudme on Fyn in the early 1980s revealed that

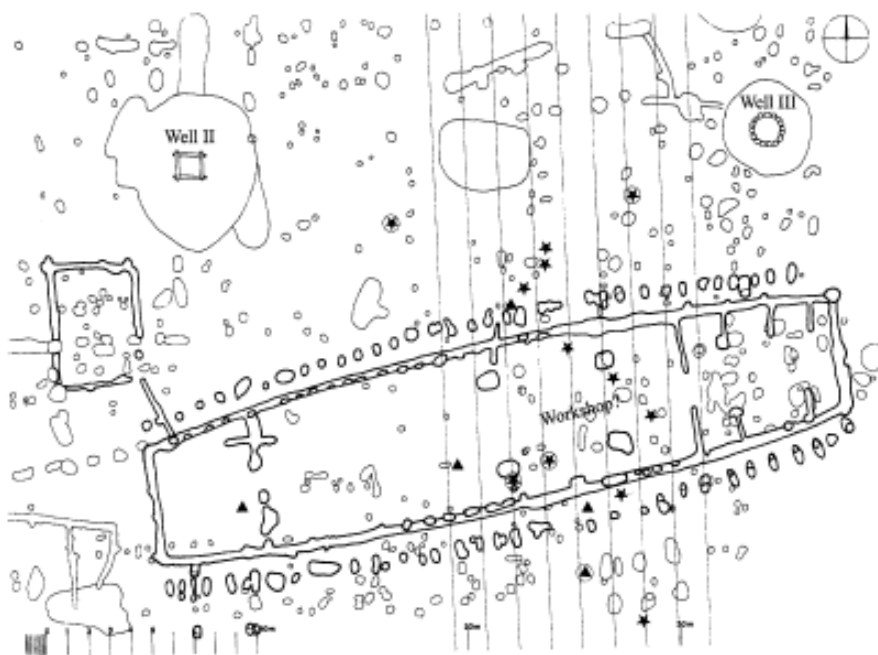


Fig. 1: Excavated house of Trelleborg type and its immediate surroundings at Gl. Hviding. Lead artefacts (triangles) and melted lead (stars) are from the plough layer. Five objects (with circles) were found in the top level of plough soil during detector scanning prior to the excavation (after Jensen 1987). (AP-fig1.tif)

hundreds of stray finds dating from the 3rd to 11th centuries could still be recovered from the topsoil (cf. Nielsen *et al.* 1994). Continued detector scanning and excavation has increased the number of artefacts many times over; without these finds the interpretation of the Gudme area would be very different.

In 1986 excavations at Gl. Hviding, south-west of Ribe, proved another point. It was possible to link carefully recorded artefacts recovered with a metal detector from the plough-layer with a specific building, one section of which was interpreted as a lead founder's workshop situated between the byre and the dwelling-space (Jensen 1987, 11-13). In spite of later agricultural activity on the site the objects did not appear to have been transported for any great distance (fig. 1). These results lead to the conclusion that the additional expence and labour involved in recording artefacts from the plough soil - in reality stray finds no longer *in situ* - had proved justified. Removal of the topsoil in stages, each level being scanned with a detector, is now a common, though time-consuming method used in many extensive settlement excavations.

One such site lies along the western shore of Lake Tissø on Zealand. The site had attracted attention in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the water table of the lake was lowered and pieces of jewellery, iron tools and not least weapons came to light on the exposed lake bottom (Jørgensen & Pedersen 1996). Stray finds, among them a gold neck ring weighing almost two kilos, and later detector scanning led to large-scale excavations carried out since 1995 by the National Museum in collaboration with Kalundborg & Omegns Museum. The layout of the settlement as well as the development of a major farm through more than four centuries have been documented, and thousands of artefacts have been recorded, most of them as a result of intensive use of metal detectors during the removal of the plough-soil and subsequent investigation of settlement features (Jørgensen 1998; 2002). Many are new or unusual and have thus broadened the range of known artefact types from Viking-Age Denmark considerably (fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Viking-Age artefacts recovered from the settlement of Tissø, Zealand. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark. (AP-fig2.tif)

Far from all Viking-Age sites are as wealthy as Tissø. On the other hand, evident contrasts between settlements warrant the continued use of metal detectors even on those sites which yield very few finds. At Vorbasse the plough-layer was searched over an area of about 40,000 sq.m. covering *inter alia* an early Viking-Age settlement, but only four of a total of five copper-alloy objects from this period were recovered (Jensen 1987, 12). The objects were all well-preserved, indicating that the low count rather than being a result of poor conditions of preservation on the site, instead reflects a different pattern of artefact circulation and loss than for instance found at Gudme or Tissø.

Recent excavations on eastern Zealand have revealed similar distribution patterns. At Toftegård on Stevns, a wealthy settlement from the Late Iron Age and Viking Age, numerous metal artefacts have been recorded, among them gilt copper-alloy ornaments, about 50 iron arrowheads, and four iron spurs, one of them with a copper-alloy fitting almost identical to one found in a grave at Birka in Sweden (Tornbjerg 1998, 226-30). At Bøgelund, 4km to the south of Toftegård in the neighbouring parish of Varpelev, a contemporary settlement has been uncovered. Yet despite extensive excavations and use of metal detectors, this site has revealed very few copper-alloy objects (*op.cit.* 230-32). There is evidence of antler working and iron smithing but no arrowheads or indeed any other weapons!

Although conditions of preservation, varying degrees of agricultural activity through time, and other factors should be taken into account, the significant difference in the artefact counts of Toftegård and Bøgelund in spite of similar excavation methods and the use of metal detectors is suggestive. The economic background and functions of the two sites very likely differed and they may represent different levels of a settlement hierarchy. The high percentage of copper-alloy artefacts and the use of gilding at Toftegård indicate a wealthy site, but it is also worth considering whether weapon fragments such as fittings for sword grips and arrowheads, whether used in armed conflict or for hunting purposes, should be included among the diagnostic traits defining major settlement centres. Detectorists often focus on precious metal or decorated ornaments of copper alloy, but sites such as Tissø and Toftegård indicate that the distribution and number of iron artefacts also show distinctive patterns linked to the function of the settlements and the social or political status of their inhabitants.

Stray finds

Apart from the artefacts recovered from controlled excavations Danish museums have seen a huge increase in stray finds, many of them from so-called “detector sites” or “productive sites”, an English term referring to sites not productive in the past but rather in the present, i.e. sites which produce numerous metal artefacts. Fig. 3 illustrates the increase in Viking-Age artefacts submitted to the National Museum for evaluation under the *Danefæ* Act. Although these artefacts only represent a fraction of those actually found and recorded in many local museums, there can be no doubt of the importance of metal detectors. Artefacts recovered by detectorists constitute much of the data in several recent artefact studies in Denmark (cf. for instance Bertelsen 1992; Pedersen 1999; *eadem* 2001). Some artefact types are well-known and may be classified within established Scandinavian typologies; others are unusual and provide new information on the stylistic and technical range of Viking-Age craftsmen. Ornaments based on identical models or cast in identical moulds but found widely apart testify to the geographical movement of artefacts and/or people within the local area or region (fig. 4);

far greater distances were, however, covered by other distinctly foreign types originating in areas to the west, south or east of Denmark.

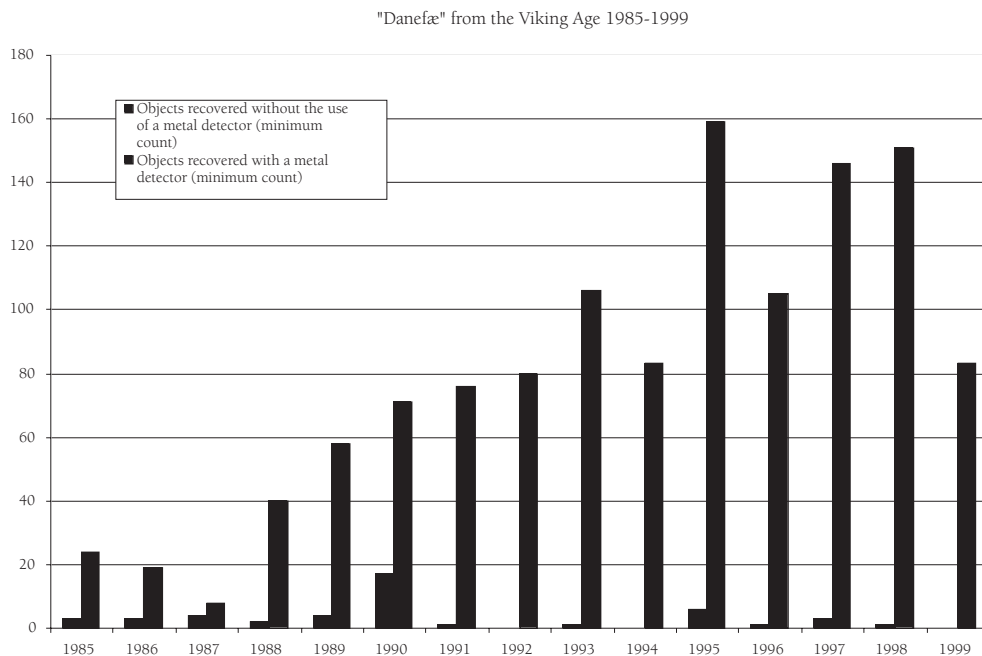


Fig. 3: Viking-Age artefacts submitted to the National Museum and accepted as danefæ. (AP-fig3.xls)

Fig. 4: Fragments of silver-gilt Urnes-style brooches from Nørholm (right) and intact brooch from Mollerup (left), both sites in northern Jutland and approx. 60 kms apart as the crow flies. Scale 1:1. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark. (AP-fig4.tif)



For many years examples of decorated metalwork from the British Isles were very few in spite of numerous references in written sources to widespread Danish activity in the west, Denmark thus contrasting with Norway, where pieces of jewellery and reused insular ornaments as well as liturgic vessels and reliquaries have been found. However, recent additions such as a reused reliquary mount and decorated lead weight from Tissø or a circular mount with animal figures from Bornholm indicate that the overall distribution pattern for insular 'imports' from the early centuries of the Viking Age in Denmark may yet change, mainly due to the intensified use of metal detectors, and also that the finds will consist of more or less complete fragments and mounts rather than intact, large objects (AUD 1996, 242; Wamers 1998; Helgesson 2001).

Evidence from the late Viking Age and the early Medieval period is more abundant and includes for instance cloisonné enamel brooches, the main distribution of which has led to an identification of the type as "angelsächsisch-südsandinavische Emailfibel" (Frick 1993). Roughly contemporary copper-alloy bird brooches have proved very common in Denmark but have also turned up in England, one English variant bearing a close resemblance to a bird image on a coin issued by King Magnus the Good (1042-47) in Lund (Pedersen 2001, 31). Further material evidence for the close contacts between England and Denmark in the 11th century is provided by copper-alloy fittings for horse harness and stirrups, i.e. cheek-pieces and harness mounts, stirrup-strap mounts and stirrup terminals, many of which are decorated in the Ringerike or Urnes style (Pedersen 1999) (fig. 5). Similar artefacts are known from Norway and Sweden, however. It is uncertain whether they were equally common, one source-critical factor being the different legislation concerning detector use.



