THE ARTICLES FEATURED IN THIS VOLUME concern folkloristics, philology, comparative linguistics, cultural geography, iconography, Old Norse studies and the history of religion in Scandinavia, but in particular they concern the questions of whether, how and to what extent late-recorded material can be used to shed light on historically much earlier periods. It is a blunt fact that our sources for the study of pre-Christian times in Northern Europe are few, fragmentary and immensely limited. However, it is possible to obtain new and relevant information if we broaden our spectrum of sources to include not only contemporary or near-contemporary material, but also material from subsequent, even much later, periods. Showcasing that and how this may be done is the aim of the present volume. Seeking to reopen discussions that have been silent for some time, these articles, each in their way, target a range of methodological issues that are in need of being updated for the twenty-first century.

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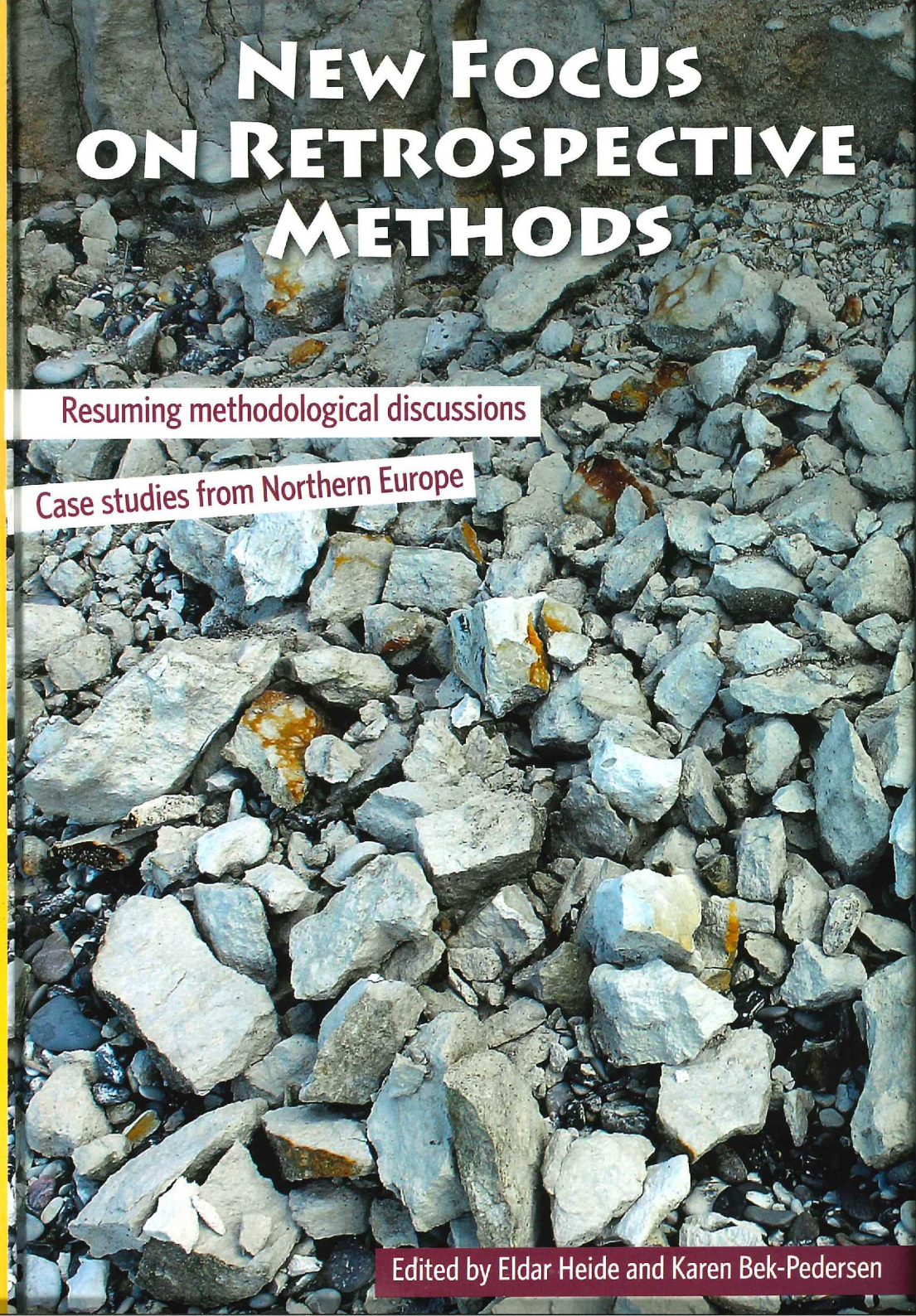
NEW FOCUS ON RETROSPECTIVE METHODS

Resuming methodological discussions

Case studies from Northern Europe



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Edited by Eldar Heide & Karen Bek-Pedersen

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Preface

The articles in this anthology are the result of the conference New Focus on Retrospective Methods, held in Bergen by the Retrospective Methods Network and the Centre for Medieval Studies (CMS) at the University of Bergen, 27–8 September 2010. Out of the 15 papers given at the conference, 9 have been developed into articles and are presented here. We would like to thank CMS for funding the conference and FFC for help and advice in connection with the making of this book.

Bergen and Århus, October 2014
Eldar Heide and Karen Bek-Pedersen

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Why a new focus on retrospective methods?

ELDAR HEIDE & KAREN BEK-PEDERSEN

In most standard introductions to Old Scandinavian religion and mythology, late material is rarely mentioned despite the fact that there are rich post-medieval traditions that clearly treat gods recognizable from Old Scandinavian mythology. Examples include Óðinn, Þórr and Loki, as well as other important mythological beings such as dwarfs, elves, and *jǫtnar* (*jötnar/jättar/jætter/jutlar*). This has been the general situation since the inter-war period, when leading scholars arrived at the conclusion that, after almost a millennium of Christianity, the popular traditions that had their roots in pre-Christian times must be so 'contaminated' and corrupt that they were no longer usable for the study of those early traditions. Thus, the widespread use of post-medieval material, which had been common up until this point, more or less fell out of favour in the study of Old Scandinavian religion and mythology and similar situations are found in other branches of the study of medieval Scandinavia. Although the discipline of folkloristics generally has maintained a high degree of awareness with regard to the value of late material and although the folkloristic trend for including it in studies of Old Scandinavian culture and tradition has increased over the past two or three decades, this has not been the case in other academic fields where the linking of early and late material was not picked up again. For example, when studying Old Norse literature, it has not been common to check nineteenth and early twentieth century folkloric material for parallels that can throw light on motifs found in the old texts. This, however, is a regrettable situation. Since lack of information is frequently the biggest obstacle for studies of pre-Christian religion and mythology, and since this is a field that generally attracts a lot of interest both within the academic disciplines and outside of them, it is unfortunate that potentially valuable information should be ignored. It can therefore only be welcomed that we have in recent years seen not only a renewed interest in post-medieval material emerging, also outwith folkloristics, but likewise a positive reception of studies making use of such material among scholars from different disciplines. This is a favourable as well as productive development following on from the

1980s and 1990s when Old Norse prose genres that had been rejected due to a narrow-minded attitude to sources during the mid-twentieth century once again became the objects of scholarly research into Old Scandinavian religion, ritual practices and mythology – with good results. This renewed interest in post-medieval material is what has paved the way for the founding of the Retrospective Methods Network at the 14th International Saga Conference in Uppsala in 2009. By September 2014 the network has acquired more than 90 members from 19 countries, ranging from students to some of the most recognized scholars in the field of Early Scandinavian studies. Moreover, a now well-established and widely read e-publication, the *Retrospective Methods Newsletter* (RMN), as well as two separate research networks, the Austmarr Network and the Old Norse Folklorists Network (ONF), have all both sprung directly from that opening move back in 2009. The bustling activities of both these offshoots can only mean that considering late material is entirely justified. Clearly, the time was ripe for an initiative in this direction.

However, working one's way back into early times on the basis of late material will always be problematic methodologically and the somewhat naive approaches of the early twentieth century scholars should not be taken up again. What is needed now is a greater methodological awareness in order to develop new methods suitable for the twenty-first century and it is a central concern for the Retrospective Methods Network that it contribute to this development. This anthology aims at presenting articles that deal with retrospective methods in general, with more specific methodological issues as well as some case studies that exemplify how it is possible to use late material to shed light on early times. Most of the articles belong within the field of Old Norse studies in a wide sense, but many of them overlap with other fields, such as folkloristics (Frog, Gunnell, Heide, Schjødt, Sesselja Helgadóttir, Sävborg), history of religion (Frog, Gunnell, Heide, Schjødt), and etymology (Heide), while others belong to different fields: early Germanic iconography and cultural history (Simek), Uralic historical linguistics (Saarikivi) and historical geography (Antonson). We wanted a diversity of topics and approaches for two reasons: Firstly, one of the fundamental principles of hermeneutics is that it is easier to develop one's understanding when looking at a problem from different angles, even angles that one may initially think are not relevant. Secondly, we believe that a broad selection of studies that discuss or make use of retrospective approaches is the best way to demonstrate the applicability and usefulness of such approaches.

Terry Gunnell's article is a combined theoretical and practical study. He approaches the question of folklore as an aid to studies of Nordic pre-Christian religion from two angles. Through multiple examples, first and foremost

Norwegian traditions connected to farm grave mounds, he demonstrates that the rich material of nineteenth and twentieth century folklore contains information that can throw light on pre-Christian beliefs and practices. While sceptics may be inclined to cast aside such an argument, Gunnell's other point is harder to reject: he makes clear that the pre-Christian Nordic religion, like any other ethnic religion, was itself a form of folklore. This implies that even if one only accepts the most reliable Old Icelandic texts as sources for Nordic pre-Christian religion, an extensive knowledge of the phenomenon of folklore is nonetheless vital for the understanding of those texts and the religion behind them in the first place. Thus, if one decides to maintain a narrow focus on only the most reliable Old Icelandic texts this does not necessarily imply a robust scepticism towards source value; rather, it may represent a self-inflicted scholarly handicap.

Jens Peter Schjødt's article is a discussion of the source value of post-medieval folklore in the study of pre-Christian Scandinavian religion. He employs an approach, which may surprise some since it is really rather fundamental: instead of belittling the problematic aspects of using post-medieval folklore, he points out that the objections to the material are not actually methodologically sound. Firstly, the current rejection of this material springs from an outdated view on the study of religion, a view that harks back to the inter-war period and ought to be revised and updated. Secondly, all of the material we have at our disposal is problematic; this quality is by no means exclusive to post-medieval folklore. Schjødt thus reminds us that, in fact, all of our results remain uncertain, whether we swear by positivistic source-critical criteria or not. The material at our disposal is by definition problematic and this is why we must adopt a critical approach to it, regardless of its chronological homeland in early or late times.

Eldar Heide's article differs from the rest in terms of what it sets out to achieve. He tackles the central issue of actually outlining a new method in order to attempt solving aspects of a problem pertaining to the history of religion. The ability to reconstruct parts of ancient beliefs and ideas on the basis of later, or even much later, information is obviously desirable within this discipline. What has often been attempted is to employ argumentation inspired by the family-tree model from linguistics. But results yielded by experiments of this kind are often very uncertain, or even clearly incorrect, which has lead many critics to take the stance that the undertakings as such are pointless. Heide's suggestion for a way round the problems is a variant of this type of reconstruction, but one which keeps to elements that constitute the semantic side of formally related words. He furthermore proposes that it be a requirement that reconstructions are not presented in an isolated manner, but find

support in independent arguments and/or data. This approach can be employed only in certain cases, but there are nonetheless a good number of those cases and they may well supplement research founded on other methods.

Daniel Sävborg discusses the genre of 'post-classical' sagas of Icelanders in the light of nineteenth and twentieth century folkloric material. The article is an excellent illustration of how we can sometimes understand medieval texts and their backgrounds better if we allow later material to illuminate them. The problem of late popular traditions, which Sävborg uses, is that, although it is often evident that they have undergone significant changes, it is hard to know quite how much they may have changed. Some traditions have, however, been very stable and Sävborg's starting point is that this has clearly been the case in the examples that he discusses, since the motifs are indisputably the same in the nineteenth and twentieth century mainland traditions as in the medieval Icelandic texts, yet at the same time it is highly unlikely that the medieval Icelandic texts constitute the source for the later mainland traditions. The article, then, shows how in the light of late folkloric material we can see an oral tradition behind the medieval texts in question and, moreover, how this can be decisive to our understanding of them and the genre they belong to.

Rudolf Simek's article is a case study of the so-called *guldgubber* from the Scandinavian Migration Age. The case is interesting because of the nigh desperate need for interpretations of this material – sizable, rich and fascinating as it is – while at the same time only retrospective methods (potentially in combination with comparative methods) can provide these interpretations. This is due to the fact that we have no contemporary sources of any kind that can inform us on how the *guldgubber* are to be understood. Simek suggests that some of the depictions of the *guldgubber* can be understood in light of medieval iconography and descriptions in medieval laws. This explanation does not provide a final or complete answer, but nonetheless a rather plausible one, and if it is the most plausible we can achieve then it carries its own worth. If we as scholars do not do our best to meet the demand for interpretations, even in difficult cases, there is no lack of charlatans out there who will do the job for us.

Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir's article is a case study, which is interesting in many respects. Firstly, she discusses material that has hitherto more or less escaped scholarly attention. Secondly, she treats genre types that are hardly represented in the oldest sources. If we are to gain a proper understanding of them then we cannot do without retrospective reasoning, and in this particular instance there are good foundations for doing so since these are traditions that are clearly closely related. The fact that the material is taken from disparate areas across the North Atlantic, areas that have had little direct contact to one

another since the High Middle Ages, gives reason to think that it represents cultural inheritance common to that area. Thirdly, it is noteworthy that Sesselja Helgadóttir attempts reconstruction of narratives, which is a somewhat more ambitious undertaking than the reconstruction of beliefs would be. The research she presents here is not only highly original, but also solidly carried out.

Frog's article presents another daring venture: he attempts reconstruction of the development of a specific narrative tradition, namely the theft of the thunder instrument, known as ATU 1148B in the Aarne–Thompson–Uther folktale classification system. This material is of interest to retrospective methodology since the oldest Norse variant, *Þrymskviða*, presents an isolated instance, while the traditions known from Finno-Ugric and Baltic areas in more recent times are very rich and can hardly be derived from *Þrymskviða*. Moreover, a sixth-century Greek variant is also known, which provides a not insignificant time-depth for the narrative. There can be no doubt that *Þrymskviða* is a version of an ancient myth and must be seen as such. Research into ATU 1148B therefore highlights a problem central to the evaluation of what the sources for Old Norse religion are: the question of the relationship between the forms of the extant eddic poems and their contents, the narratives they tell.

Hans Antonson's article serves to put into perspective the problems that we wrestle with in Old Norse studies. In many places across Scandinavia there are few or no contemporary sources for the rural landscape of the Early or High Middle Ages. Accordingly, a concrete demand for contemporary sources to base investigations on would essentially block any research into this field. But within the study of agrarian historical geography this is not the common attitude; instead, it is universally recognised that post-medieval maps and physical features in today's landscape – such as clearance cairns, stone walls, house foundations, terrace edges, etc. – can provide information about medieval landscapes and can therefore be used, in combination with archaeological evidence, to reconstruct those landscapes. Antonson gives a detailed presentation of this method in two case studies. – Note an important terminological point: in historical geography, and thus in Antonson's article, the term *retrogressive* means the same as *retrospective* in the other articles, whereas *retrospective* means the opposite. The use of these terms is also explained in the article, which should minimize potential confusion.

Janne Saarikivi's article likewise offers an enlightening perspective, but from an entirely different angle. Non-experts in the field will probably be surprised by how much cultural and religious history may be reconstructed based on place-names and systematic comparative linguistics. The methodology described by Saarikivi is employed in many places across the world, but it has been particularly highly developed within Finnish academic tradition,

to which Saarikivi belongs, since Finland lacks written sources from ancient times. There has therefore been a need to develop reconstructive/retrospective methods within several disciplines. Aspects of the methodology presented by Saarikivi are useful also within Old Norse studies, not least with regards to cultural and religious history, combined with textual research and other combined approaches.

As can be seen, the present collection of articles provides not only fundamental arguments for retrospective methods and the use of late material in Old Norse studies; it also offers diverse examples of how retrospective reasoning can work and of the kinds of results it can yield. Such practical examples will determine the future attitude towards late material and retrospective reasoning. It is our hope that the present anthology will stimulate interest in this kind of scholarship as well as encourage a higher level of methodological awareness and a stronger demand for explicitness in claims, methods and argumentation in Old Norse studies in general, also among scholars who are sceptical about late material and retrospective reasoning.

Nordic folk legends, folk traditions and grave mounds

The value of folkloristics for the study of Old Nordic religions

TERRY GUNNELL

This article examines the potential value of folkloristic research approaches and nineteenth-century folkloristic material for the study of Old Nordic religions and pre-Christian beliefs and rituals in the Nordic area. Starting with a short introduction to the nature of folklore, and the important role played by folklore and the oral tradition in the pre-literate (and early literate) Nordic world, it simultaneously stresses the folkloric nature of Old Nordic religions and the extant sources regarding them. The article concludes with a short case-study of Norwegian traditions involving offerings made to farm grave mounds in the nineteenth century, demonstrating that both the practice and the beliefs and legends attached to it not only underline the continuing sacral value of the grave mound for local people, but also potentially reflect early beliefs in ancestral spirits which the Church failed to eradicate.

1. Folklore and the sources on pre-Christian Nordic religions

What value does the study of folklore have for research into pre-Christian Nordic religions and beliefs? Furthermore, what value can folklore recorded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries possibly have for the study of a phenomenon that officially came to an end a thousand years ago? While the second question needs some arguing, the former is easily answered by anyone who has spent any time studying folkloristics: when it comes down to it, all pre-Christian Nordic religion and belief was itself a form of folklore (rather than an organised state religion like modern-day Christianity or Islam), and thus demands to be studied from that viewpoint. The same applies to the backbone of a majority of the textual sources that deal with pre-Christian Nordic religion and belief, whether they take the form of Eddic or skaldic poems, Icelandic sagas (family, kings', romantic or legendary sagas), or even hagiographic accounts about early saints. Prior to their recording on pergament, most of these accounts took the form of traditional material which was passed

on orally. To my mind, there is little question that all of this material should be analysed like the records of modern folkloric material (themselves a blend of scholarly and popular tradition).[1]

Such statements nonetheless need some qualification, not least for those who view folkloristics as a matter of nationally-dressed grandparents relating romantic wonder tales or muttering quaint rustic charms in smoky, dilapidated traditional cottages. In short, one should begin by stressing that folkloristics is more interested in examining literal 'ways of life' than in creating national heritage. In very simple terms, it involves the study of knowledge that is not learnt from books or in school, but by other, less formal means. In other words, it is the study of 'informal' learning, which makes up an extremely high degree of most people's knowledge even today. It is not only the knowledge passed on by parents and grandparents to their children and grandchildren, but also that passed on between friends and acquaintances, and from skilled artists (in a widest sense of the word) to those who wish to learn from them (outside formal schooling). Here we are not only talking about narratives and songs, but also traditions, customs, values, skills and more, the material that is being passed on not only taking the shape of words, but also actions (learnt by demonstration, allied with explanation). The word 'folk' applies to all people, and it might thus be argued that folkloristics involves the study of shared knowledge passed on within groups (ranging from a pair of friends to a nation) over time, both in the past and in the present. Key concepts are those of identity, culture, tradition and performance.

In short, folkloristics involves the study of *tradition* (as opposed to the dissemination of formal written knowledge).[2] Returning to the question of Old Nordic religions and the extant sources concerning them, it is clear that all of the practices and beliefs involved were traditional in the sense that they were

1 It might be noted that the stress here is on 'the records' of modern folkloric material, which come in the form of writing rather than sound, and, in their published form, tend to have an academic background and context. There is no question that the sagas and poems were recorded by learned people who had knowledge of other written materials, literary motifs and structures which will have influenced the recordings of this material. They nonetheless have chosen to make use of their home environment and (oral) history rather than set their accounts in the Mediterranean. This means that a high percentage of their material must be based on knowledge passed on orally at some point in the process. In other words, it is folkloric (as explained below).

2 For effective reviews of the nature of folkloristics as a field of study, see, for example, further Ó Súilleabháin 1967: 7–15; Dundes 1965: 1–51; Toelken 1979; Georges and Owen Jones 1995; Feintuch 2003; and Oring 2012.

not based on any written textual sources: there was no Bible and practices of this kind did not come with a handbook. Like other forms of folklore, the various aspects of these religions were passed on by demonstration and word of mouth, whether they were myths, beliefs or ritual practices. They moved through time and space, and the awareness of shared beliefs and traditions in different places, like the awareness of shared languages (in a sense another kind of folklore), would have given the people who followed them a sense of shared identity. Hardly any of these beliefs, traditions or stories were the creative work of an eccentric individual artist with his/her own language and mythology. The fact that this material was passed on by demonstration or word of mouth over a very wide territory within and outside the Nordic countries is easily demonstrated by the evidence of similar place-names (Brink 2001 and 2007), and artefacts that bear obvious similarities, such as the *guldgubber* (Watt 2004), and the recurring images of women bearing cups or horns (often [probably wrongly] related to *valkyrjur*) (see, for example, the images in Ellis Davidson 1969: 45–7). Another example is that of the weapon-bearing man with a horned helmet (Gunnell 1995: 58–65). These place-names and images were not only passed through space. They were passed on over a great expanse of time. Archaeological finds have shown that depositions of offerings at the same watery site could continue over hundreds if not thousands of years (see, for example, Fabech 1999). Folk traditions can survive for a very long time indeed, without people being aware of why they maintain them. Superstitions concerning what *might* happen if the tradition is changed often help to preserve this status quo.