Fig. 5: Copper-alloy mounts for horse gear from Gammelkirke (top) and Nørholm (bottom), northern Jutland. Scale 1:1. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark. (AP-fig5.tif)

A similar increase is seen in the number of Viking-Age artefacts from continental Europe,² among them circular enamel brooches from Germany (cf. Ulriksen 1999) or personal ornaments (fig. 6) and knife sheath mounts from the Slavic area south of the Baltic. Turning further east, single detector finds originating in Gotland include a silver-inlaid mount for a box-shaped brooch dated to the late 10th or early 11th century found at Balstrup in Zealand (fig. 7). Complete brooches are rare in Denmark, single mounts even more so, and it is uncertain whether the Balstrup mount was brought to Denmark as a separate ornament or formed part of an intact brooch (AUD 1999). Another recent discovery also from Zealand is a convex round brooch of Finnish type with S-shaped animal figures (AUD 1997, 216); a few strike-a-lights of iron with copper-alloy handles and a similar pendant shaped as a pair of horsemen probably originated in the same area (fig. 8). Several other artefact types could be mentioned, including typical horse shoe-shaped brooches. As yet no comprehensive survey has been carried out on the Danish finds from the eastern Baltic but the growing number of detector finds offer great potential for future studies.

Fig. 6: A pair of “temple” rings, silver, from Bakkegård on Bornholm. Scale 1:1. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark. (AP-fig6.tif)



Fig. 7: Gilt copper-alloy mount for a box-brooch from Balstrup, Zealand. Scale 1:1. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark. (AP-fig7.tif)



Fig. 8: Pendant and strike-a-light from Nørholm, northern Jutland, and Tissø, Zealand. Scale 1:1. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark. (AP-fig8.tif)

Conclusion

The metal detector has led to an enormous increase in the archaeological material from the Viking Age in Denmark, often supplementing or changing established distribution patterns. For this material not to remain a passive resource, on-going source-critical discussions are necessary. Geographical and chronological patterns need to be re-evaluated, and typologies created to cover the many new artefact types etc. Far from all detector sites will be excavated, which in itself leads to a research problem, in that we are faced with a growing body of archaeological finds lacking a specific, datable context such as a grave, datable hoard, stratified settlement deposit etc. Additional problems relate to the nature of the evidence, for instance the uneven distribution of finds, due in part to the similarly uneven distribution of detectorists, the cooperation between detectorists and museums, and the different legislation governing the use of metal detectors in countries separate today but closely linked in the Viking Age, and finally the sheer number of objects. How do we record and present the often huge numbers of artefacts (approx. 5.000 objects from Gudme, c. 10.000 from Tissø (fig. 9), and more than 10,000 covering the first millenium AD from Uppåkra in Scania)? How do we ensure a reasonable balance between the resources involved in recording detector finds and their subsequent use in research and other fields? Are all artefacts equally significant, or is it possible to distinguish between different levels of documentation depending on the types of objects and sites? Even with the aid of modern technology it may prove difficult or in fact impossible to document every single object in equal detail.



Fig. 9: Distribution of detector finds from the Late Iron Age and Viking Age settlement along the western shore of Lake Tissø, Zealand. The two fields with very few finds cutting across the main settlement have been closed to detectorists (map reproduced with kind permission from the excavator Dr. Lars Jørgensen). (AP-fig9.tif)

Solutions to these questions have yet to be found, and the initial fascination with artefacts and numbers is now and then replaced by a feeling of exhaustion and often frustration. One conclusion presented at a symposium held in Odense in 1997 on detector finds and their potential was that the use of metal detectors and the subsequent use of the finds was no easy task (cf. Henriksen 2000). On the other hand, metal detectors had made it more fun to be an archaeologist!

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Notes

- ¹ A survey of the results for the late Iron Age from the years 1966 to 1988 was published by Peter Vang Petersen, The National Museum of Denmark in 1991. Finds recorded as *danefæ* are presented in brief yearly reports in *Arkæologiske Udgravninger i Danmark (AUD)*.
- ² One of the largest finds to date in Denmark from western Europe, a silver hoard, came to light in January 2002 near Rødby Fjord, Lolland. The first artefact was recovered with a metal detector, the rest as a result of a controlled excavation by Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum. The hoard consists of approx. 50 buckles and other strap fittings, among them a complete set of mounts including a trefoil mount for a sword belt. The find has been submitted to the National Museum as *danefæ*.

The watchful dragon. Aspects of the Conversion of Scandinavia

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The Conversion in Scandinavia has sometimes been described by historians as a matter of force. The king coerced the people to accept the new faith, realising that Christianity would place him on equal terms with the Continental and Anglo-Saxon kings. Some historians of religions, using Old Norse literature as their source material, have stressed the social fragmentation caused by the Conversion, conjuring up a dramatic confrontation of different ideologies (Steinsland 1991: 335 f.). However, the evidence from archaeology and rune stones supports neither the idea of a violent conversion nor that of a cultural break (Gräslund 2001: 127 ff.). Through the burial customs in particular, it is possible to discern a gradual transition, from pagan cremation graves furnished with rich grave-goods, artefacts of different kinds and some domestic animals, via inhumation graves, still with grave goods, on through oriented inhumation graves without grave goods but still in the old cemeteries, and culminating in oriented graves in churchyards.

This gradual transition, however, cannot always have been regular and smooth but would sometimes have been erratic or irregular and with backlashes for Christianity. There were probably strong elements of acculturation, paving the way for syncretism. In its broadest sense, syncretism denotes any mixture or fusion of two or more religions. The term is often used when elements from one religion are incorporated into another, without basically changing the character of the latter. It is important to point out that the Old Norse religion was not static. Conversely, it was dynamic and changed over time. It was most probably changing under the influence of continental Christianity during the second half of the first millennium AD. This was, however, a two-way process: Christianity was also affected by Old Norse religion and took over some of the latter's cultic ceremonies and attitudes. A similar process has been thoroughly studied concerning religion in the Roman Empire. Ramsay MacMullen has investigated the influences of paganism and Christianity upon each other, and he demonstrates that the two religious systems were both vital during an interactive period that lasted far longer than historians have believed (1997: 150 ff.). In some cases Christianity could not fill peoples' demands of for example celebrations and offerings, then the pagan ceremonies were transformed and/or given a Christian content (MacMullen 1997: 154 ff.). The contact between the pagan Germans and Christianity has been studied from a similar point of view by James Russell, who pointed out that Christianity adopted German

ritual elements (1994: 26 ff., 134 ff.), certainly by that paving way for the Conversion in the North.

The Icelandic/Norwegian historian Jon Vidar Sigurdsson has coined the concept “Phase of cultural negotiations” between the phase of early contact with Christianity and the phase of ecclesiastical organisation (Sigurdsson 2003: 111). Cultural negotiations mean the adaption of Christian ideas for pagan ritual but also the reverse: filling Christian ritual with pagan ideas. In my view, it seems to be a general human tendency to avoid sudden disruptions to the status quo and instead to gradually accept new ideas. Naturally, at the Conversion some people may have been very rigorous converts, totally repudiating the old religion, but it is reasonable to assume a certain remnant belief in the old ideas persisting amongst the majority of people. Such a dualistic belief can be found in Old Norse literature. In one Icelandic example, Helgi the Meagre believed in Christ, but at sea, in bad weather and during difficult tasks he instead invoked Thor (Landnámabók 218). Even in the artefactual assemblage a mixed pagan-Christian belief can be discerned, the most striking example being a Thor’s hammer amulet decorated with crosses (Gräslund 1985: 292 ff.). The pagan conception of the world can be described as focusing on complementarity, as opposed to contrapunctual, incompatible categories. This is one reason why the pagans had no difficulties in accepting Christ as a new god alongside the old ones. Confrontations presuppose clear either/or dichotomies, which is what happened later in the phase of ecclesiastical organisation in Scandinavia.

A mixture of this kind seems to mark the general tendency at conversions: there are innumerable examples from the Christianisation of the Roman Empire and the Germanic kingdoms. It has been described in the following way, “Many Christians continued to take part in traditional Roman festivities; they sometimes shocked their bishops by dancing in church, getting drunk at celebrations in the cemeteries, consulting magicians or resorting to charms to cure their troubles” (Markus 1990: 74).

The concept of cult continuity is important in this connection. It could be divided into subgroups: cult place continuity when the early medieval church was built on the same spot as a pre-Christian sacrificial site - a good example is Old Uppsala but also Frösö church in Jämtland, the northern part of Sweden where a Viking Age offering site with lots of animal bones has been excavated under the chancel of the church (Iregren 1989: 119 ff.). In many places there is onomastic evidence of cult site continuity: churches in villages called Torsåker, Frölunda, Odensala (former Odensharg).

Another subgroup is continuity in rituals - the meaning may be changed but the rituals remain (Hultgård 1992: 56 ff.). Examples are the field processions with crucifixes or images of saints which took place in the countryside in spring or early summer up to the 19th century, at first hand as remains of medieval Catholic ceremonies but in all probability with roots back into prehistoric times, perhaps connecting to the description of the Nerthus cult by Tacitus in the 1st century AD. And, when the West Norwegian Gulathing Law (written down in the 12th century), prescribes that three farms should join in brewing a special beer and drinking it together with their families at a special occasion and with a special ritual to secure good harvest and peace, then we are certainly confronted with an old religious custom in Christian disguise.

Also the saints may be taken as example. When shifting to a new religion with only one God, the saints filled the gap after the many old gods. The best example may be the Holy Virgin, taking over from Freya; it may sound strange, but many of Freya’s rites connected with

childbirth, weddings and fertility for the soil and the animals survived in the popular cult of Saint Mary (Näsström 1996: 335 ff.). In the runic inscriptions from the 11th century she is always invoked as God's mother, never as Virgin (Gräslund 2001: 81).

The question of continuity versus change has often been discussed in archaeology, and in many cases it is obvious that there is continuity even within the change, so that elements of the past - sometimes losing their meaning and sometimes retaining a good deal of it - still survive. It is possible that the part of the pre-Christian cult that related to home and family and which was served by women did in fact linger on, initially during the transition phase but probably even longer in popular belief and folklore. Another long-lasting phenomenon is supernatural beings from the other world, for example the dwarfs who were skilful craftsmen and lived underground; in the Old Norse mythology they helped the gods, in later popular belief it was very important for the people of the farm to be well in with them, as in that case they watched and protected the estate, otherwise they could do a lot of harm. Probably they are the ancestors of the Swedish *jultomte* (Father Christmas), who in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century had little in common with the Continental Santa Claus or insular Father Christmas. Still up to the 1950s it was common in Sweden to bring a bowl of porridge outdoors for the *tomte* at Christmas.

Personal names are good examples of the smooth and peaceful transition from paganism to Christianity in Scandinavia. The old personal names with the name of a pagan god as first element continued to be used frequently even after the conversion. Compounds with Thor are the most frequent (masc. Torbjörn, Torsten, Torleif etc. fem. Torgård, Torborg, Torgun etc.) but also compounds with Frö exist often and, more seldom, with Oden. Johan and Nicolas are the earliest Christian names on rune stones, but there are only few examples (Williams 1996: 70ff.). It was not until the Late Middle Ages that Christian personal names became really frequent in broader layers.