Turning to the linguistic and textual sources commonly used with regard to the discussion of Old Nordic religion, it is worth remembering that the place-names which refer to different gods or sacred sites are another form of folklore (both in nature, and with regard to the explanatory legends that often accompany them). Prior to the advent of maps and records, and even after this, these too lived – and sometimes gradually changed – within the oral tradition, often moving away from their original meaning as the people of Sogn in Norway forgot that a place named Leikanger (lit. 'play-field') had anything to do with games or rituals; that Balestrand (lit. 'grassy slope') had anything to do with a grass slope; or that Hove (lit. 'temple') was originally related to a pagan religious site. Some place-names are naturally later creations (new names are regularly added while others are lost). Others, however (especially medieval names like Hofstaðir [lit. 'temple-places'] and Freysvík [lit. 'the bay of the god Freyr'] that are unlikely to have been coined by Christians) would appear to have roots that precede their appearance in the earliest maps or records. It can be assumed that they too have a longer traditional life behind them: changing

place-names regularly is a risky process, both for travellers and local people who aim to find their destinations with the help of such recognised names.

Proceeding to the sagas and their use as sources on Old Nordic religion: here, once again, we are dealing with not only shared language and cultural concepts that had been passed down in tradition over the centuries, but also accounts that (if the saga writers are to be trusted) had been living in family oral tradition for over three hundred years prior to the time they came to be written down (Gísli Sigurðsson 2004: 17–48). This seems to be particularly clear with regard to a work like *Landnámabók* which, to all appearances, seems to be a record of the extant local and family legends about the settlement of different areas of Iceland. As will be stressed below, this does not mean that the accounts were historically accurate. More correct, and of equal value for historians, is that they seem to offer a good reflection of the way in which Icelanders in the eleventh century (when the material was collected) *understood* their family histories, their environment, the place-names that gave character to this environment, and the religious beliefs of their forefathers. Close parallels to these accounts are found in the much later near two-hundred-year-old accounts of the settlement of North America, New Zealand and Australia still told within immigrant families in these parts. Certainly, the family sagas, recorded in a learned environment, are bound to contain borrowings from other written materials (other voices encountered in silent reading or heard recited aloud in the learned environment, all of which blended with those heard in the local oral tradition). However, it must also be remembered that, like the vernacular language used to write these works, these literary accounts also drew strongly on various kinds of traditional material that had been passed down between people, both local and foreign. The cold fact is that without oral legends having existed in Iceland prior to the time of the sagas, there would be no sagas.

Some scholars today spend their time searching for potential textual borrowings in the sagas and Eddic poems, arguing that these (which they often find in foreign works) are the only trustworthy evidence available. They then suggest, on the basis of these finds, that the works in question *must be* more recent or based on foreign models rather than having roots in earlier local oral tradition. As any folklorist will argue, such arguments are fundamentally flawed, especially if they ignore potential oral materials that have since been lost (like most oral materials). Arguments of this kind have roots in an academic world which often trusts blindly (and soley) in the *written* evidence that justifies its existence. The simple fact is that absence amongst written accounts (in a culture that was gradually learning the art of writing) does not mean historical absence. In the same way, as anyone who has ever studied the

nature of oral tradition knows, oral traditions continually adapt and change (often borrowing lines or motifs from written sources: see, for example, Lord 1960; Ong 1982; and Foley 2002). A single line, apparently borrowed from a later written source, does not mean that most of the work itself was originally composed at the time of that source (if one can talk of 'original compositions' in the case of oral materials).

There is little question that countless oral legends existed in pre- and post-conversion Iceland, and that they were used as material for the sagas (and then compared with the written material by reading and listening audiences who tend to be critical, especially when it comes to information concerning their own areas or families). There is equally little question that in the scriptoria, these local legends lived alongside Christian material that was continuously entering the oral tradition via sermons, oral readings in monasteries, and, occasionally, private reading.[3] Travels to foreign parts (abroad or within the country) would have added new material to the oral tradition known by writers, storytellers, and listeners, in the form of new historical 'facts', new migratory legends, and new migratory motifs. When it comes down to it, all of this material should be regarded as folklore, as long as it existed and was transmitted in oral form (or by demonstration). This applies to hagiographic and classical legend, just as it applies to the Eddic poems and skaldic verse, unless this material was created as it was written on the page (and few would argue that this applies to a majority of the Eddic and skaldic poems).[4] Snorri Sturluson himself seems to have viewed much of the Eddic material he used as being 'genuine' mythological sources, and thus 'traditional' in one form or another.[5] The fact that Snorri refers to poets in some cases (for example, 2005: 7), but merely to named works in others implies that the original 'authors' (if they existed) of the latter works were outside his comparatively wide-ranging living memory.

3 On the degree to which even written materials were received in oral form (like – and alongside – other oral materials) in the academic world of the Middle Ages, see further Green 1994.

4 As noted at the start, and elsewhere in this article, this does not challenge the idea that the form of the final written records are bound to have been strongly influenced by the literary frameworks and structures the writers had encountered elsewhere in their scriptoria.

5 Snorri refers to *Grímnismál*, *Vǫluspá* and *Heimdalargaldr* as if he expects readers or listeners to know what he is talking about. Elsewhere he simply quotes words from the poems as mythological sources. For examples, see Snorri Sturluson 2005: 9–10, 12, 22, 26, 31.

In short, there is little question that Old Nordic beliefs, myths and traditions (and the earliest source material on these phenomena) all belong to the field of folklore, and this in turn demands that this material should be treated (and respected) as we treat folklore. For some, the expression 'it's just folklore' means that something is total fiction; in short, it is not a 'fact' (whatever 'facts' are). Such a statement is as naive as talking about a person's beliefs as being 'just beliefs'. When it comes down to it, the word 'belief' is something that is used by a non-believer, while for the true believer, 'beliefs' are not envisioned as beliefs but rather a form of fact, even though the evidence to support them may be scientifically limited. Part of our problem today is that we tend to look at people of the rural societies of the past as ignorant 'believers' and ourselves as advanced enlightened logical scientists whose worldview is based on fact, blithely forgetting the 'fact' that most of our 'knowledge' about the world is based on information that has been passed on to us by others (from parents, teachers, television news readers, film directors, politicians and computer technicians), material which we 'believe'/'trust' to be true (in spite of having read Orwell's *1984* and regularly encountered government 'spin'). In this regard, we are really not so different from the people of the past, who also had their own 'knowledge' about the world around them; about illnesses and how they were cured; about the 'history' of their family and their environment; and about the 'real' dangers of interfering with ancient burial mounds. All of this took the form of trustworthy 'knowledge' that had been passed down over time by people who 'knew'. To sum up, folkloristics is a field that is not limited to the world of the Grimm brothers. It is equally relevant to providing an understanding of both present-day culture and the ancient world of Old Nordic religion.

This long introduction on the nature of folklore, folk narrative and folk belief is meant to provide a background to the case study presented at the end of this article which will examine the degree to which the folk narratives and folk traditions collected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be used as source material on pre-Christian beliefs and rituals, something early folklorists like Jacob Grimm, linguists/philologists like Magnus Olsen, etymologists/folklorists like Nils Lid, and archaeologists like Haakon Shetelig/Schetelig seem to have taken for granted.

As the archaeologists Atle Omland and Torun Zachrisson (among others) have recently demonstrated (see, for example Omland 2007: 62–82, 383, 393–414; Zachrisson 1996), the relationship between 'serious' scholars of literature, archaeology, history, etymology and religion and the world of folklore since the Second World War has been almost as variable and tempestuous as the relationship between folklorists and folklore, especially when it comes to

the way in which the material in question can be used and applied. Scholars like the Grimms and Wilhelm Mannhardt believed that folklore preserved by the rural populace offered insight into ancient beliefs and practices.[6] In other words, to their minds, it often contained ancient 'survivals' thousands of years old. In the light of more practical examination of the nature of tradition and oral narrative within societies, later Swedish folklorists like C. W. von Sydow and Albert Eskeröd, strongly influenced by Malinowski and the developing field of anthropology, came to place less stress on the historical value of the material, and more emphasis on its functional value for the society that preserved it (see further Bringéus 2006: 220–32). In short, rather than looking at the material itself, a greater focus was placed on *why* people told narratives, and *how* they understood them. There also came to be greater interest in *why* traditions were maintained, and how traditions and narratives *changed* over time, because while there was still an awareness that folklore can survive through time and across space, there was similarly an understanding that it could (and often did) change and adapt in a range of ways in line with the nature, interests and social and geographical environment of the society in which it lived. In short, folklore always has to be examined *in the context of the folk that use it and pass it on.*

Bearing all of the above in mind, it is time to proceed towards a small case study concerning what nineteenth-century rural Nordic legends and traditions concerning Bronze- and Iron-Age grave mounds could possibly tell us about the beliefs and traditions that were associated with their construction a thousand years earlier?

2. Folk legends as sources on pre-Christian Nordic religions

In many ways, an equally valid question is whether, in the light of what we know of tradition, the folk beliefs and legends of a particular area should be totally ignored in the discussion of pre-Christian religions that once existed in that same area (and not least those folk beliefs and legends connected to archaeological remains)? There is evidence from India, and certain Native American tribes like the Hopi or Zuñi, for example, of oral chants, poems or narratives being passed down near unaltered over the course of centuries, especially when there is some policing by the authorities or related superstition about potential divine punishment (see Gunnell 1995: 16 and 184). Obvious

6 See especially Grimm 1875–8, I: xi–xii and xxiv–xxxv in particular (trans. in Grimm 1882–3, III: xiii–xvi and xxxiv–xlvii); and Mannhardt 1904–8 (originally published in 1877).

examples of similar survivals over time and through space are the ancient Greek and Roman motifs that have been found in Nordic legends in very different social contexts (see, for example, Hansen 2002). A number of Scandinavian legends also seem to demonstrate effectively that local legends have the potential to contain a kernel of truth which has survived for a very long time indeed. One of the most famous is that told by the archaeologist Karl Rygh, who decided to investigate the legend of an armoured knight and his horse, both of whom were supposed to be lying under a large rock after having died in an avalanche. Under the rock, Rygh found the bones of a man and a horse, two Viking-Age spear points, and no evidence of a grave (Alver 1989: 138). Another belief legend from Dejbjerg in Denmark told of wagons filled with gold which were supposed to be lying in a bog near the local vicarage. This account was verified (to some degree) when the two famous Dejbjerg wagons from the early Iron Age were found in the bog in 1881–2 (*ibid.* 138). The archaeological finds of royal graves at Vendel in Uppland, Sweden, were also preceded by local legends of kings inhabiting these graves (*ibid.* 138). There is little question that both legends and traditions *can* survive for centuries in the oral tradition (see also Gunnell 2001a).

Nonetheless, as most of these accounts also demonstrate, this material can also change or be adapted over time to a greater or lesser extent (see, for example, Gunnell 2001b on Icelandic Black Death legends). It should also be remembered that the Dejbjerg legend was not unique. As the Swedish folklorist Bengt af Klintberg has demonstrated, the legend in question was actually quite widespread and also attached to a number of lakes and bogs in southern Sweden (af Klintberg 1998). What is most interesting here is therefore not so much that the Dejbjerg legend was based on a real memory related to that particular lake but that it shows that the gold wagon legends in general seem to have some basis in ancient truth. Like the much earlier story of Grendel and his mother in *Beowulf*, these accounts appear to be closely connected to faint memories of the ritual depositions of objects in water which took place during the Bronze and Iron Ages, activities for which the storytellers had no evidence, but which archaeological excavation has now proven took place. Should such legendary evidence be ignored?

Beliefs and traditions change even more slowly than legends, especially in societies which change little. However, they can also survive radical superficial change: seven years ago (2006 and 2007), the Folkloristics (*Þjóðfræði*) Department of the University of Iceland, in association with the Institute of Social Sciences (Félagsvísindastofnun) carried out a detailed survey into modern Icelandic folk and religious beliefs (see Ásdís A. Arnalds *et al.* 2008), a survey which was answered by over 1,000 people. Three main conclusions could be

drawn from the survey: first of all, people in a modern society like Iceland still 'believe' comparatively strongly in the supernatural (in the sense that they are highly wary about denying its existence); secondly, in spite of the radical changes that have taken place in Icelandic society over the last thirty years, the belief figures attained from the survey are remarkably similar to those recorded in the last survey of this kind taken in 1974; and finally, the beliefs that are strongest in both surveys are those which are found in the medieval sagas: in other words, beliefs in ghosts, spirits, dreams, fate and *fylgjur* (lit. 'followers'; a kind of personal spirit born with you that accompanies you throughout your life). Clearly, too, those who answered the surveys were also somewhat uncomfortable about denying the existence of nature spirits. All of these beliefs go back over a thousand years. They were hardly created by Christianity.

In short, there is good reason for *considering* folkloric source materials as long as one first reads the health warnings about their potential for changeability and adaptability over time. They are, after all, 'lore': material that is respected enough to be passed down, sometimes over a very long period indeed, but also material that depends on human memory (with all the problems that entails). Without question, such folklore needs to be used with care, and in conjunction with other evidence, if it looks relevant.

It also seems quite natural to use folk narrative and practices as tools to help understand the way in which people in the past understood the landscape they lived in. I recently wrote the following description of local legends, underlining their value for those who told them, a value which has little to do with the literal historical value some might imagine these narratives have for us:

> Arguably for many listeners at the Icelandic *kvöldvaka* … folk legends served as a kind of map. On one side, they reminded people of place-names and routes, and gave historical depth to these surroundings, populating them with ghosts and other beings of various kinds. On the other, they served as a map of behaviour, underlining moral and social values and offering examples to follow or avoid. Simultaneously, they reminded people of the temporal and physical borders of their existence, questions of life and death, periods of liminality, insiders and outsiders, and continuously, the physical and spiritual division between the cultural and the wild, what Lévi-Strauss might refer to as the 'cooked' and the 'raw'. If the map was followed, you had a good chance of living in safety. If you broke it, you stood an equally good chance of ending up in a folk legend yourself if not on a list of mortality statistics. (Gunnell 2005: 70; see also Gunnell 2009)

I have similarly talked of legends being 'the clothes worn by the landscape in the minds of the local inhabitants' (Gunnell 2006: 16). It is for the above reasons that many historians and archaeologists are again beginning to take folk narratives into account in their research, the archaeologists noting any local legends connected to the landscape they are excavating on the off-chance that they might have some degree of validity (see, for example, Zachrisson 1996 and 2004; Omland 2007 and 2010). Historians, meanwhile, are starting to realise that legends provide a great deal more information about the worldview of the average person than official accounts do (see, for example, Hopkin 2000 and 2004; Gunnell 2009; Andreassen 1986; Tangherlini 1994: 6). In short, folklore brings us back to the heart of the living society, rather than its institutions. Most importantly, it brings us back to the individual in this society and his/her inner comprehension of the world.

After its heyday in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the use of folklore by Old Norse scholars may have slipped out of fashion after the Second World War (most particularly in Germany for obvious reasons). Nonetheless, it would be wrong to argue that it has ever totally disappeared or lost respect in Old Norse studies, especially amongst those of us who have found it natural to teach (or be involved in) both Nordic folkloristics and Old Norse studies (for all the reasons mentioned at the start of this article). Obvious examples over the last fifty years are Dag Strömbäck, Bo Almqvist, Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, Hilda Ellis Davidson, Jacqueline Simpson, John Lindow, Stephen Mitchell, Thomas DuBois, Merrill Kaplan, Jonathan Roper, Karen Bek-Pedersen, Eldar Heide, Ármann Jakobsson and the present author.[7] All of these scholars have made good use of the obvious connections between the two fields, and have regularly made use of folkloric material and folkloristic approaches in their researches and teaching (while maintaining a careful eye on the aforementioned health warning).

To give a few examples of how later folklore materials can be effectively used in the study of Old Nordic religions (and vice versa): in my own research, I have examined the connections between pre-Christian nature spirits (so-called *landvættir/náttúruvættir*), *álfar* and *dísir*,[8] and later Nordic supernatural beliefs as a means of understanding not only the development of these more recent beliefs but also their origin and individual Nordic nature (Gunnell

7 Unfortunately there is no space here to list all the relevant works of these authors. Interested readers are encouraged to follow up the works of these authors on line.

8 As the articles referred to note, the word 'álfr' is related to the English word 'elf' but has a different meaning, even in modern Icelandic. There is no direct translation for the word 'dís', referring most commonly to a female family spirit.

2000, 2004, 2007). I have also considered how later Nordic disguise traditions might explain the performance format of *Lokasenna* and *Vafþrúðnismál*; the appearance of Byggvir in *Lokasenna* (sts 44–6); Þorleifr jarlsskáld's Yuletide disguise described in *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds* (1956: 220–3); and the image of the ogress Grýla in Iceland, the Faroes and Shetland, past and present (Gunnell 1995: 93–181; 2001a; 2007b: 275–326).

Numerous other examples can be given: there is little question that the accounts of *ǫndvegissúlur* (lit. 'high-seat pillars') being used to decide places of settlement should be seen in the context of the widespread northern Nordic belief legends concerning the floating of logs down a river to decide the positioning of medieval churches (Gunnell 2010: 110). In the same way, the idea of *helskór* (lit. 'hel-shoes') mentioned in *Gísla saga* (1943: 45–6) makes much more sense when seen in the context of later Icelandic traditions of workers receiving new shoes from their employers when moving between farms at the time of The Feast of the Cross (Árni Björnsson 1996: 58–9). Similarly, the ritual of passing around a preserved horse phallus with accompanying improvised verses described in *Vǫlsa þáttr* (*Flateyjarbók* 1944–5, II: 441–6) is provided with living context when seen in the light of a later tradition of passing around a decorated bull's tail (a *drunnur*) and making verses at Faroese weddings (Coffey 1989). One need not limit oneself to the field of tradition: ideas about Þórr having possibly been a fertility god in some areas are given support by later Norwegian legends describing him consecrating weddings with his hammer (the legend of 'Tor og Urebøura' in Bø *et al.* 1981: 89–90, 265–6; and Liestøl 1939: 116–17 and 217). Other legendary connections are seen in the close relationship between the format of the ancient accounts of the encounters between Grettir and Glámr and Beowulf and Grendel and later folk narratives describing the Christmas visits of supernatural groups known right across Scandinavia (see Gunnell 2004; and Eike 1980). Similar connections must exist between the *stjúpmóðrasǫgur* (lit. 'step-mother tales') mentioned in *Sverris saga* and those wonder tales collected in the Nordic countries in the nineteenth century. In none of the above cases is it possible to say that the later folklore was directly based on *written* accounts of earlier rituals or beliefs. Everything suggests they have roots in early tradition that has been passed on by word of mouth or demonstration over several centuries.

3. Folk legends concerning burial mounds

There is very good reason to believe that the same thing applies to the widespread Nordic legends and beliefs concerning pre-Christian burial mounds, which seem to have a basis in much earlier attitudes to these sites. Anyone

who has ever read a collection of mainland Nordic legends will note that burial mounds stood out as central features of the landscape for those who inhabited it, like the watermill, the waterfall, the lakes and ponds, and the fjords and mountains (something which had been intended by the mound builders who commonly deliberately placed them in prominent sites). As Atle Omland notes in his recent – and highly recommended – PhD thesis on the connections between folklore and archaeology in Agder in Norway (Omland 2007; developed in Omland 2010), the legendary material about these sites varies from implications in place-names (such as Kongshaugen, 'The King's Mound') and short statements about flames or light being seen above the burial mounds at night (cf. af Klintberg 2010: 376; Jauhiainen 1998: 305) or the need for caution in their vicinity to longer narratives explaining these names and beliefs (Omland 2007: 225–85).

The latter can be divided into three main types: The first type (ML[9] 8010: Hidden Treasures: see Christiansen 1958: 215; af Klintberg 2010: 375–83; Jauhiainen 1998: 309) focuses on legends about people trying to dig into grave mounds for treasure (often on a Thursday night) and then sometimes losing the treasure when they break a silence taboo by commenting on a fantastic vision that confronts them while they are working, something which can range from the illusion of a local church or their farmhouse burning down to the even more startling sight of seven headless roosters pulling a carriage (see, for example, Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1988: 320–5; Simpson 1988: 34–8; af Klintberg 1972: 263–8). Such legends are not only widespread in mainland Scandinavia, but also in Iceland where they are regularly attached to recorded Viking-Age burial mounds (see, for example, Jón Árnason 1954–61, I: 268–9). As Omland underlines (2007: 142–6, 291–9), the key feature of these legends is not so much their historical truth as their reflection of the generally understood idea (also noted in the sagas) that breaking into a grave mound was a norm-breaking activity that took those involved into dangerous liminal territory. In short, the legends underlined that in later folk consciousness the burial mound was not a 'normal' place; it had an element of sacred taboo. However, the legends also underline that people in the nineteenth century – most of whom had rarely seen a museum – knew that these mounds of earth and stone were not natural but contained objects and people. This is something that might well have roots in the later finds of objects or grave-mound breaking. However, it might also have developed from transmitted memories of the experience of the funerals associated with such grave mounds, which, as

9 'ML' refers to the expression 'migratory legend', the ML type-numbers referring to the classification system designed by Reidar Christiansen, see following references.

Ibn Fadlan (see Montgomery 2000), and in later times Terje Gansum (2002) and Neil Price (2002), among others, have shown, were comparatively dramatic, emotionally charged affairs.