Even in the iconographical evidence there is continuity with remaining pagan elements - the old Scandinavian tradition of animal art continues, for example on the rune stones, especially in the Lake Mälaren area, the region richest in rune stones. Animal art may be regarded as pure decoration, but in all probability it had a symbolic meaning, clear for the

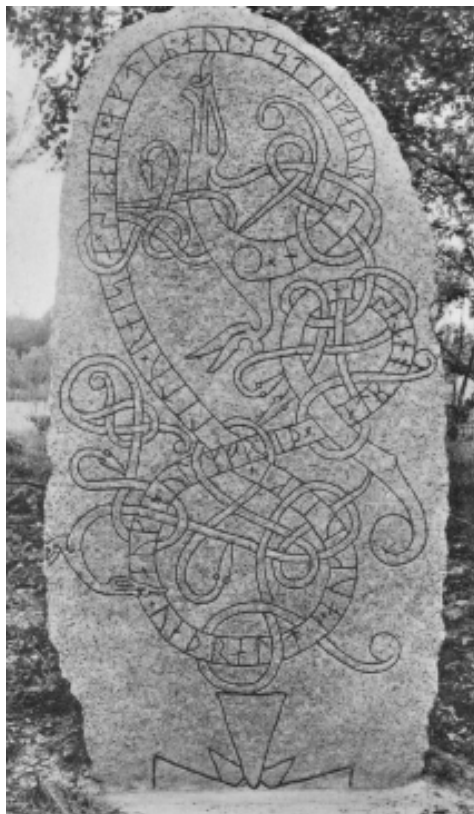


Fig. 1: Rune stone U 463, Ala, Vassunda parish, Uppland. The rune animal with the typical shoulder spirals and forelegs of the Great Beast is struggling with a serpent/serpents. After *Upplands runinskrifter*. (ASGfig1-U463.tif)

contemporary viewers. The majority of the rune stones have to be regarded as Christian, as so many of them have a prayer included in the text and/or are decorated with a cross (Lager 2002). But what do the rune animals (the ribbon shaped “dragons” or serpents bearing the runes on the rune stones) mean? Several scholars have interpreted them as symbols for Old Norse mythology, perhaps the Midgard-serpent who kept the world together, and, in order to understand the rune animal as an element of the Christian iconography, they argue that the cross has subjugated the dragon or serpent (Christiansson 1995: 453 ff.; Thrainsson 1994: 57 ff.). In my view this interpretation is neither necessary nor relevant as the rune animal obviously goes back to the Great Beast on the Jellinge stone, which is struggling with the serpent (fig. 1). The Great Beast is seen as a symbol of the good or of Christ, fighting with the serpent - the evil. However, there are exceptions, on the rune monuments illustrating the legend of Sigurd the Dragon slayer the rune animal in fact is the dragon/the evil who is killed by Sigurd/the good.

The winged dragon does not show up in Scandinavian iconography until the Conversion, even if winged four-legged animals are found rarely in the beginning of the 9th century in wood-carving from Oseberg and on the Sparlösa stone from Västergötland (Capelle 1985:136 f.). In the 11th century there are several examples of winged dragons on the rune stones in Uppland. Sometimes it is the rune animal that has got wings (fig. 2), but normally it is the serpent (fig. 3).



Fig. 2: Rune stone U 305, Bensta, Skånela parish, Uppland, with a winged rune animal. After *Upplands runinskrifter*. (ASGfig2-U305.tif)



Fig. 3: Rune stone U 1142, Åbyggeby, Vendel, Uppland, with a winged serpent. After *Upplands runinskrifter*. (ASGfig3-U1142.tif)

A number of small bronze artefacts representing dragons' heads have been found in Viking Age market places/central places around the Baltic (Gräslund 2003: 178 ff.). Their distribution and their rareness indicate that these artefacts were not common property but probably signalled important individuals. Their function is unclear; they are double-sided and have probably been attached to an object in such a way that both sides of them have been visible. A small reliquary, like the one from Cammin (e.g. Klindt-Jensen & Wilson 1965: Pl. LV), has been suggested (Kyhlberg 1973: 172 ff.).

It is tempting to connect these "miniatures" with the stem ornaments of Viking ships, known from picture stones in Gotland and from a carved piece of wood found at Bryggen in Bergen, depicting Viking ships with dragons' heads at the stems and weather vanes at the mast-heads (Herteig 1969: pl. 35). A statement in *Landnámabók* that the stem dragons should be removed before landing not to frighten the underground people of the other world (*vättar*), shows that the dragon heads had an apotropaic effect. Such stem dragons are not only known from pictures and literature, there are also real artefacts, like the finds from the river Schelde in Belgium (for ex. Oxenstierna 1959: Pl. 6). The stem dragons may be seen in connection with the animal head poles found in Oseberg, interpreted as seat poles, with a suggested magic/religious function (Grieg 1928: 65 f.). Similar animal heads occur on many objects in the Oseberg grave, on sledges, on the bed and just as loose sculptures. Animal heads with big round eyes, open mouth and big teeth may be regarded as dragons or beasts. They had without doubt a symbolic, probably protective meaning and gave signals of the owner's power and status to the world around him/her.

I have in an earlier work dealt with some expressive animal heads from female graves of the 10th century in Valsgärde and Birka (Gräslund 1999: 95 ff.), and suggested that the women buried with these animal sculptures may have had a cultic function, perhaps as a Freya priestess, by analogy with what has been proposed about the woman in the Oseberg grave (Ingstad 1992: 224 ff.). In Valsgärde, an old woman had been buried in a 10th century cremation grave with a unique object, a carved richly decorated animal's head of bone or antler with eyes of carnelian (fig. 4). Its best counterpart is one of the sculptures from the Oseberg grave. Sometimes these animal heads with very distinct eyes and open mouth with large teeth have been interpreted as wolves. It is quite clear that they depict beasts, but in my view the intention could as well be to depict dragons, the fabulous animals.



Fig. 4: The animal head from Valsgärde grave 85. Photo Allan Fridell. (ASGfig4-Vgde85djur1.tif)

Similar animal heads occur in obvious Christian contexts during the Middle Ages. Firstly, the Norwegian stave churches should be mentioned, a fine examples with dragons' heads at the roof is the church in Borgund (for ex. Roesdahl & Wilson 1992: 157). There is also a textile picture, 14C-dated to the second half of the 13th century, of a probably early medieval church on the tapestry from Skog in Hälsingland, where both the church roof and the bell tower have animal heads as endings (Franzén & Nockert 1992: 101). The house-shaped early 11th century reliquaries from Bamberg and Cammin, both decorated in Mammen style and in all probability of South Scandinavian origin, are provided with similar animal heads at the roof. The reliquary from Trönö in Hälsingland (fig. 5), produced in Limoges in France in the beginning half of the 13th century, with scenes from the life of Thomas Beckett, has been interestingly "Scandinavized" trough the attachment of animal heads at the ends of the ridge-capping (Tegnér 1999: 199f.).



Fig. 5: The reliquary from Limoges, supplemented with a capping and two animal heads. Trönö church, Hälsningland. After Tegnér 1999. (ASGfig5-Trönöskrinet.tif)

Medieval high seats and thrones are often decorated with animal heads, for example on the Bayeux tapestry from the end of the 11th century, the throne of King Edward Confessor (Rud 1996: 38, 56), the throne of King Harold Godwinson (1996: 59) and the high seat of Duke William (1996: 44, 46, 60). A folding stool, the *sella curulis*, the Roman seat of office for the most important magistrates, may be followed from the Republic, through the Roman Empire to the post-Roman history both as the royal and the episcopal seat of dignity (Wanscher 1980: 121, 191). The dominating symbolic and ornamental motif of the wooden stools was the animal heads at the top of the legs at all four corners of the seat (1980: 224). The animal heads, often beast heads, are probably closely related to lion masks, symbols of the Roman

imperial power and taken over by the medieval ecclesiastical and secular power. The French scholastic Guillaume Durand in the late 13th century has given a definition of the *folding stool*: “The Episcopal *faldistorium* designates the spiritual jurisdiction connected with the pontifical authority” (Wanscher 1980: 198). There are folding stools of this kind for the pope up to modern times.

Danish and Swedish bishops from the late 12th and the 13th centuries are often depicted at their seals, sitting in such a chair, decorated with animal heads, for ex in 1152 the seal of bishop Radulf from Ribe, in 1191 the seal of archbishop Peter in Uppsala, in the 1220s the seal of bishop Bengt in Skara, in 1244 the seal of archbishop Jarler in Uppsala and in 1270 the seal of bishop Erik in Skara (Hildebrand 1862-67, II: pl. 1-3). The seal of the cathedral chapter of Skara from the 13th century shows the Holy Virgin seated in such a chair (fig. 6). A preserved bishop's chair of similar kind (but somewhat coarser) is the one from the old church in Suntak in the province of Västergötland (fig. 7), probably originally a pew (Karlsson 1976:99), dated to the 12th century, another one is from Heddal church in Norway; the latter with a carved illustration from the legend of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer (Fell 1980: 26). In both these cases the animal heads are heads of beasts. Probably it was quite natural for the Scandinavian craftsmen/carpenters to carve these beasts, inspired by the new continental fashion but in the same time following the old domestic tradition from the animal art. Obviously, in the Middle Ages the dragon was not solely regarded as evil but also had a benevolent, protective power. This may originally be an *Interpretatio Germanica* of the Roman seat, the *sella curulis*, often decorated with animals' heads, lions or other animals. The term “To sit between the lions” was even a concept for a judge in duty in medieval France.



Fig. 6: The seal of the cathedral chapter of Skara 1283 (known from 1259). After Schück 1983. (ASGfig6-sigillSkara Domkapitel.tif)



Fig. 7: A “bishop's chair” probably originally a pew. Suntak church, Västergötland. After Holmqvist 1956. (ASGfig7-Suntak.tif)

Dealing with the iconography of Romanesque art, the Danish art historian Lise Gottfredsen, points out the ambiguous signification of dragons and serpents. In purely biblical scenes, there is often no doubt that the dragon or serpent is a symbol of the evil, whereas it in other contexts can be a part of the tree of life and thus be good (Gottfredsen 1988:111 f.). In some cases two dragons or serpents are put up against each other, then one of them, usually the bigger, is good, the other evil. She refers to Isidorus of Sevilla, a Father of the Church who lived in the end of the 6th and beginning of the 7th century and who had a great importance for the medieval iconography. He says that Christ is the new serpent, conquering the old one (Gottfredsen 1988: 118 foot-note 5).

The dragon as a good and vigilant guardian can also be seen in the iron-work on medieval church doors from the 12th and 13th centuries from Norway (Karlsson 1988 I: 136 ff.). The resemblance to churches is due to decorative elements of animal heads and crosses, having the same apotropaical task (fig. 8). A late medieval, interesting key plate from a church in Sala NW of Uppsala shows a small dragon in the round, keeping watch (Karlsson 1988 II: 245, 254). The church in its entirety had to be protected against evil powers, the door and especially the keyhole was considered its weakest spot, where it was necessary to strengthen and repeat the general defences we find on the roof.

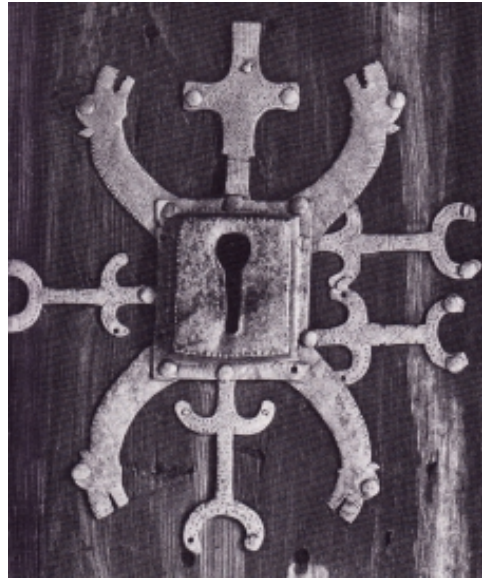


Fig. 8: Lock plate with cross and animal heads from the church door of Lomen stave church, Norway. After Karlsson 1988 I. (ASGfig8-NyckelhållLomen.jpg)

So, returning to the conversion period and the zoomorphic rune stones of the 11th century, I am convinced that the rune animal, the dragon, should not be seen as an outspokenly heathen element, but rather that the vigilant dragon was taken into service by the Church. The symbols continue to be used but their content may be changed.