The next common burial mound legend type (ML 6045: Drinking Cup of the Fairies: see Christiansen 1958: 168–70; af Klintberg 2010: 182–3; Jauhiainen 1998: 270, 298; Berge 1924) is that commonly known in Sweden as the 'Ljungby horn' legend; and in Norway as the 'Vallarhaugen' legend, an account which can sometimes grow to be comparatively long and dramatic.[10] The legend tells of a man who, on his way home (often at Christmas), rides past a (grave) mound and notes that a party is taking place inside. He calls out to the inhabitants, asking for a drink. Someone comes out and offers him a beautiful cup, horn or goblet. Remembering that folk beliefs underline the danger of drinking supernatural brews, the man empties the cup over the back of his horse (nearly burning the tail off the poor creature), and sets off for home as fast as he can, stolen cup in hand. The rest of the legend describes the dramatic chase that ensues, and how the hero only narrowly reaches home safely. The cup is then often said to have become a recognised supernatural heirloom in the local church or on the farmstead.

Once again, it would be foolish for anyone to suggest that this account was based on a single historical event, although folklorists such as Rikard Berge (1924) have tried to examine its origin and gradual distribution over time. What is evident is that the earliest recorded version was written down by William of Newbury in the twelfth century (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1988: 236). It is also clear that the extant versions, found over much of Scandinavia (but not Iceland, Orkney or Shetland) are not borrowed from texts of William of Newbury's work. More important for the present discussion, however, are the various motifs involved in this story which, like the treasure accounts noted above, are usually applied to named mounds known by both the storyteller and his/her audience. Once again we encounter the idea that the mound in question contains ancient treasures, and that such sites demand respect (the legend underlining that people should not make rash requests in their vicinity, any more than they should make jokes about bones that are found in a charnel house: in Nordic folk legends, such behaviour always has dire consequences). Another essential feature of the legend is the idea that the grave mound is inhabited by a living being (something echoed by ghost legends in the Icelandic sagas), and that it is a site closely associated with liminal time and space (some

10 For examples, see Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1988: 236; Simpson 1988: 213–15; af Klintberg 1972: 136–7, 310–11; Lindow 1978: 102–4; Sande 1887: 11–14; Bø and Hodne 1974: 106–7.

distance away from the farm itself). As Torun Zachrisson (1996: 102) points out, it is noteworthy that people in later times should have maintained an awareness that these features of the landscape were graves (or at least that they were 'lived in'). Once again we seem to be dealing with some degree of transmitted memory.

This brings us to those legends that are of most interest and potentially most value in the present context. Unlike the mound legends described above, all of which are so-called 'migratory legends' (internationally recognised accounts), most of the legends discussed below are 'memorates', in other words, apparently personal experience narratives which tend to be told in first person, and relate to events that supposedly occurred in the living memory of the storyteller. The legends in question are often less carefully shaped, but provide an even better reflection of living beliefs (Honko 1989). In essence, they underline the respect that people had for certain burial mounds, describing how this respect was demonstrated, and, equally important, the dangers that could befall you if this respect was not maintained. Sometimes no more than a single statement (implying a potential narrative), they are found all over mainland Scandinavia, but most particularly in Norway.[11] They describe how, according to family belief, certain grave mounds close to farms[12] were not supposed to be disturbed in any way, something that applied in particular to the grass and any trees that grew on them. These sites were thus also seen as being out of bounds to any livestock. In many cases, however (and especially in Norway), it is stated that people would often go further and regularly leave out newly-made ale, bread, butter and other kinds of food on the mounds for those within, most commonly at Christmas and on other holy days, but sometimes weekly, often accompanied by a particular statement (see the lists given in Birkeli 1938: 157–62). There is good evidence that such activities were still continuing in the early years of the twentieth century, when archaeologists like Haakon Shetelig and Karl Rygh and folklorists like Johannes Skar and Moltke Moe were travelling the country.[13] Most of the legends in question tell

11 See, for example, Sande 1887: 68–71; Olrik and Ellekilde 1926–51, I: 230–2, 242–3; Bø *et al.* 1981: 165–6; Bø and Hodne 1974: 14–15, 105, 109–12; and in particular Shetelig 1911: 206–11; Birkeli 1938: 100–71; Lidegaard 1998: 19 and 21; Simpson 1988: 183 and Omland 2007: 356–63.

12 These are mounds which are often said to be inhabited by spirits, sometimes the 'hidden ones' or the *underjordiske* (lit. 'underground people'), but just as often by individuals.

13 See Sande 1887: 69–71; Shetelig 1911; Birkeli 1938: 100, 120, 131–2, 142, 161–3; Olrik and Ellekilde 1926–51, I: 230–2, 242; Bø *et al.* 1981: 165–6 and 282; Omland 2010: 345–7; cf. Vikstrand 2001: 282–3.

of what can happen to anyone who disturbs the mound and/or breaks the said taboos and/or traditions: they can lose their health in one way or other, or, even worse, cause their families to lose everything they own. In a sense, they lose the farm's luck – or, to put it another way, the protection from bad luck that the mound (and/or its inhabitant) has so far afforded them.[14]

As noted above, legends and related traditions of this kind are encountered in various forms in Norway (particularly in Telemark, Valdres and Agder, and in western Norway in places like Hardanger, Sogn, Nordfjord, and Sunnfjord); and also in Shetland and (especially) Orkney.[15] Certainly, when many of the legends blame the arrival of outsiders (such as new wives) for the abandonment of traditions leading to the loss of well-being, the legends may well be as much about reactions to step-parents and outsiders as they are about mound 'worship', but all of these accounts simultaneously underline the slight fear, reverence and respect with which some local grave mounds were viewed (something effectively encouraged and maintained by the legends in question). As Zachrisson (1996) and Omland (2007: 356–63) have noted, these legends – and beliefs associated with them – seem to have protected certain mounds as effectively as national preservation laws have done in our own time. To some extent, they should be viewed in the context of other traditions still known today in other neighbouring countries, where patches of ground are kept untouched by farmers because of taboos they no longer understand, enduring traditions connected to the fairy *raths* in the west of Ireland (Ó Súilleabháin 1967: 19, 85–6); the untouched fields known as the 'Guidman's Grunde' or 'crofts' which were maintained well into the nineteenth century in Scotland (McNeill 1989: 22, 58–9; Lyle 2013); and in Iceland the so-called *álagablettir* (lit. 'enchanted spots') found all over the country, in which belief seems to still be comparatively strong (see Ásdís A. Arnalds *et al.* 2008: 36–8, 102–3, 141–3, 209–10, 228; Gunnell 2012; and forthcoming).

In general, however, these legends offer a clear reflection of the 'sacred' landscape as it was sensed in pre-Christian times, when, as Stefan Brink writes:

> … all nature and landscape were metaphysically 'charged' in different ways, with different degrees of energy, as regarded holiness or sacrality; the landscape was *metaphysically impregnated* as a totality, and people

14 One of the most effective accounts comes from Sogn, and was recorded by Olav Sande in the 1880s; see Sande 1887: 69–71; and (in Danish) in Olrik and Ellekilde 1926–51, I: 242.

15 See further Marwick 2000: 39–42; and Muir 1998: xi–xii and 125.

> lived in a numinous environment. Everything 'out there' was, as Mircea Eliade would have called it, a huge *hierophany.* (Brink 2001: 81–2)

In short, the legends underline a particular sense of the landscape being divided into places that are 'safe' to be traversed and used, and others that need to be dealt with more carefully (for no visible reason) and with particular reverence. Uniquely, we are not talking here about obvious potentially dangerous natural features like glaciers, mountains, rivers or lakes.

Even more interesting with regard to the legends under consideration are the recurring statements that the spots in question are inhabited by supernatural beings, and that they (or at least the trees on them) are the receivers of the consumable offerings (features which no longer apply to the Irish, Scottish or Icelandic legends, but do apply to those from Shetland and Orkney; see references above). Considering the nature of the offerings, what seems to be going on is a sharing of the valuable produce of the farm. There is logical reason for seeing these activities as a form of sacrifice to the beings/powers within the mounds. It is also obvious that such behaviour was no nineteenth-century innovation. Early parallels can be found in accounts in the fourteenth-century manuscript of *Kormáks saga* telling of *álfar* in a *hóll* (a mound/hillock) of being given a blood sacrifice in return for help in curing an injury (*Kormáks saga* 1939: 288), and in the early fourteenth-century account telling of *landvættir* ('land spirits') living in cairns of stone which are given food by women in order to get 'better luck with … farming than before' ('til þess at þer skili þa eiga betra bu en aðr'; *Hauksbók* 1892–4: 167). The latter account is particularly interesting because it is apparently based on personal experience (being a local addition to a translation of a homily by Cæsarius of Arles). That such activities continued in Christian times can be seen in the Older *Gulaþingslǫg* prohibition of offerings to not only *hǫrgar* (cairns) but also grave mounds in the thirteenth century (*Den Eldre Gulatingslova* 1994: 52: 'Blot er oss oc kviðiat at vér scolom eigi blota heiðit Guð. ne hauga. ne horga'; 'It is also stated regarding sacrifices that we should not make sacrifices to pagan gods, or gravemounds, or altars'). Similar ideas may be reflected in the statement in the thirteenth-century *Gutasaga* that the Gotlanders 'believed in groves, grave mounds, shrines, and fenced-off areas as well as the pagan gods' ('troþu menn a hult ok a hauga, vi ok stafgarþa ok a haiþin guþ': *Guta saga* 1999: 4–5).

The idea of receiving injuries (often referred to as *tussebit,* lit. 'spirit-bites', in Norway) as a result of cutting grass or collecting firewood from these mounds (see, for example, Olrik and Ellekilde 1926–51, I: 231–2) has parallels in the widespread idea of injuries or illnesses being caused by supernatural beings, something reflected in the idea of *ælf-adl*; *ælf-sogoða* (both meaning 'elf-sickness'); and *ylfa-gescot* ('elf-shot') in England (Hall 2007: 105–6, 108–18).