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Chapter 42

Frisia - a Viking nest?

Niels Lund

The role of Frisia and of Vikings based there in the raids against Francia as well as England and Ireland needs to be studied more closely. Some of the first raids recorded hit Frisia, Charlemagne had to improve the coastal defences in that area around 800 (Einhard: 17), and Godfred went there to take tribute. Frisia was always a fringe area from a Frankish point of view and had probably fallen under Danish influence in the 8th century, when the Merovingians had lost their grip and before the Carolingians restored it to the Frankish empire (Wood 1983).¹ In the ninth century it was 'for long stretches a kind of no-man's-land between the Frankish and Danish empires, sometimes Frankish, often held by a Danish chieftain in benefice from a Frankish king, occasionally under Danish overlordship, frequently the scene for Danish raid and Frankish counterattack as well as for Franco-Danish trade' (Reuter 1991:69). Throughout the 9th century several Danish princes held fiefs in Frisia, sometimes with the approval of the emperor or the Frankish king to whose kingdom Frisia happened to belong, sometimes without. Harald Klak was given Rüstringen as a retreat in 826, and several others later held fiefs in other parts of Frisia. The Danish king Horik also expressed an interest in Frisia on several occasions, offering to take over control of it on behalf of the emperor. From his point of view Harald's family and Horik's own as well, were dangerous rivals to his throne; therefore an alliance between the Frankish and Danish rulers might very well be in their mutual interest (Lund 2002). Frisia was always, from a Frankish point of view, a remote area, so difficult to control that a local ruler, or rulers, who did not irritate the emperor too much, could run Frisia very much as they pleased.

In 866 a Viking force sailed up the Seine to Melun and forced king Charles to make peace. In June these Vikings left their island near St Denis, «reached a place suitable for making repairs to their ships and for building new ones, and there they awaited the payment of the sum due to them» (AB 866).

In July they reached the sea, and one group of them, in Hincmar's own words, *aliquandiu in pago Italiae redit et libitibus suis, excepta publica Hlotharii coniunctione, perfruitur*. In the standard German translation this is rendered «ein Teil von ihnen nahm einige Zeit seinen Aufenthalt im Ysselgau, wo sie, abgesehen davon daß Lothar keinen förmlichen Vertrag mit ihnen Schloß, alle ihre Gelüste befriedigten» (Rau), and in Albrechtsen's Danish translation in *Vikingerne i Franken* this becomes «og en del af dem slog sig for nogen tid ned i Ijsselland. Her nød de efter forgodtbefindende tilværelsen, dog uden at Lothar sluttete formel overenskomst med dem». Both miss the meaning of the Latin verb 'redeo'. These Vikings *returned* to the Ijssel district.

Janet Nelson got this right in her translation, and in a note she suggests that «Apparently these Northmen wanted to be granted land in Frisia, as previous groups had been^o». However, if they *returned* to the Ijssel district, they must have come from there. The implication of this passage is that some of those Vikings that raided up the Seine in 866 were based in the Ijssel district.

The Annals of Xanten say that these pagans, having received an immense tribute from Charles, *reversi sunt alibi desolare aecclesiam Dei*, ‘returned in order to afflict God’s Church elsewhere’.

These Danes may have been concerned to secure formal recognition from Lothar of their possession of Ijsselland but it was hardly their most urgent concern and it apparently made no very great difference if they got it or not. Lothar will have remembered how, in 855, his father Lothar had granted him Frisia, and how Roric and Godfrid had nevertheless maintained themselves in Dorestad, and afterwards *maxima parte Fresiae potiuntur*, held sway over most of Frisia (AB).

This indication of the existence of an otherwise unrecorded Danish fief or principality, albeit still informal, in Frisia that served as the basis for raids in the Western kingdom is an incentive to reexamine the annals for indirect corroboration.

The author of the Annals of Xanten was a monk of Lorsch, Gerward, who was his monastery’s estate manager at an estate near Nymwegen, very close to Xanten, that is. He reports Viking movements in Frisia, in Gaul and to some extent in Germany, very much the events known to us from other chronicles as well. After his death in 860 the annals were continued by an unknown author. It is somewhat puzzling why these annals, in addition to covering affairs in the Frankish kingdoms should also report attacks on England and Ireland, as happens under the years 868 and 871. The standard explanation is that this information must have been brought to, not Xanten but, for information relating to the years after Gerward’s death in 860, to Cologne by travellers between Britain and Rome; they often stayed at monasteries en route. But these annals were not written in a monastery. Was the author reporting about their own local Vikings, those residing in Frisia and sometimes plundering in the Frankish kingdoms, sometimes across the water in Britain?

Much revolves around the family of Harald Klak. He was a contender for the Danish throne and when in 814 he was exiled by his rivals, the sons of Godfred, he turned to Louis the Pious for help. Louis supported him, using him as a vehicle for influence in Denmark, much as he supported princes on other fringes of the empire. Being unable to help immediately, the emperor provided hospitality for Harald in Saxony. A campaign in 815 conducted by Saxon and Abodrite forces on Harald’s behalf proved fruitless, as did Harald’s own efforts in the following years. In 819, however, a compromise was reached that gave Harald a share in power in Denmark. This proved short-lived; by 823 Harald was complaining to the emperor about his partners, who threatened to evict him again, and in 825 and 826 there were negotiations between the emperor and the sons of Godfred without Harald’s participation. In 826, then, when the emperor was having a general council in Ingelheim and was receiving the envoys of Harald’s rivals, Harald appeared there with a huge following and received baptism in St Alban’s in Mainz. This looks as a demonstrative attempt to go one better than his rivals in their bid for imperial favour, but the emperor was not moved to further his case decisively. He did, however, assign a fief to Harald in Rüstringen, the peninsula between the Weser and the bay of Jade, and Harald thus became the first Danish prince known to be established in Frisia.

In 841 Louis had died and his successor Lothar began his reign by granting one Harald Walcheren and the neighbouring regions as a benefit. This Harald “had for some years been imposing many sufferings on Frisia and the other coastal regions of the Christians, to the damage of Lothar’s father’s interests and the furtherance of his own” (AB). Some of us have settled for the identification of the Harald who got Walcheren etc. with the Harald who was given Rüstringen in 826; in the meantime he must have taken Lothar’s side in the conflicts between him and Louis (Lund 1989). It is odd, however, that Prudentius should continue his report with this denunciation of Lothar’s grant: «This was surely an utterly detestable crime, that those who had brought evil on Christians should be given power over the lands and people of Christians, and over the very churches of Christ; that the persecutors of the Christian faith should be set up as lords over Christians, and Christian folk have to serve men who worshipped demons» (AB). He must have known that Harald Klak was baptized in 826. Simon Coupland is prepared to accept this on account of Prudentius ‘writing bitter polemic, not careful biography’ (Coupland 1998:93, n.48), but that surely is following the line of least resistance. Prudentius takes care to remind us of Harald Klak’s son Godfrid’s baptism at Mainz in the emperor Louis’s time, even while talking about his defection from Lothar (AB 852).

Simon Coupland has also questioned the identification on the grounds that Harald Klak was too old to have a brother living in 873, surely a sound argument as Harald was an adult in 815 and his father probably dead by then. He suggests that Harald Klak was that Harald whose death is reported by the Annals of Fulda under 852: «Herald the Northman had in earlier years fled the anger of his lord Horic, king of the Danes, and come to King Louis by whom he was well received. He was baptised and received into the Christian faith, and held in honour among the Franks for many years. At length he became suspect to the leading men of the northern regions and the warders of the Danish march as of doubtful loyalty and a potential traitor, and was therefore killed by them». Coupland has a good point in Harald’s career, his flight from Denmark and his reception and baptism by the Franks (Coupland 1998:91). If only the annals had not styled Louis ‘king’ in this context, making it a reference to Louis the German, while the ruler who accepted Harald, stood sponsor to him and gave him a fief in the northern regions, was Louis the Pious, *Hludowicus imperator* - as he is styled by the Fulda annals under 850, where mention is made of Roric, who together with his brother Harold, called *Herioldus iunior* in the Annals of Xanten 850, held the *vicus* Dorestad as a benefice *temporibus Hludowici imperatoris*.

To add to the confusion it must be asked if we are justified to identify that Harald who got *Gualacras aliaque vicina loca* from Lothar in 841 with the Harald *iunior* who held Dorestad together with his brother, or nephew, Roric in the time of Louis the Pious? Dorestad was not Lothar’s to give in benefice to his supporters or allies in the time of his father. After the suppression of his second rebellion against Louis, Lothar was to all practical purposes and intents limited to Italy. There was a division of the empire in 839 (AB), allotting Frisia to Lothar, but this was not to take effect until after the death of father Louis, and it was not the partition that resulted from the wars between the three brothers in 843, when Louis the German got a lot more than his father had allowed him in 839.

If any Harald, with any nephew (AB) or brother (AF) Roric, held Dorestad as a fief in the time of emperor Louis, 814-840, he must have been given it by the same Louis, and, unless he had forced it from the emperor by the series of attacks on Dorestad in the 830s, it seems a bit

strange that Lothar should reward him immediately after the death of Louis for services rendered against Louis.

According to the Annals of Fulda this Roric, whom Lothar must have taken over as a vassal from his father, was, after the death of Louis and of his brother Harald, accused to the new emperor as a traitor, captured and imprisoned. However, he escaped and turned to Louis, king of the Germans. He then lived in Saxony for some years, and then collected a Danish force and started attacking Lothar's kingdom; in 850 he forced Lothar to give him back Dorestad. He managed to maintain some position in Frisia till his death sometime after 873.

Roric had defected from Lothar a short time before he appeared on the Rhine and the Waal in 850, laying waste Frisia, the island of Betuwe and other places in the neighbourhood. Upon which Lothar, unable to crush him, received him back into his allegiance and granted him Dorestad and other counties (AB). Unfortunately we are not told which counties but there is never any suggestion that Walcheren was involved in this deal. Although it is possible that the Harald who got Walcheren in 841 was already a vassal of Louis for Dorestad, and was rewarded by Lothar for his disloyalty to Louis, and although it might be tempting to explain the fact that so little is afterwards heard of Walcheren as a Viking fief by reference to Harald's death soon after, there are certainly also obstacles to this assumption. We cannot safely assume that this Roric's relative Harald was identical with either Harald Klak or with that Harald who obtained Walcheren in 841.

I used to think there was only one Harald - now I am afraid there are even three: Harald (1) Klak, who sought the help of the emperor from 815, was baptized and given Rüstringen in 826, and whose death is probably recorded in the Annals of Fulda under the year 852; Harald (2) *iunior*, who with his brother, or nephew, Roric held Dorestad from Louis the Pious; and Harald (3), who, a pagan, in 841 obtained Walcheren etc. from Lothar in recognition of his invaluable services against Lothar's father, Louis the Pious.

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Note

- ¹ Ian N. Wood, *The Merovingian North Sea*. Occasional Papers on Medieval Topics 1. (Alingsås: Viktoria Bokförlag, 1983).

Narrative and direct address in skaldic verse

Jayne Carroll

In what is probably skaldic studies' most frequently quoted passage, Snorri Sturluson emphasises the importance of the original performance context of skaldic verse:

Tökum vér þat allt fyrir satt, er í þeim kvæðum finnsk um ferðir þeira eða orrostur. En þat er hátt skálða at lofa þann mest, er þá eru þeir fyrir, en engi myndi þat þora at segja sjálfum honum þau verk hans, er allir þeir, er heyrði, vissi, at hégómi væri ok skrök, ok svá sjálfir hann. Þat væri þá háð, en eigi lof. (Prologue, *Heimskringla*, ÍF 26:5-7)

We regard all to be true which is found in those poems about [the Norwegian kings'] expeditions and battles. It is [to be sure] the habit of poets to give highest praise to those princes in whose presence they are; but no one would have dared to tell them to their faces about deeds which all who listened, as well as the prince himself, knew were only falsehoods and fabrications. That would have been mockery, still not praise. (Hollander 1964:4-5)

Snorri argues that the poet's reciting in the presence of his patron and others who are 'in the know' guarantees the reliability of the verse: if the text were seriously distorting reality, then it would have been pragmatically unacceptable. This argument is implicitly accepted by those who value skaldic verse as an (albeit problematic) historical source.

The perceived importance of this relationship between poet and patron, and a foregrounding of the role of the poet in the creation and reciting of the text, is observable in most prose works that preserve skaldic poetry. The performativity of the skaldic poem is something that marks it out from many medieval texts which also deal with historical events. Skaldic stanzas, at least the majority of them, have arrived on the desks of their readers from medieval times to the present with a name attached. Most of the surviving corpus is not anonymous, as the saga-authors systematically provide name labels when they quote from a poet's work. This in itself is a kind of badge of authenticity, part of the text's claim to represent a past reality. The poet does not just feature in the prose though. Usually, he surfaces in his—or very occasionally her—poem as well. This could take the form of the poet narrating in the first person (or using second-person forms of address—the 'you' always implies an 'I'), or it could be that the poet presents him- or herself as an audience of an earlier telling of the events, or the poet could surface in the poem by referring to the here-and-now of the skaldic performance. In addition to depicting the past events under narration, all the textual indicators of the poet's presence

serve to create for us a further past reality: the actual context of performance. The poem demands that we form a number of mental pictures, and the picture of the here-and-now of the original performance can dramatically affect or add to our reading of the poem. To take one example, Matthew Townend's recent analysis (2001) of the Norse poems on Knútr drew upon an imagined picture of their possible original performance context in the royal palace of Winchester; in this light, the poems can be read as an assertion of the centrality of Norse tradition to a king who in other respects seems thoroughly to have Englished himself.

The performance context impinges upon the text not simply in how it affects or contributes to our reading of the text, but also in its structure—the internal structure of each stanza, and how the stanzas fit together to make up a cohesive long poem. This paper is, in part, a close examination of how the structural elements of the text reflect the reality of the performance context, and argues a very basic point: that the narrative structure of an individual poem generates meaning, and deserves detailed attention. There may be, for example, significant structural differences between poems that clearly indicate an original context of direct address (where the object of praise is present at the original recital) and poems that do not indicate such a context (e.g. *erfidrápur*, poems composed and performed in praise of a deceased leader, presumably a short time after his death; see Fidjestøl 1982: 193–98).¹ Direct address is usually clearly signposted through apostrophe and second-person pronouns and verbs, and these features are obvious differences between direct-address and non-direct address poems—apostrophe and second-person forms do not make sense unless the 'praisee' is present—but in many cases the differences extend further than this. The corpus that I have examined is limited (skaldic eulogies purportedly performed in England; compiled in Jesch 2001), so conclusions must be tentative, but among these poems there seem to be significant differences in the way that the cohesive features and linguistic elements that we normally associate with narrative text are used, partly determined by performance context.

So what are these narrative features? Lexical repetition and thematic congruity may be counted as general cohesive features. Linguistic elements that promote narrativity are those that contribute to, or further, the textual ordering of the succession of events being narrated (a text's connective tissue). These may have a clause-linking function within the texts, or place events in chronological sequence relative to each other, or have anaphoric function, referring back to something already specified. Typically, these are subordinating conjunctions and relatives, such as *who* and *which*, coordinating conjunctions, such as *and* and *but*, third-person pronouns, and adverbs which indicate temporal order, such as *then*, *later*, and *afterwards*. It is often commented upon that there is a general scarcity of these elements in skaldic poetry (see, for example, Lindow 1982: 98): descriptive definitions of skaldic poetry lead the reader to expect a lack of logical relationship between adjacent clauses, with disconnected main clauses as the norm, and intercalary clauses further impeding a sense of narrative progression. In other words, it is perhaps better to speak of the non-narrativity of skaldic verse, rather than its narrative structure (but see Poole 1991 for the narrative capabilities of skaldic verse). The essential argument of this article is that we can make interesting observations above and beyond such blanket statements; in particular, about the ways in which the performance context affects the narrative structure of a text. In what follows, I illustrate this point with three poems from my small corpus, chosen in part because of the way they have been transmitted in their prose sources. Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *Höfuðlausn* is preserved in the Wolfenbüttel manuscript (c. 1350), with a stanza order accepted by its subsequent editors, and it thus presents the

fewest problems with reconstruction and stanza order (although the ?-group mss present alternative readings, and an alternative stanza order and text in vv. 13-18; see Poole 1993). Þórðr Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrápa* and Óttarr svarti's *Knútsdrápa* are more problematic, and space does not allow for an adequate discussion of preservation issues, but nevertheless the stanzas are preserved in adjacent series in their prose contexts, and are examined within these 'series' below.² Each poem is printed in the appendix with the relevant linguistic elements 'coded' to aid the reader.

Þórðr Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrápa*, in praise of Norwegian Eiríkr jarl Hákonarson, is an example of a poem which in all likelihood is not intended for recital before its praisee; it is considered by some critics to be a possible example of an *erfidrápa* (see Fidjestøl 198: 116).³ The poem is an aggregate account of a number of particularly important events in Eiríkr's life: vv. 1-4 narrate his battle with the Jómsvíkings; vv. 6-10 are all concerned somehow with Eiríkr's relationship with Norwegian Óláfr Tryggvason—they cover his refuge in Sweden with Óláfr Svíakonungr and his victory at the battle of Svölðr; the final preserved stanzas, vv. 11-17, treat Eiríkr's part in Knútr's English campaigns. The text can be divided into sections, each relating to one of these three episodes in Eiríkr's life, and each, broadly speaking, presenting an initial situation and proceeding chronologically.

Referring to the appendix, it should be possible to see that there is a relatively even spread of the linguistic elements associated with narrative text highlighted throughout *Eiríksdrápa*; these are the elements that function as the text's glue, holding it together. Each stanza has at least one instance of this sort of word, and many have two or more, spread through the two helmings, and, quite unusually, sometimes linking them. So, the helmings in stanzas 6, 9, 10, and 16 are linked with simple conjunction *en*, meaning 'and' or 'but'; in stanzas 2, 4, and 11, the second helming functions as a clause subordinate to one in the first, introduced with relative pronouns—'he who', 'those who', 'that'. Similarly, subordinate clauses are common within the helming, introduced with relative pronouns and relative adverbs. Conjunctions also link main clauses within helmings.

This particular poem is not lacking in the words that are, generally speaking, held to be scarce in skaldic verse. We have a fairly comprehensively cohesive text in terms of these narrative nuts and bolts. We can go further and make a few observations about the ways in which verbal repetition and thematic congruity also contribute to its cohesiveness, within each of the three 'sections' (these are outlined in the appendix). Each section deals with a particular phase in Eiríkr's life. I shall concentrate on sections 1 and 3, because the order of the verses in these two sections is relatively unproblematic, as they are preserved in that order in their prose texts. The stanzas of section 2 are rather more cobbled together.

In the first section, that treating the Jómsvíkings, we find an extensive use of the vocabulary of ship-faring. Eiríkr is first described as *Sveiða vangs viggmeiðr* 'tree of the horse of Sveiði's field>seafarer'. Lexical items for ships feature in all four stanzas: in 1 we have *súðlǫngum skeiðum* 'long-planked ships'; in 2, we have *snekkjur*, *knǫrru* and *skeiðar*—all of which are types of ship—and just possibly *lind* as well, as a metonym for ship; in 3 we have *stóði hrefnis* 'stud of row of planks', a ship kenning; in 4, *mævar skeiðar* 'slim ships', *leiðangr* 'ship-army'; *barms vigg* 'steed of the rim [ship]'. In addition to the simple repetition of terms for ship, each of the three ship kennings has as its base word an element which signifies 'horse'.

Alongside these terms for ships we have related terms for sea and sea-faring equipment. in v 1 we have *vatn* 'sea' and *dregnum hlunni* 'worn roller'; in 2, *brim* 'sea'; in 3, *lǫg* 'sea', *hlumr* 'oar-

handle', *sæ* 'sea', *blǫðum ára* 'blades of oars'. This section is drenched in sea-faring terminology; this heavy use of a particular lexical field gives a sense of the section as unit—it stops quite abruptly when we move on to the second section.

Vv. 11–16, narrating Eiríkr's battles in Knútr's campaign, display the same lexical cohesion and unity. In 11A, Knútr is described as *lofkenda* 'famous', where *leyfð hefsk* 'praise dwells'. Lexical repetition abounds, comprehensively linking the stanzas: in 11, *hjalmsomum*, *hilmi*, and *jarli* in are matched with *hjalmaðs jarls ok hilmis* in 13B; *hilmi* then appears again in 16B; vv. 11 and 13 are linked further with *koma* and *fundar* matching *koma* and *fundr*; in 12 Eiríkr's *mislong* ships 'ships of varying length' are matched by Knútr's *langskipum* 'long ships' in 13. Elements from the *bláðýrum* 'dark animals' which means 'ships' and *eggveðrs* 'edge-storm' a battle-kenning in v. 12 combine in *bláar eggjar* 'dark edges' in 14; *eggja* is repeated once more in v. 15; Eiríkr gives flesh *hrafni* 'to the raven' in v. 15 and his followers are *hrafni gefendr* 'raven-feeders' in v. 16. *Land* is repeated in 12, 14, 16. Much of this lexical repetition serves particularly to link verses that are either immediately adjacent or one stanza removed. In other words, on a local level, there is a lot going on to knit the text together, both in terms of the linking words, and lexis and theme.

Eiríksdrápa, therefore, has a relatively clear narrative structure, and, importantly, not one that we have to infer from, for example, a series of place-names that illustrate a logical course of movement. The poem is liberally sprinkled with the parts of speech that form a text's connective tissue; and it is knit with extensive lexical repetition and thematic congruity.

Óttarr svarti's *Knútsdrápa*, on the other hand, is rather different. In praise of Knútr the Great, ten of the poem's eleven surviving stanzas refer to his activities in England, and the final stanza to his part in the battle of the Holy River. The poem is entirely narrated in the second person: it is unambiguously, even emphatically, direct address. Generally speaking, linking and subordinating elements are used to a far lesser extent in *Knútsdrápa* than they were in *Eiríksdrápa*. They are there, but not in great number. The text has 4 conjunctions, 5 relatives, and minimal use of any pronoun—just two instances—other than the very frequent second-person forms. Even first-person forms are rare—there are only two in the entire poem. Most of these elements occur in the final three stanzas; there is a concentration towards the end of the poem.