Still more interesting in the present context is the information these legends provide about the nature of the recipient(s) of the aforesaid offerings. In many cases, they are said to be nature spirits, *huldra* ('hidden ones'), *troll*, *alvar* ('elves'), *vetter* ('spirits'), or *underjordiske* ('underground people'). However, in just as many others, the legends refer to a single male being with various names, such as *gardvorden* (lit. 'farm protector'), *garvoren* (same meaning as the previous word), *haugbuen* (lit. 'mound dweller'), *haugbonde* (lit. 'mound farmer'), *haugbokke* (lit. 'mound man'), *haugetusse* (lit. 'mound spirit'), *tunvoren* (lit. 'mound protector'), *tussen* (lit. 'spirit'); and *vetten* (same meaning as the previous word) (Birkeli 1938: 117–44). This latter being is a figure that Emil Birkeli sensibly views as being closely related to the slightly better-known figure of the *nisse, tomte*[16] or *gardvord* (see above) who in later times was often given his own bed in Norwegian farmhouses (see Boberg 1956; Solheim 1973), and (even today in parts of Norway) receives offerings of cream porridge (*rømmegraut*) in the barn, stable or elsewhere in the house at Christmas. The latter figure (see also Feilberg 1918), has parallels in the Chinese and Vietnamese 'kitchen god', but Nordic legends underline that the *gardvord*'s main job was to look after the livestock, help with the harvest, and generally protect the farm against marauding spirits such as the Norwegian *juleskreia/oskoreia.*[17]

It is nonetheless noteworthy that the *nisse/gardvord* was one of the few Norwegian spirits that seem to have been imported to Shetland and Orkney (where it blends with the figure of the Scottish brownie)[18] but which do not seem to have taken root in the Faroe Islands or Iceland (in spite of slight parallels in the figure of Koðrán Eilífsson's *ármaðr* (lit. 'good-year man') mentioned in *Kristni saga* and *Þorvalds þáttr viðfǫrla* (*Biskupa sögur* 2003: 7–8 and 60–8). This raises the question of whether this was because the spirit evolved in mainland Scandinavia after the time of the settlement and the acceptance of Christianity (something that is unlikely for obvious reasons); or because, unlike the other Nordic spirits which were connected to the general natural landscape,

16 Originally farm protectors, the *nisse* (Norway and Denmark) and *tomte* (Sweden) have in latter years come to take on the role of Christmas spirits; see further the articles referred to below.

17 The *juleskrei/oskoreia* was a form of 'wild ride' of supernatural spirits which was believed to come down on Norwegian farms at Christmas; on this phenomenon, see further Celander 1943 and Eike 1980. For examples of legends about the *nisse* and *tomte*, see, for example, Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1988: 236–47; Lindow 1978: 136–44; af Klintberg 1972: 110–17.

18 See further Marwick 2000: 30–46; and on the figure of the brownie, Briggs 1971: 188–93 and 1976: 45–9.

the farm guardian was more difficult to relocate to the previously uninhabited lands of Iceland and the Faroe Islands because he was originally intimately associated with older man-made constructions – constructions which could be found in the landscape of Orkney and Shetland (even though they had not been made by Scandinavians), but neither in Iceland nor the Faroe Islands.

All in all, there is good reason for supporting Birkeli's argument that the customs of leaving offerings on Norwegian grave mounds in later times would appear to have been originally related to this kind of human farm-guardian spirit, sometimes referred to as the *rudkall* (lit. 'the man who cleared the land'), rather than to the more generalised nature spirits which were seen as inhabiting nature in general (especially hills), and were easily transferred over time to replace beliefs concerning mound dwellers (see also Solheim 1973: 63). There are obvious parallels in modern Icelandic beliefs suggesting that graveyards are watched over by their first inhabitant (the so-called *vökumaður*, lit. 'watchman'[19]), and other earlier Nordic beliefs connected to church guardian spirits and even boat guardians (see af Klintberg 2010: 137–8, 149–50, 359, 366–7). Other modern parallels to these traditions, which also have very ancient roots can be seen in grave yards on ridges in Russian Karelia, where more recent deceased ancestors are still regularly given food and drink (both tea and alcohol) by their living relations. Further parallels connected to such ridges can be found in Estonia (Jonuks 2009: 30–5).

The idea of the dead living on in their graves or the local landscape rather than going to Hel or Valhǫll is, of course, echoed in the early Icelandic accounts telling of the dead living on in graves or local hills or mountains, in *Landnámabók* (1968: 98 [S68], 125 [S85], 140 [S97], and 233 [S197]); *Grettis saga Ásmundssonar* (1936: 57–9); *Brennu-Njáls saga* (1954: 192–4); *Eyrbyggja saga* (1935: 9); *Harðar saga* (1991: 40–3); *Ynglinga saga* (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, I: 24–5); *Flateyjarbók* (1944–5, II: 76 and 78); and *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* (1944: 276–8). It is also noteworthy that some of these accounts, like those dealing with Freyr and Óláfr Geirstaðaalfr in *Ynglinga saga* and *Flateyjarbók* also talk of offerings being given to grave mounds in order to guarantee good harvests in coming years.

In general, it seems highly probable that the later folk traditions of offerings being left out for the spirits of the dead on grave mounds or in grave yards in Norway, Karelia and Estonia, have roots in a long-serving (and possibly more broadly international) tradition related to ancestral 'worship' (or simply respect) which continued for centuries after the official acceptance

19 See Jón Árnason 1954–61, I: 216 and the Kirkjugarðar Reykjavíkurprófastsdæma website.

of Christianity in the aforementioned countries. They appear to have been a tradition that both the laws (like the post-conversion *Gulaþingslǫg*) and the Church (as in the earlier-noted account of Koðrán in *Kristni saga*) failed to halt. Indeed, as I have noted elsewhere, I suspect these deeply rooted traditions related to ancestors were also reflected in the earliest forms of the belief in the *álfar* in Sweden (see Gunnell 2007a). As later Nordic folk beliefs and legends underline, the Church also failed to wipe out the beliefs in other local spirits related to the local landscape like the *underjordiske*, *huldre*, *álfar* and *nykrar* (a form of water horse). Why should they have been more successful in wiping out such local traditions as those related to the farm grave mound, which seemed to help sustain the well-being of the farm? As noted above, one must also consider whether it is likely that such widespread traditions related to pre-Christian sites would have come into being in Christian times, not least because they offer close reflections to the evidence of food and drink being consumed at, and on, grave sites in Scandinavia, as far back as the Neolithic period (see Zachrisson 2004, especially 153–5 and 162–7, on recent Iron-Age findings at Helgö in Sweden).

In short, in this case, the later folkloric material seems to support the idea that ancestor 'worship' of some kind (in the form of offerings to grave mounds) must have existed alongside the worship of the gods as a part of local day to day religious activity in certain parts of the Nordic countries during pre-Christian times. This would seem to add weight to the earlier-noted accounts of the offerings made to the graves of Freyr and Óláfr Geirstaðaalfr and also Rimbert's account of the Swedes 'worshipping' dead kings at the time of Ansgar's mission to Sweden (Rimbert 1986: 54). They provide encouragement for archaeologists to examine better the outer layers of key local grave mounds for evidence of such continued attention. Of course, the idea that people might have had some beliefs in the dead protecting the living in Scandinavia is not in itself surprising: one finds similar kinds of ancestor 'worship' (if that is what we are talking about here) all over the world. Nonetheless, it does give us further reason to question the blind acceptance of Snorri's ideas that all Nordic Viking-Age warriors who died in battle went to Valhǫll.

This nonetheless brings us back to the question voiced at the start: how trustworthy is this later folkloristic material as a source on pre-Christian religious practice? Like the sagas and Eddic poems, all of this material comes from much later times, after the formal acceptance of Christianity. As with all attempts to find roots and parallels for Nordic mythology or accounts of ritual in classical or Christian works of literature, everything related to this period of time is speculative when it comes down to it. We actually *know* very little for certain about early medieval Scandinavia. To my mind, the most use-

ful aspects of the study of folklore (in the sense of the word given at the start of this article) for those interested in Old Norse studies are not that it provides important source material (which it does on occasion, as has hopefully been demonstrated here). Even more valuable is that folkloric material from the past offers ways of understanding the pre-literate pre-Christian world in which oral tradition, superstition, long-standing custom and local contextually based variation and adaption were key features of daily life, just as they were in the rural society of the nineteenth century. This world (which in many ways reflected that depicted in the nineteenth-century folk legends) was one in which change usually came slowly, and in which the sense of history and the past were very different from that which we know today. Looking at things from this local, individual viewpoint can be a useful key for gaining new insights into the way the world was understood by those living in the same environment, in the distant past. Both for this reason, and for the comparative material folklore provides, there is very good reason for not burning the folklore archives (or letting them rot) but rather for keeping them open and available to all of us – however much we may question the ways in which they were collected (see further Gunnell 2013).

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Folkloristic material and pre-Christian Scandinavian religion

JENS PETER SCHJØDT

This article discusses from a theoretical perspective the possibilities of using post-medieval and modern folkloristic material for reconstructing Old Norse religion. Taking Jan de Vries as an example of an older kind of religio-historical enterprise, it is argued that his ideas of a genuinely 'Teutonic' religion simply do not stand up to modern ideas about orally transmitted religions, of which diversity is perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic. Furthermore, it deals with differences and similarities in the ways we use respectively medieval sources and later folkloric sources and concludes that it would be hard to argue that there are any principal differences between the two. A basic criterion must be whether our interpretations of the sources 'make sense' according to other sources and to a qualified modern perspective of these orally transmitted religions.

1. Introduction

It is the aim of this article to discuss some of the theoretical implications of taking so-called folkloristic material into consideration. First, there will be an analysis of some of the changes that have taken place in the historical study of religions since Jan de Vries maintained, in the early thirties, that folklore should not be seen as an important tool in the reconstruction of Scandinavian (and Germanic) pagan religion. Although his viewpoint deserves consideration, important changes seem to have taken place since then, particularly in relation to orally transmitted religions such as pre-Christian Scandinavian religion, and this makes de Vries's argument more or less invalid. The crucial point is, as far as I see it, to decide whether we can establish any criteria – from a theoretical perspective – to support the use of folkloristic material. It will therefore also be necessary to address some arguments which, in my opinion, will support the use of this material. The first argument relates to the inevitable use we make of comparative material in general, and the other one, as already hinted at, to the character of the religion that, for lack of a better term, we usually call pre-Christian Scandinavian. What 'kind' of religion are we dealing

with, and what is the relation between that 'kind' of religion and the folkloristic material from a much later time? A further point is the general tendency among scholars in the humanities to give up the notion of objectivity in historical reconstructions. I have dealt with this issue in other publications (see Schjødt 2009a; 2012; and forthcoming), and it will, therefore, not be treated here in any detail. Briefly, however, it can be stated that I fully agree with this tendency: historical reality will by necessity always depend on interpretations that are reliant on the world-view of the interpreter.

2. The viewpoints of de Vries

The use of late folkloristic material has lost some, but certainly not all, of its popularity since the thirties, when Jan de Vries, among others, expressed his scepticism against folkloristic scholars such as Axel Olrik and Hilding Celander. In his book on Loki from 1933, for example, he says:

> We will not follow the way of Axel Olrik and Celander in our investigation, who treat the modern traditions as equivalent and even superior to the documents of the heathen period, because we think it methodically objectionable to explain the religious representations of one period by those of another. This holds still more true in the present case where the gulf of the conversion to Christianity lies between both periods. The only possible way seems to me to scrutinize the extant Old-Norse material, and if the conclusions we arrive at are in any way concordant with the modern popular tradition, we may consider it as a nice confirmation of our deductions. (De Vries 1933: 27)

This and other similar statements seem to have had a heavy impact on the scholarship within Old Norse religion, at least in the sense that, since the beginning of the twentieth century, relatively few scholars have built their theories entirely on folkloristic material, although many modern scholars (e.g. Mitchell 2011; Gunnell 2000, 2007; Lindow 2000a; Heide 2002) have certainly used it in very convincing ways as part of their arguments. In reconsidering the results that can be reached by the aid of folkloristic material, it would seem wise, however, to discuss the arguments behind de Vries's position rather than whether it is right or wrong since things are rarely just 'right' or 'wrong' when it comes to historical constructions. A theory may be fruitful and productive or it may be the opposite, but we can hardly ever determine with certainty whether it is 'true'. From the point of view of traditional historical source criticism, some of de Vries's statements seem quite sensible because they are

basically based on the significance of contemporaneity: the folkloristic material *is* late, it is transmitted in a different cultural and religious setting from the pagan, which is the one we are trying to reconstruct, and much folklore definitely and demonstrably originate far into the medieval period and later. Such factors inevitably require us to be extremely careful regarding such material. However, as I will argue, de Vries's scepticism was based on a view on religion and mythology which does not stand up to modern standards. In this first part of the article, I will therefore discuss what has changed between the first third of the twentieth century and now and what consequences, if any, these changes will have for our use of the folkloristic material.