The bulk of the poem does seem to be structured quite differently to *Eiríksdrápa*. In *Knútsdrápa*, we have a poem that is pretty much lacking in the semantically light connective words that we associate with narrative text. There are also far fewer of the more general features of narrative, such as use of lexical repetition and patterning, that are present to such an extent in *Eiríksdrápa*. This can perhaps most easily be seen when we consider that Óttarr addresses Knútr with warrior kennings or heiti twenty-one times in only eleven stanzas, but only once repeats the same element (*hilmir*, vv. 1 and 3; compare this with Þórðr's five uses of *jarl*). This poem is something of an apostrophic *tour de force* both in terms of the number of times Knútr is addressed, and the variety of terms used in the address. There is some repetition of nouns in general, but this is in non-consecutive stanzas: so we have *nafn* 'name' in 2 and 8; *skjöldr* 'shield' in 3 and 8, *rann* 'shield' in 1 and 7; *byggð* 'dwelling' in 4 and 7, *sverðr* 'sword' in 8 and 10, and *ætt* 'family, lineage' in 3 and 7. There is less of a sense of a stanza being tied very tightly to its successor. Instead, it is the poem's use of second-person forms, rather than conjunctions and relatives, that lends the text cohesion. The consistent direct address obviates the need for a more consistently delineated narrative path. It provides the structural

outlines necessary for the text to be perceived as coherent and cohesive, and this therefore renders the verbal signs of beginning, progression, and end in the informational content of the poem less essential. Because we are so consistently given a sense of the reality of the original performance, we are also provided with a sense of cohesiveness, even if this does not extend very far when subjected to analysis.

My two examples, *Eiríksdrápa* and *Knútsdrápa*, illustrate a simple and quite commonsensical point. The original performance context inevitably affects the structure of the text at the most basic narrative level. Specifically, consistent reference to an external reality can provide a narrative backbone upon which to hang the flesh of the poem.

My third example is the rather over-familiar *Höfuðlausn*, Egill's poem in praise of York's tenth-century Viking ruler Eiríkr Bloodaxe. Discussion of this poem is dogged by problems with the saga-chronology: the reigns of Eiríkr Bloodaxe and Athelstan were not co-existent. This, coupled with the head-ransom context, a literary topos found in a number of sagas, casts doubt on the authenticity of the poem itself and the likelihood of its composition and recital in York in the presence of Eiríkr.⁴ However, as John Hines has pointed out, the poem 'locate[s] itself convincingly in time and place, and identif[ies] the ruler that it praises' (Hines 1995: 84). While it is impossible to state beyond doubt that the poem was addressed directly to Eiríkr Bloodaxe, close attention to its narrative structure contributes to a reading which foregrounds this context of enunciation. This fosters the sense that the poem is very much about the relationship between praiser and praisee, a sense that may have played a part in the poem being preserved within a head-ransom episode.

Structurally speaking, this poem is more complicated than the two examined above. It clearly indicates that it is direct-address (for example, with the use of apostrophe), but, unlike Óttarr's poem, it is not narrated in the second person. Of the twenty stanzas, eleven are third-person accounts of past events. So here we have a mixture of direct address and, what we would normally think of as the poem's narrative, the relating of past deeds. Stanzas 4, 5, 6, and stanzas 9 to 15 dwell on Eiríkr's martial deeds, and, with the exception of the first helming of stanza 13, are uniformly past tense. These are the stanzas where Eiríkr's 'story' is told. These story verses are sandwiched between stanzas of direct address and those in which Egill gives an account of his own activities in the first-person. The poem has more of a mixed structure than the two previous examples; there are short sections on Eiríkr, then short sections on Egill and his role as performing poet. There are various neat links between these sections. Stanza 3 provides an example of this: it accomplishes a shift in focus from the present moment of recital (*ek fylja fet* 'I proceed to recite'), which has been the subject of the previous two stanzas, to Eiríkr's past actions (*hvat fylkir vá* 'what the king fought'), which are the subject of the next three verses, via a past act of recital (*flestr maðr of frá* 'many a man heard'). In effect, Egill transposes the hearing of Eiríkr's deeds from the present performance context into the past, and from there, to the fighting itself. A further section link is to be found in stanza 6, which marks the end of a so-called 'narrative' section and indicates the beginning of one in which the moment of praising is again foregrounded. It does this by taking us from a scene of battle—*fleina hnit* 'clash of spears' to the idea of praise when we're told that *orðstír of gat Eiríkr at þat* 'Eiríkr gained fame from that'. From past fame, we come to the present spreading of fame. It is a kind of mirror image of the earlier link.

Similarly, stanza 16 marks another definite stage. We have a consequence of battle: fighting gains gold, which is then distributed by the king in his role as *hringbróti* ring-breaker, and

this role is elaborated upon in stanzas 17 and 18 in the present tense, bringing us into Egill's present—he wants to benefit from this generosity. The poem has moved into the realms of the immediate: Egill's role as poet in York, where we remain for the rest of the poem.

Thus, the poem has a perfectly acceptable internal logic which can be painted with very broad brushstrokes. In terms of metaphorical progression too, there are strands of images running through the poem, ably analysed by Hines (1995). To take one of Hines's examples, there is a clearly traceable string of liquid images in the poem: the sea carries Egill with his sea of Óðinn's mindshore (poetry; v. 1); the sea's water turns to blood in the kenning 'river of sword' (v. 4), in v. 5 blood and water reunite; Eiríkr also comes from across the sea, and is heard of across the sea; nearing the end of his poem, Egill again describes his poetry as Óðinn's liquid.

So the poem is organised into clearly linked sections, and strands of metaphors provide further cohesion. However, when we look at the nuts and bolts of what we have termed the narrative component—the series of stanzas describing battle-scenes, that is verses 4 to 6 and 9 to 15—this does not have much in the way of overall design or coherence. These scenes are not linked. There are only two instances of *þá* 'then' in stanzas 4 and 14. In these cases, the link is between two concurrent states, rather than what we might perceive as a linear progression along the lines of this happened **and** as a result this happened next.

It is difficult to find narrative progression, an internal chronology, when the poem does not appear to relate a succession of past events. However, the linguistic elements which do indicate a chronological order or a causal relationship belong to the stanzas which form a commentary on Egill's immediate role—**fremr** *munk segja ef firar þegja* 'further I will speak if men are silent' (v. 7); *hygg, vísi ... hvé ek þylja fet, ef ek þogn of get* 'pay heed prince, how I recite, if I get silence' (v. 3); **enn** *munk vilja fyr verum skilja skapleik skata* 'Further I wish to proclaim before men the character of the leader' (v. 16)

The pronouns too, are limited to the stanzas of direct address, not only the first-person pronouns, but also third-person pronouns. Of the six third-person pronouns in the poem, there is only one which does not occur in a verse of direct address, that is in 17 *hōnum* 'for him'; and even this is not in a section of the poem which deals with Eiríkr's past actions. Stanza 17 is one of the present-tense stanzas, and, because it narrates Eiríkr's generosity in the present tense, it is a very thinly disguised request for reward. In other words, it is focusing on the present relationship of Egill and Eiríkr.

So, paradoxically, what we might expect to be the 'narrative' component of the text, where we learn what Eiríkr has done, does not contain linguistic elements which imply a causal or chronological relationship. These elements are, however, to be found in the stanzas of direct address. In fact, these stanzas are very much the fabric of the poem's narrative component, from a linguistic nuts-and-bolts point of view. His first-person statements are in no way parenthetical; they structure the poem. The poem's story is Egill's journey to England and his appearance at Eiríkr's court, rather than the story of Eiríkr's glorious past.

Verb usage too leads us to read Egill's experience as the structuring principle of the narrative. They provide us with the poem's chronology. In the first stanza of the poem, the journey and composition are narrated in a series of past-tense first-person verbs—*fórk* 'I travelled'; *drók* 'I launched'; *hlóðk* 'I loaded'. There is then a shift to the use of present-tense verbs to narrate this same journey and composition—*ek ber/berk* 'I carry' (vv. 1 and 2). These verbs implicitly equate the journey with the act of composition both in the metaphors used and in

their juxtaposition in the stanza [*fórk<ber*, *drók<hlóðk*]. The present-tense forms which narrate the journey then merge into those used of Egill's here-and-now when he talks about his situation: *mærik* 'I praise' (2); *biðjum* 'we ask' (2); *ek þylja fet* 'I proceed to recite' (3). This focus on the 'present' is maintained through the poem: in both stanzas 7 and 16, Egill declares *munk segja* 'I shall say'; in 18 he continues *mælik* 'I speak'. The move towards the poem's close is marked in a shift to past tense to refer to the recital, and there seems to be a deliberate transposition of present- to past-tense forms of verbs already used in the poem:

v.3

vel sómir þat,
hvé ek þylja fet,
ef ek þogn get;

It well becomes that
how I proceed to recite
if I receive silence

v.19

hvé ek yrkja fat,
gótt þykkjumk þat,
es ek þogn of gat.

how I proceeded to compose
good that seemed to me
when I received silence

Similarly, *ek ber/berk* (vv.1 and 2) changes to *bark* (v. 20). So here we have a clearly defined chronology of events. Those events are not a series of Eiríkr's deeds, but Egill's experiences. This clearly defined chronology marks the subject of these experiences as the true subject of his poem.

This may ring true with the way we, as readers, make sense of the poem—that is, by imagining the present of the *ek*, the 'I': the import of the poem is completely tied to a scene which is implied rather than described in the poem. The battle-scene stanzas have little in the way of informational content: they do not add to our knowledge of the history of the period or of Eiríkr Bloodaxe (tellingly, the poem is not mentioned in Campbell 1971, although some of Egill's other poems are).

The poem's persistent return to the context of enunciation, to the here and now of the performance, supports the function that it has within its prose context: establishing a relationship between Egill and Eiríkr is dominant, over and above narrating the praise-worthy activities of the poem's ostensible subject. The importance of the present, rather than the past events of Eiríkr's life, is bound up in the most basic structural elements of the text. In many ways then, *Hqfuðlausn* is a poem which has a narrative scheme—an orderly structure which is possible to follow—only in relation to its performance context. This was the case with Óttarr's poem too, but in a rather different way, and I think with most direct-address poems.

There are, of course, enormous problems with any study which attempts to tackle the question of structure: most of the surviving long poems we have are reassembled fragments, most probably incomplete, and, as a work in progress, this paper has not begun to deal with these issues. However, examination of narrative structure may add much to our understanding of skaldic verse—if nothing else, it should make us reassess the notion that this poetry is fundamentally and intrinsically non-narrative in structure. Much of it is, for sure, but we might want to modify this, or at least account for a poet's different approaches. There may be particular reasons why certain types of skaldic verse lack narrative elements, and the reasons may not simply be to do with the rigid metrical and alliterative structure of the verse, and the noun-heavy kenning system. It may well be to do with the performance context, and the

demands that this imposed upon the reciting poet and his text. Aside from this investigation offering greater understanding of structure, it may have further applications. If we have a better grasp of the elements of a poem that are linked to its discourse context, we may be in a position to make an assessment of what that discourse context actually was. Detailed analysis of the text could lead us to greater insight into the reality of the original performance.⁵

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Apendix

Key:

subordinating conjunctions and relatives

co-ordinating conjunctions

THIRD-PERSON PRONOUNS (not relatives)

ADVERBS INDICATING TEMPORAL ORDER

1. Non-direct address: Þórðr Kolbeinsson: *Eiríksdrápa* (Text from *Skj* BI, pp. 202-6 with minor changes in punctuation and more significant changes noted, but rearranged following Fidjestøl 1982: 115-17, 171.

'Sections':

- vv. 1-5 Eiríkr vs. the Jómsvíkings
 vv. 6-10 Eiríkr vs. Óláfr Tryggvason
 vv. 11-17 Eiríkr's part in Knútr's English campaigns

1. **Ok** sannliga sunnan
 (sôusk vitt búendr ítrir
 stríð) of stála meiða
 stórhersögur fóru;
 súðlǫngum frá Sveiða
 sunnr af dregnum hlunni
 vangs á vatn of þrungit
 viggmeiðr Dana skeiðum.
2. Mjök lét margar snekkjur
 (mœrðar ǫrr) sem knǫrru
 (óðr vex skálds) ok skeiðar
 skjaldhlynr á brim dynja,
þás ólítill útan
 oddherðir fór gerða
 (mǫrg vas lind fyr landi)
 lǫnd sins fǫður rǫndu.
3. Setti jarl, **sás** atti,
 ógnfróðr, á lǫg stóði
 hrefnis, hōva stafna
 hótis Sigvalda at móti;
 margr skalf hlumr, **en** hvergi
 huggendr bana uggðu,
þeirs götu sæ slíta,
 sárgamms, blǫðum ára.
4. **ENN** í gǫgn at gunni
 glæheim skriðu mævar,
 rendi langt með landi
 leiðangr, Dana skeiðar,
þær es jarl und örur
 ærins golls á Mœri
 (barms rak vigg und vǫrmum
 valkesti) hrauð flestar.

5. Jǫfrum varð, **en** urðu
 allhvast Danir falla,
 blóðhelsingja bræðir,
 bræðr Sigurðar, ærði.
6. Meinrennir, brá (manna
 margs fýsa skǫp), varga,
 ljóða **LÍTLU SÍÐAR**
 læ Hōkonar ævi,
en til lands, **þess's** lindar
 láðstafr vegit hafði
 hraustr, **þás** herr fór vestan,
 hygg kómu son Tryggva.
7. Hafði sér við særi
 (SLÍKS vas vǫn at HÖNUM)
 auðs, **an** upp of kvæði,
 Eiríkr í hug meira;
 sótti reiðr at rōðum
 (rann engi **Þvi** manna),
 þrályndi gafsk Þrændum,
 þrœnzkr jarl konung scenskan.
8. Þar vas hjalmaðs herjar
 Hropts við dreyrgar toptir

 orð fekk gótt, **es** gerði
 grams vǫrn blōum hjǫrvi,
 (hǫll bilar hāra fjalla)
 Hyrningr (**ADR** þat fyrnisk)
9. Veitk, fyr Erling útan,
 ár **at** hersar vǫru
 (lofak fasta Tý) flestir
 (farlands) vinir jarla,
en EPT víg frá Veigu
 (velk orð) und gram norðan
 land eða lengra stundu
 lagðisk suðr til Agða.
10. Allvalds nutu aldir,
 una líkar vel slíku;
 skyldr lézk hendi at halda
HANN of Nóregs mǫnnum;
en Sveinn konungr sunnan

sagðr es dauðr, **en** auðir
(fátt bilar flestra ýta
fár) **HANS** býir vöru.

11. **ENN** hefsk leyfð, **þars** lofða,
lofkenda frásk sendu
at hjalmsömum hilmir,
hjarls drótna, boð, jarli,
at skyldligast skyldi,
skillk, **hvat** gramr lézk vilja,
endr til ásta fundar
Eiríkr koma **ÞEIRA**.

12. Ítr þrifusk jofra hleyti
eggveðrs í fôr seggja
(skeið helt mörq í móðu
mislöng) **sem** ek vissa;
bládýrum helt böru
brands svá náar landi
Ullr, **at** enska völlu
áttstórr, séa knátti.

13. **ENN** at eyrar grunnir
endr, skjöldungir, of rendi
sás kjölslóðir kníði,
Knútr langskipum útan;
varð, **þars** vildu fyrðar⁶
varrláð koma báðir,
hjalmaðs jarls ok hilmis
höegr fundr á því dægri.

14. Gollkennir lét gunni
(græðis hests) fyr vestan
(Pundr vá leyfðr til landa)
Lundún saman bundit;
fekk, regn Þorins rekka⁷
rann, of þingamönnum,
æglig högg, **þars** eggjar,
Ulfkell, bláar skulfu.

15. Hvatr vann Freyr á flotna
folkstafns, **sás** gaf hrafini
sollit hold né sjaldan,
sverðs eggja spor leggja;

snjallr lét opt **ok** olli
Eiríkr bana **ÞEIRA**
(rauð Hringmaraheiði
herr) Engla lið þverra.

16. Gengu upp, **þeirs** Englum,
ár hrafn gefendr, vöru
langa stund, á landi,
leiðir, grund af skeiðum,⁸
en í gögn, **þeirs** göðu,
glaum skers, bæi verja,
galt hilmis lið hjalta,
herferð búendr gerðu.

17. Óð, **en** ærnu náði
íms sveit freka hveiti,
(gera qlðra naut gylðir)
gjalpar stóð í blóði.

2. Direct address poem: Óttarr svarti: *Knútsdrápa* (Text from *Skj* BI, pp. 272-75, except where noted).

1. Hratt lítt gamall, lýtir
lögreiðar, framm skeiðum;
fórat fylkir æri
folksveimuðr þér heiman;
hilmir bjótt **ok** hættir
harðbrynjuð skip kynjum;
reiðr hafðir þú rauðar
randir Knútr fyr landi.

2. Út fylgðu þér Jótar,
auðmildr, flugar trauðir,
skauthreina bjótt skreytir
Skönunga liðvanir;⁹
vöð blés of þér vísi,
vestr settir þú flesta
(kunt gerðir þú þannig
þitt nafn) í haf stafna.

3. Herskjöld bart **ok** helduð
hilmir ríkr af slíku;
hykkat þengill þekðust
þik kyrrsetu mikla;

- ætt drapt, Jóta dróttinn,
Játgeirs í för þeiri;
þveit rakt (þrár est heitinn)
ÞEIM stillis konr illan.
4. Brunnu byggðir manna
buðlungr fyr þér ungum,
opt lézt, hús ok, heiptar
herkall búendr gerva.
5. Gunni lézt í grœnni
gramr Lindisey framða,
beldu viðr **ÞEIR'S** vildu
víkingar því ríki;
bíða lézt í breiðri
borg Helminga sorgir
æstr fyr Úsu vestan
engst folk, Svía þrengvir.
6. Ungr fylkir lézt Engla
allnær Tesu falla,
flóði djúpt of, dauða,
dík Norðimbra líkum;
svefn brauzt svörtum hrafni,
sunnarr, hvøtuðr Gunnar,
ollir sókn enn snjalli
Sveins mōgr at Skorsteini.
7. Fjorlausu hykk Frísi
friðskerðir þar gerðu,
brauzt með byggðu setri
Brandfurðu, þik randa;
Játmundar hlaut undir
ættniðr gōfugr hættar,
dansk herr skaut þá dōrrum
drótt, **en** þú rakt flóttu.
8. Skjōldungr, vant und skildi
skœru verk, enn sterki,
(fekk blóðtrani bráðir
brúnar) Assatúnun;
vått, **en** valfall þótti
verðung, jōfurr sverði
nær fyr norðan stóru
nafn gnōgt Danaskóga.
9. Bjōðr, vant brynjur rauðar,
blíðr stōrgjafa, **SIDAN**
(lætr qnd **AÐR** þrek þrjóti
þinn) fyr Norðvík innan.
10. **FRAMM** gekst enn **þars** unnuð
(almr gall hátt) við malma,
[knōttut] slæ **[þars]** sōttuð]
sverð [kastala verja];
unnuð eigi minni
(ulfs gōmr veit **ÞAT**) rómu,
hnekkir hleypiblakka
hlunns, á Tempsar grunni.
11. Svíum hnekðir þú, sóknar
siklingr qrr, en mikla
ylgr, **þars** ö en helga,
ulfs beitu fekk, heitir;
helt, **þars** hrafn né svaltat,
(hvatráðr est þú) láði,
ógnar stafr, fyr jōfrum,
ýgr, tveimr (við kyn beima).
5. Egill Skallagrímsson: *Hofuðlausn* (Text from
ÍF 2, 183-92)
1. Vestr fórk of ver,
en ek Viðris ber
munstrandar mar,
svás mitt of far;
drók eik á flot
við ísa brot,
hlóðk mærdar hlut
míns knarrar skut.
2. Buðumk hilmir lōð,
þar ák hróðrar kvōð,
berk Óðins mjōð
á Engla bjōð;
lofat vísa vann,
víst mærik **ÞANN**;
hljóðs biðjum **HANN**,
því at hróðr of fann.

3. Hygg, vísi, at,
vel sómir þat,
hvé ek þylja fet,
ef ek þogn of get;
flestr maðr of frá,
hvat fylkir vá,
en Viðrir sá,
hvar valr of lá.
4. Óx hjörva glöm
við hlífar þrom,
guðr óx of gram,
gramr sótti fram;
þar heyrðisk þá,
þaut mækis ö,
malmhríðar spö;
sú vas mest of lö.
5. Vasat villr staðar
vefr darraðar
of grams glaðar
geirvangs raðar;
þars í blóði
enn brimlá-móði
völlr of þrumði,
und véum glumði.
6. Hné folk á fit
við fleina hnit;
orðstír of gat
Eiríkr at þat.
- Fremr munk segja
ef firar þegja,
frögum fleira
til frama þeira,
óxu undir
við jöfurs fundi,
brustu brandar
við bláar randar.
8. Hlam heinsqðul
við hjaldrqðul
beit bengrefill,
- þat vas blóðrefill;
frák, at fell
fyr fetilsvelli
Óðins eiki
í éarnleiki.
9. Þar vas eggja at
ok odda gnat;
orðstír of gat
Eiríkr at **þat**.
10. Rauð hilmir hjör,
þar vas hrafna gjör,
fleinn hitti fjör,
flugu dreyrug spjör;
ól flagðs gota
fárbjóðr Skota,
trað nipt Nara
náttverð ara.
11. Flugu hjaldrs tranar
á hræs lanar,
órut blóðs vanar
benmös granar,
sleit und freki
en oddbreki
gnúði hrafni
á hqfuðstafni.
12. Kom gríðar læ
at Gjalpar skæ;
bauð ulfum hræ
Eiríkr of sæ.
13. Lætr snót saka
sverð-Frey vaka,
en skers Haka
skíðgarð braka;
brustu broddar,
en bitu oddar,
böru hqrvar
af bogum qrvar.
14. Beit fleinn floginn,
þa vas friðr loginn,

- vas almr dreginn,
varð ulfr feginn;
stózk folkhagi
við fjorlagi,
gall ýbogi
at eggtoigi.
15. Jofurr sveigði ý,
flugu unda bý;
bauð ulfum hræ
Eiríkr of sæ.
16. ENN munk vilja
fyr verum skilja
skapleik skata,
skal mærd hvata;
verpr ábröndum,
en jofurr löndum
heldr hornklofi;
HANN'S næstr lofi.
17. Brýtr bógvita
bjóðr hrammþvita
muna hodd-dofa
hringbrjótr lofa;
mjök's **HÖNUM** fól
haukstrandar mól;
glaðar flotna fjól
við Fróða mjól.
18. Verpr broddfleti
af baugseti
hjørleiks hvati,
HANN es baugskati;
þróask hér sem hvar,
hugat mælik þar,
frétt's austr of mar,
Eiríks of far.
19. Jöfurr hyggi at,
hvé ek yrkja fat,
gótt þykkjumk þat,
es ek þögn of gat;
hrærdak munni
af munar grunni
Óðins ægi
of jöru fægi.
20. Bark þengils lof
á þagnar rof;
kannk mála mjöt
of manna sjöt;
ór hlátra ham
hróðr bark fyr gram;
svá fór þat fram,
at flestr of nam.