But let us begin with the position of de Vries. He addressed the issue of the value of folkloristic material on several occasions (e.g. 1931: 3–4; 1932; 1933: 5–6). His attitude, although sceptical and critical towards some of his folklorist contemporaries, as appears from the above quotation, was definitely not a total rejection of the use of that sort of material. Actually, he gives some examples of pagan traditions that, in his view, have continued to exist up until modern times, for instance that modern agricultural traditions may enlighten the ancient cult of Freyr (de Vries 1931: 3).[1] Even so, it is true that, at least in connection with both Óðinn and Loki (cf. de Vries 1931 and 1933, respectively), his aim is to show that the modern material will cause more confusion than it will contribute to solutions with regard to the role of these deities in pagan times. And we have to admit that folklore is not a static entity: new sayings and practices come into being all the time (cf. de Vries 1931: 3–4),[2] and many of them will disappear after longer or shorter periods. On the other hand, nobody (and certainly not de Vries) is likely to deny that narratives as well as practices from modern folklore *may* reach back into pagan times (de Vries 1931: 4).

However, it seems that what has changed substantially since the days of de Vries is not so much our view on folklore as our view on pagan religion and world-views. De Vries had a firm conviction that pagan religion could be seen as a coherent and apparently more or less static entity. Another quotation exemplifies this:

1 Whether this is true, however, is open to discussion. Fertility cults, of course, existed in pagan as well as in later times, but the folklore of medieval and post-medieval periods do not necessarily have to do with the cult of Freyr.

2 For instance historical incidents may become 'mythicized' (cf. Niles 2007: 210–12) and thus transformed into 'folklore'.

> So I do not consider it necessary to repeat my objections to a method [the folkloristic], which, tempting as it may be in cases where genuine heathen tradition is too fragmentary or too obscure to render us valuable material for our investigation, still is highly questionable when we want to understand the meaning of a religious phenomenon in its original form. (De Vries 1933: 5–6)

The problems in this statement, I would argue, are the notions of 'genuine heathen tradition' and 'its original form'. This terminology implies, firstly, that there was such a phenomenon as a 'genuine heathen tradition'. At first glance it may seem unproblematic because what de Vries was aiming for was a tradition 'unpolluted' by Christian influences and probably also by influences and traditions from 'non-Teutonic' peoples, as for instance the Saami and the Celts; for de Vries often uses terms such as 'the heathen Teutonic religion' (e.g. de Vries 1931: 63), which must indicate that this religion was specific to the pagan 'Teutons' (whoever they were). The second implication is that this is the stage where we find the 'original form' of a religious phenomenon.

Now, regarding the first notion, we may well ask when and among whom this 'genuine heathen tradition' existed. It cannot have been during the Viking Age since it is common knowledge that parts of the Nordic and Germanic world were influenced by Christian mission already long before that time.[3] We also know that encounters with the Romans and the Celts had taken place at a much earlier date, so the genuine heathen 'Teutonic' tradition must have been even earlier than the first centuries AD. And even in the Bronze Age, there was a lively exchange of material goods between Scandinavia and the Continent which certainly implies other levels of cultural exchange, too. All in all, it seems as if this 'genuine heathen tradition' was never genuine in the sense that it was completely isolated from and non-influenced by 'non-Teutonic' cultures (cf. Sävborg 2004; DuBois 1999: 10–17). On the other hand: even if we go back into the Stone Age and try to imagine some primitive family groups walking

3 This does not mean that people became Christian. They may well have remained pagan in most ways, but knowledge of Christian ideas, whether they caused resistance or approval, probably had some impact on those who were confronted with them. We could here speak of direct influence from missionaries and indirect influence from pagans having met these missionaries and having communicated with other pagans. Apart from that, it is important to bear in mind that the development and the influences from non-Germanic speaking peoples were very different in various parts of the North: in the northern parts of Scandinavia, Saami influence probably played a major role whereas, in the south, influences from Slavonic and other Germanic tribes were likely to have occurred (cf. Schjødt 2009b).

around collecting fruits and hunting animals without meeting anybody else, it would be hard to argue that two groups who never met in such a 'culture' ('Teutonic' or otherwise) would share any tradition, except for such similarities which are known from all over the world. In other words, the notion of genuine traditions has to be qualified if it is going to be used at all.

As regards the second notion, 'the original form', it is even more complicated, for what is the original form of a religious phenomenon? Now, in the context of de Vries (and no doubt many of his contemporaries), we may understand 'an original religious phenomenon' in two ways. Either he means 'original' in a global or universal sense, or he means 'original' as 'original among the Teutons (or Scandinavians)'. What is the original form of, for example, the phenomenon 'sacrifice', except for a certain structure constituted by humans killing a living being for a certain purpose that has to do with 'the other world'. This basic structure will in every culture be performed in a way that is genuine for exactly that culture (and it will inevitably evolve and change over time). So, let us imagine that the first Germanic-speaking tribe (*sic*) made a sacrifice in which they killed a horse in order to hand it over to a certain god. Would this be the original 'Teutonic' sacrifice? Would sacrifices with humans or goats as victims delivered to other gods then not be original? Nobody, not even de Vries, would probably make such a claim. The 'original form' is a notion without any content at all, and it seems as if de Vries and many others of his and later generations simply did not reflect sufficiently on the notion of 'the original form'.

Thus, the premises that de Vries worked from do not suffice from a modern perspective. Religion is not static, and it never was – likewise, it was not and is not coherent, and it was not and is not understood in the same way by everybody in a society (Schjødt 2009b).[4] The question is then which impact this has on our evaluation of the use of folklore. First and foremost, it implies that we cannot uphold the idea that 'pagan' and 'non-pagan' can be seen as straightforward oppositions. As I have argued elsewhere (Schjødt 2009b; 2012), religions change all the time and we have to acknowledge that religions are always diverse at many levels, not only historically, but also geographically, socially and cognitively. Sometimes the changes are so slow that we cannot see them whereas in other historical situations they speed up, often due to intertribal or intercultural communication. As already mentioned, Scandinavia has had contacts with mainland Europe ever since the Bronze Age and probably

4 A recent example of this cognition is Terry Gunnell (2007: 129–30), who concludes that the *álfar* were in no way a homogeneous group that was understood in the same way by everybody.

also before that, so we must assume that influences, at least in the higher strata of society, have continued to take place. This is certainly not to say that everything related to religion has been replaced by something new at a stroke, for religious changes will never happen this way.[5] Even the most sophisticated religions of our era will always, in some respects, keep some archaic traits simply because such are the rules of evolution, biological as well as cultural. For instance, the contents are likely to change faster than the structures, which means that new gods may become part of a given pantheon, but usually the basic relations between man and god will remain the same, and those structural changes that do take place will typically be implemented much more slowly than is the case with the cult of new gods. This is also what we see in Scandinavia where it has been shown that, at least during the first two centuries after the official conversion, the mentality of the newly converted continued to be rather 'pagan' (McGuire 2008).

3. Primary and secondary religions

So, even if de Vries's view on folklore may seem quite reasonable, his concept of religion does not stand up to modern standards. Before we continue, however, it is relevant to add a few words about the kind of religion that is assumed to have existed in pre-Christian Scandinavia. Scholars very often seem to have considered it as a world-view with the same characteristics as that of Christianity (although with different gods, different ritual features, different ethics etc.), and Christian and pre-Christian religions would thus be two mutually exclusive religions. This, however, is not a realistic perspective. The two religions do not fulfil the same role in the cultural life of their respective societies. Whereas Christianity (at least ideally and thus predominantly in the upper strata of society) attempts to control the thought world of its adherents through its dogmatics, this was probably never the case among the pagans, so we could say that the notion of belief, as I have argued elsewhere (Schjødt 2010), was not part of pre-Christian religion.[6] On the other hand, beings of 'the other

5 Again, religious changes are, of course, of different kinds. When indigenous religions are the target of great missionary religions with universal claims, large parts of the world-view tend to be replaced. When two local religions meet because of trade or warfare, on the other hand, they will still influence each other, but the influences tend to be of minor extent, and certainly slower, than is the case in a process of mission.

6 To put it very briefly, the point in my 2010 article is that 'belief' in the Christian sense of the notion has as its prerequisite that it is possible not to believe, or to believe falsely. This notion of belief was probably never (at least not until the confrontation with the Christian missionaries) an issue among the pagans for whom the ritual

world' were probably to a much greater extent present in the everyday lives of pagans than was the corresponding case for Christians since pagan deities could be identified in all kinds of natural phenomena. But first and foremost, Christianity was a religion of the book and it was a religion with central religious authorities. These were the prerequisites for the relative homogeneity of Christianity as compared to paganism. Therefore, even if things were no doubt much more complicated among the lay people than among the clergy, there was an ideal within Christianity (and in other universal religions)[7] that everybody should understand the texts and perform the rituals in basically the same way. This was not the case among the pagans, which is certainly confirmed by archaeology (e.g. Price 2012), and therefore we cannot assume that a myth or a ritual which we know from only one single source was known in exactly that same form by anybody other than the author himself and perhaps his immediate surroundings. Rather, we should assume quite the contrary: that people in other villages and towns, and people from other social classes, would know the myths and the notions they imply in variant versions. It is highly unlikely that the ritual leaders among the pagans – let us just call them priests – were authorities in the sense that they would tell people how to believe or how to interpret their myths, or for that matter the rituals that they performed, at least when we compare to other oral cultures that we are better informed of. They may have been experts in divination and other kinds of magical techniques, but in these cases they would depend on the traditions and their own skills, not on a book or a bishop. This means that the whole religious worldview would basically depend on what could be termed 'folklore', narratives ('myths') and actions ('rituals'), and these were probably understood in quite different ways by different individuals. According to the German historian of religion Jan Assmann, we have to distinguish between *primary* and *secondary* religions, where primary religions are exactly based on ritual and orality and secondary religions on canonical writings (Assmann 2006).[8]

duties were the core of their religions, whereas discussions about 'right' or 'wrong' in the way they viewed the world are hard to imagine.