Notes

- ¹ A number of skaldic poems may be said to have 'conventional' addressees, for example, female observers of martial deeds (see Fidjestøl 1997[1976]: 339 and Frank 1991). Their presence must have been imagined rather than realised.
- ² Fidjestøl 1982: 35–36 lists prose preservation contexts.
- ³ The order of stanzas accepted here is Fidjestøl's, and follows his argument that the verses previously edited under the two titles *Eiríksdrápa* and *Belgskakadrápa* (*Skj* AI: 212–17; *Skj* BI: 202–6) belong to the same poem.
- ⁴ For two views on the authenticity of *Höfuðlausn*, see Hines 1995 and Jón Helgason 1969.
- ⁵ I should like to thank Judith Jesch and John McKinnell who read and offered very useful comments upon an earlier draft of this article.
- ⁶ *Skj* BI's *dyrum* is an emendation. Here, the MS reading *fyrðar* 'men' is preferred (see *Skj* AI, p. 216).

- ⁷ The text given here follows the MS reading as given in *Skj* AI, p. 216, rather than the emendation *regn_orinn Røkkva* presented in *Skj* BI.
- ⁸ *Grund af skeiðum* following MS reading in *Skj* AI, p. 217.
- ⁹ The reading *liðvanir* follows ÍF 35, p. 101, rather than *Skj* BI's *lið Vánar*.

‘Go then South to Dublin; that is now the Most Praiseworthy Voyage.’ What would Brynjólfr’s Son have found there?

Howard B. Clarke

‘Farðu síðan suður til Dyflinnar; sú er nú ferð frægst’ (Nordal 1933: 84). Thus wrote the author of *Egils Saga Skalla-Grímssonar* c. 1200, in the early days of the Anglo-French city. For any Icelandic trader of that time, it would have been good advice, for Dublin was undergoing one of the most dramatic phases of development in its entire history. It is doubtful, however, whether Icelanders were still trading with Dublin, or indeed with any part of Ireland (Gelsinger 1981: 133-5). No Icelandic or Norwegian is recorded as a member of Dublin’s Guild Merchant in the period from c. 1190 to 1265; the only hint of a possible Scandinavian presence in the city is the name William Wiking, who became a guild member in the very early thirteenth century (Connolly and Martin 1992: 21). In their references to Dublin (Dyflinn) and to Dublinshire (Dyflinnarskíri and variants), Icelandic authors in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were looking back to a place that had been transformed out of all recognition by the time of writing. This necessarily brief and by no means exhaustive survey of Icelandic literary allusions to Dublin and its dependent territory presents a simple four-fold typology that suggests that there were different levels of historical consciousness that are worth distinguishing one from another.

The first type of reference to Dublin may be described as political, harking back to the conquest and control of an undefined settlement in Ireland in a ninth-century context. *Landnámabók* and *Eiríks Saga Rauða* preserve the tradition that Óláfr the White went on a Viking expedition and conquered both Dublin and Dublinshire (Benediktsson 1968: 136; Sveinsson and Þórðarson 1935: 195). This event can be dated from Irish sources to 853 (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983: 313, ‘Amlaib, son of the king of Lochlann, came to Ireland, and the foreigners of Ireland [Vikings] submitted to him, and he took tribute from the Irish’). The contextual section near the beginning of both versions of *Landnámabók* places an Irish king, Cerball of Ossory (842-88) at Dublin (Benediktsson 1968: 32-3). This is incorrect in terms of rulership, but may be an echo of the ruthless destruction of King Óláfr’s stronghold (Irish *dún*) at Clondalkin, a few kilometres west of Dublin, in the year 867 (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983: 323, ‘Amlaib’s fort at Clondalkin was burned ... and the aforesaid commanders caused a slaughter of a hundred of the leaders of the foreigners in the vicinity of Clondalkin on the

same day'). One of the named commanders of the victorious Irish was Cináed mac Gáethíne, an ally of Cerball, and the exemplary punishment meted out to the defeated Vikings may have been remembered long afterwards. A quite different and mainly unsupported version of political events in the mid-ninth century occurs in *Haralds Saga Hárfagra*, which links the Norwegian king with Dublin in the persons of his chosen war-leaders, Porgils and Fróðe, who are said to have been the first to take possession of Dublin (Aðalbjarnarson 1941: 138, 'Peir eignuðusk fyrst Norðmanna Dyflinni'). The alleged long reign over Dublin by Porgils until he was tricked by the Irish has no historically attested basis. In terms of Icelandic history as traditionally conceived, the context of all these politically inspired references is the period immediately preceding the Age of Settlement (c. 870 to c. 930).

By way of contrast the second type of Dublin reference belongs contextually to the Saga Age (c. 930 to c. 1030). This type is essentially economic in that it implies that Dublin was a great trading place from both an Icelandic and a Norwegian perspective. The Irish sources confirm this change of emphasis in a particular way: instead of a mere encampment (*longphort*), Dublin is now being referred to consistently as a stronghold (*dún*). By the mid-tenth century, when the latter term is first used in relation to Dublin, the proto-urban settlement had evolved into a genuine town (Clarke 1990-2; 1998). Immediately before directing his son to Dublin, Brynjólfur provides him with a merchant ship for trading purposes (Nordal 1933: 84, 'Kaupskip mun ek fá þér í hendr ok þar með kaupeyri'). In *Eyrbyggja Saga*, composed around the same time, Þoroddr is described as a great trader who had made a merchant voyage west (from Norway) to Dublin in Ireland (Sveinsson and Þórðarson 1935: 76, 'Hann var farmaðr mikill ok átti skip í ferðum. Þoroddr hafði siglt kaupferð vestr til Írlands, til Dyflinnar'). Later on, in a context set in the 1020s, Guðleifr does the same thing (Sveinsson and Þórðarson 1935: 176, 'Þat var ofarliga á d?gum Óláfs ins helga, at Guðleifr hafði kaupferð vestr til Dyflinnar'). Nearer the beginning of the Saga Age, in the third quarter of the tenth century, Jarl Hákon in *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar* sends a man west overseas, bidding him to make a trading voyage to Dublin, as many people were doing then (Aðalbjarnarson 1941: 291, 'Penna mann sendi Hákon jarl vestr um haf, bað hann fara kaupferð til Dyflinnar, sem þá var m?rgum títt ...'). A quite different trade route is indicated in *Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu*, where Gunnlaugr sails to Dublin with some merchants from England (Nordal and Jónsson 1938: 74, 'Síðan siglir Gunnlaugr af Englandi með kaupmonnum norðr til Dyflinnar'). The overseas trade of Dublin during the Saga Age (and beyond) is well attested in the city's archaeological record (Wallace 1985; 1986; 1987) and this part of the saga writers' stock of material was undoubtedly soundly based.

There is a distinct echo of trade between England and Dublin towards the end of *Orkneyinga Saga*, where Svein Asleifarson on his way south comes across two merchant ships laden with English broadcloths; both ships are plundered of their cloth, wine and mead (Guðmundsson 1965: 285, 'En er þeir kómu nær suðr undir Dyflinn, þá sigldu þar af hafi kjólar tveir, er komnir váru af Englandi ok ætluðu til Dyflinnar. Peir váru hlaðnir enskum klæðum, ok var þar á gœzka mikil. ... Hann hafði tekit af kjólunum vín mikit ok mj?ð enskan'). The two following chapters in this saga are unique, however, in their depiction of Dublin as a town governed by leading men. These and other details suggest a third type in this classification that may be described as topographical. The historical context is the 1160s, the last years of the Hiberno-Norse period and within two generations of the saga's composition as we now have it. Svein's last, and fateful, plundering expedition brings him south to Dublin, taking the townsmen (*staðarmenn*) by surprise. The allusion to the town's councillors (*ræðismenn*) is

reminiscent of Gerald of Wales's large building or 'court' (Latin *curia*) in which the last Hiberno-Norse king of Dublin, Asculf mac Torcaill, was executed in 1171 (Scott and Martin 1978: 67, 77). The climax of the episode involves the digging of deep pits in front of the town gates and here and there between the houses where Svein and his men were likely to go (Guðmundsson 1965: 288, 'Peir tóku þat ráð, at þeir grófu sér grafir stórar fyrir borgarhliðum ok víða annars staðar milli húsanna, þar er þeim Sveini var ætlat at ganga ...'). In the end, tolerably civilized Dubliners (*Dyflinnarmenn*) get the better of an unreconstructed representative of a bygone Viking world.

The fourth and last type of reference to Dublin in the whole body of Icelandic literature is non-specific: the place is merely cited as a location for action. The most historically based of these references is the lead-up to the climactic battle of Clontarf, north-east of the town, in the spring of 1014. They occur in chapters 154-7 of *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, where the late thirteenth-century author has inserted elements from the otherwise lost *Brjáns Saga*. The latter, it has been suggested, may have been composed in Dublin c. 1100 (Ó Corráin 1998: 449-52). Some of the main characters — Jarl Sigurðr, Bróðir and King Brian himself — all pass through the town (Sveinsson 1954: 449, 'Brjánn konungr var kominn með allan her sinn til borgarinnar', etc.). The early thirteenth-century *Laxdæla Saga* has King Mýrkjartan riding to Dublin in company with his recently acknowledged grandson, Óláfr Hoskuldsson (Sveinsson 1934: 58, 'Konungr reið þá til Dyflinnar'). A different kind of kinship features in *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar*, where the central character is matched with Gyða, sister of Óláfr Kváran (Irish Amlaíb Cuarán), king of Dublin from 945 to 980 (Aðalbjarnarson 1941: 267, 'En er þing var sett, þá kom þar dróttning ein, er Gyða er nefnd, systir Óláfs kvárans, er konungr var á Írlandi í Dyflinni').

The historical context of Brynjólfr's son's unfulfilled expedition to Dublin is the mid-tenth century, the time of King Óláfr Kváran. The latter's early years witnessed considerable political uncertainty, caused partly by his two failed attempts to establish himself permanently as king of York. In his absence, the last great Viking raid out of Dublin — to Kells and its district — took place in 951 under another war-leader. Óláfr returned to Dublin in the following year and consolidated his kingship, ambushing and killing the king of Tara (high-king) in 956 (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983: 399). The first defensive embankment (Bank 2) at Wood Quay has been dated archaeologically to c. 950 (Wallace 1988: 130-1) and more recent excavations have uncovered similar defensive arrangements of roughly the same date on the southern side of the enclosure (Walsh 2001: 96-104). Accordingly Björn and his companions, had they reached Dublin, would have found a town in the making, though still in its relatively early stages. The cultural environment would have been Scandinavian in many respects, though the houses might have seemed somewhat foreign in their mode of construction (Wallace 1992) and most of the womenfolk would undoubtedly have been Irish. The king himself was married to Gormlaith, a Leinster princess, and his example must have been widely imitated. As a result, Dublin in the mid-tenth century was already ceasing to be purely Viking and was in transitional mode towards being Hiberno-Norse. Finally the proposed typology of references to Dublin in Icelandic sources, simple though it is, suggests in turn that later saga writers, consciously or unconsciously, could call upon a differentiated set of folk memories that reflected with some degree of accuracy the long and complex evolution of the town itself (Clarke 2002: 1-6).

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