7 Gro Steinsland (2005: 30–4) provides a good overview of some important differences between 'ethnic' religions and 'universal' religions.

8 Assmann is dealing with memory and is one of the leading figures within 'memory theory'. His main idea in connection with religion as orally or literally transmitted is that, in order to keep up the 'cultural memory', 'primary' religions depend on the performance of rituals whereas the 'secondary' religions depend on canonical writings. Another way of classifying is given by Robert N. Bellah (2005) who argues that the 'primary' religions of Assmann could be divided into 'tribal' and 'archaic' religions (p. 69). In that classification system, the religion of Iron Age Scandinavia would probably be seen as a transitional stage between those two groups (cf. Bellah 2011: 175–209).

9 When some scholars refer to the theories of other scholars as 'just' theories, it is probably because they have not understood the simple fact that any interpretation of historical sources with the purpose of reconstructing a historical 'reality' cannot be anything other than 'a theory'.

10 I have dealt with these questions more exhaustively in Schjødt forthcoming.

4. Arguments for using recent folkloristic material

If we accept that there is no such thing as an original 'Teutonic' or 'Germanic' religion – because a religion is always in flux and never constitutes a stable condition, neither historically nor, for that matter, individually since religious notions also differ within the life of the individual – then we have to accept, whether we analyse modern folkloristic material, the sagas, or Snorri, that we never have direct access to anything like 'the pagan Teutonic religion'. This is because, as we just saw, such a phenomenon never existed and because all sources are ultimately conglomerations of various influences: the individual author's own imagination, the ideology of the society in which he creates his work, the historical traditions that are part of this ideology, and probably many other elements that all contribute to the product which we use as a source for a certain religious configuration (Schjødt 2009a). We must always apply several 'filters' before using this or that piece of information for a certain purpose. Also – and this is important – we can never know for sure whether our results are 'correct'. Having said this, it is obvious that in order not merely to undertake 'impressionistic' interpretations, we have to use all methods available, such as philology, historical source criticism, textual criticism, etc. We have to consider the 'grand theories' of our own time, whether for example anthropological, sociological or psychological in order to create qualified theories of the object in focus. But they will inevitably remain 'just' theories.[9] They may be good or bad theories with respect to their potential to explain or describe a historical period, but in no way will they be able to 'mirror' the reality of bygone periods in a one to one relationship. To do historical research in the twenty-first century is to create plausible theories.[10] Sometimes we have a lot of source information to support our theories, but in the case of pre-Christian Scandinavian religion that situation is quite exceptional. Most often we have very little source material to build our theories on, sometimes just a single statement from which we can form our ideas. This, of course, makes our conclusions even more conjectural than is the case in many other areas of historical enterprise.

Thus, as far as I see it, there are two main arguments for taking modern folkloristic material into consideration. The first one is that folklore is in principle and in theory no more problematic than any other kind of source material. Having accepted that the 'Teutonic' religion of de Vries's imagination never existed as a coherent entity, it does not really make sense to argue that this or that source is or is not a product of 'a genuine Teutonic religion'. Why is it, for instance, that we can accept the use of eddic poems, Snorri's *Heimskringla*, various *fornaldarsǫgur* as well as information from other genres, such as the descriptions of authors from antiquity of the god Mercury, in order to draw a picture of Óðinn[11] whereas late recorded folkloric material is dismissed? If the argument, like the one made by de Vries, is that the Christian world-view had substituted the pagan, then it is hardly acceptable to proceed in this manner. Apart from the fact that this viewpoint is 'essentialist', that is to say that the two world-views are separated by watertight barriers – which is certainly wrong, as we have just seen – we also know that many of the texts just mentioned are written in Christian times, especially some of the *fornaldarsǫgur* are very late and are strongly reminiscent of 'folktales', which are certainly a kind of folklore.

The second argument is that we cannot deny that there is such a phenomenon as 'tradition', which we may here define as a body of ideas and practices contributing to the shaping of identity for the individual as part of a community. Very often the 'origins' and 'meaning' of such ideas and practices, which are usually expressed in a symbolic language, are not conscious to those who live with them. In this way, these ideas and practices (or at least some of them) may well survive a change in religion; ideas and practices that have been prohibited by the new religion may be transformed in such a way that they do not conflict with the dogmas of this new religion, or the religious specialists of the new religion accept that traditions are not changed 'overnight' and therefore allow for some degree of continuity of the old tradition. The structure of a narrative or a ritual may thus remain 'the same' although the content may

11 Some scholars, who may be characterised as hyper-critics, would argue that we cannot do that because the figure of Óðinn will always be portrayed in different ways according to what genre any given description belongs to (Lassen 2011: 391). This is no doubt an important point and the differences in genre may very well have an impact on the traits focused upon. On the other hand, however, if the various aspects may be seen within a theoretical framework, i.e. a framework based on a qualified theory of religion and mythology in a society like that of pre-Christian Scandinavian, it may prove more fruitful to investigate whether the various pieces of information form a structure instead of dismiss them beforehand *because* they are expressed in different textual genres.

change,[12] and this is exactly why Christian authors are able to transmit pagan narratives and use them for whatever purpose they may have.[13]

The really interesting question is why it seems to have been the consensus that it is alright to use information related in sources that are up to 400 years later than the conversion whereas sources that are 800 years later cannot be used. As far as I can see, the answer must be that there *is* no apparent reason for that. Of course, it is generally recognised that the nearer a source is to what it describes, the more reliable it is. But there are two things to note here: firstly, by far the greatest amount of textual sources are, as we have seen, several hundred years later than the paganism they aim to describe, so we could argue (as some have indeed done) that none of the sources can be used for anything like a description of pre-Christian religion. I will maintain, however, that it is actually possible, on the basis of these late sources and informed theories, to draw a fairly realistic picture of what that religion would have been like, although, as mentioned earlier, there are very few things we know with certainty. So even if there is a distance in time between the written Icelandic sources and modern folklore, it would be very hard to argue that such a distance has decisive theoretical implications. The difference is only of degree and it will be hard to argue that something decisive happened during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which created a significant difference between the period before and the period after this time. Therefore it is not easy to see any sharp discrepancy between Old Norse and later folkloristic material. Secondly, the whole idea that older sources are better than later ones is problematic when dealing with the history of mentality, ideas or religion. It is obvious that in the history of events there may be a strong tendency for this to be the case,[14] but it is certainly different when we are studying 'traditions'. They did not 'take place' at a certain moment in time. In the case of Scandinavia, it is easy to imagine that some people, just one generation after the Christianisation, did not have much idea about paganism at all. On the other hand, other people may, for various reasons, have kept the memories for several generations after

12 As we know from, for instance, Saxo Grammaticus, many narratives are thus transformed from the mythical to the historical code.

13 One such purpose, which we find with Snorri, would be to show that the pagans were wrong since they 'believed' in gods who were actually historical persons.

14 However, even in the history of events, it is far from certain that a contemporary source would be more reliable than a later one. There could be a lot of possible reasons why a contemporary author, either intentionally or unintentionally, might create a false picture – we need only consider modern political propaganda where battles and wars may be described quite differently, depending on the relationship between the author and one of the parties. Do we all remember 'Comical Ali'?

the change of religion, either because they were interested – perhaps for antiquarian reasons, which seems to be the case with Snorri and in a different way with Saxo – or because they lived in an environment where the old traditions, more or less transformed, continued to live, which seems to be the case with some of the authors of *fornaldarsǫgur*. As mentioned earlier, we must assume that telling stories about some pagan god was not necessarily impossible in a Christian context, as long as he was not believed to be a real god but was seen as a historical person or a demon. Even though, as was also shown earlier, such stories may be invented, it is, in my opinion, common sense to assume that some of the old narratives and practices could be transmitted in more or less transformed modes so that they would not be in any direct opposition to the Christian world-view of any given period. Eventually, it is up to us, the scholars, to argue whether this or that narrative (or practice) did or did not exist prior to the time it was recorded, and what it would have been like in a pagan context.

5. Criteria for selecting relevant folkloristic material

When this is so, however, we come to the crucial point: *how* do we decide which category a practice or a narrative belongs to, which stories and practices are recent, and which are more or less direct heritage from pagan times? It can hardly be doubted that in Christian as well as pagan times, new stories, often variants or transformations of old stories, came into being all the time. Again, religion and mythology are never static as new traditions are continuously formed while old traditions are forgotten. Even if, from a Lévi-Straussian point of view, we can maintain that all stories (and practices) are transformations of other stories (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1971), we have to admit that not all of these transformations are recognisable in the sense that we can transform them back into their pagan form or, in other words, reconstruct their pagan content. But, as I will argue below, some of them probably are, as has been demonstrated by older as well as more recent scholars. So which criteria do we set for the selection of material?

First of all, it is not likely that we will be able to find any external criteria for selecting information valuable to the reconstruction of paganism. By external is meant criteria that have to do with the provenance of the sources in which the information is transmitted (when talking about the textual sources) or the date of observance (when talking about ritual practices). Whether folksongs are more reliable than agricultural practices or folktales more reliable than handbooks of witch hunting (cf. Mitchell 2009), and so forth , is probably impossible to say beforehand and we will thus find no objective way to evaluate

the information.[15] The crucial point must be the information as it is presented to us in relation to other information, *and as we interpret it*, for interpretation is always necessary, although it is never objective. We cannot use distinctions between genres – not between different genres of folkloristic material and not between folklore and medieval textual sources. What counts must be the individual piece of information.

It seems that there is basically only one way of taking such decisions and that is by using comparisons (cf. Lindow 2000b: 72; Schjødt forthcoming).[16] This must be qualified. Actually, I am talking about two quite distinct enterprises which could nonetheless both be seen as part of what is often called the 'comparative method'. The first point is the trite fact that we cannot reconstruct anything that happened in the past without having an idea of how past cultures were shaped. Do people in other cultures think exactly the same way as we do? Or do they think completely differently, perhaps with the consequence that it is impossible for us to understand their world-view? I expect that all scholars would take a position in between these two extremes: we know that other cultures have other values than ours; they react differently to certain stimuli. That is why we can talk about different cultures at all. On the

15 Again, this is in principle no different from when we deal with the medieval sources. We cannot decide whether some information in an eddic poem was part of the world-view of anybody other than the author. What we can say is that, at a certain time and at a certain place, it was *possible* to say this or that about a certain god, but whether it was common is quite a different matter.

16 Heide (2009: 364–5) lists some important criteria for evaluating the source value of late material. I believe that most of the points actually have to do with comparison, although it may well be comparisons of data within the Nordic area which I have shown elsewhere did not, at least not in detail, constitute a uniform religious space (Schjødt 2009b; forthcoming). So, even if some of Heide's criteria may not seem at first glance to involve comparisons, I would maintain that they actually do. This said, however, we also have to leave room for the possibility that on the surface we may be able to reconstruct without using much comparison. For instance Heide's fifth point, 'cultural fossils', mentions the place name 'Torshov'. Here we must admit that from this we can conclude that the god Þórr probably had some place of consecration in which rituals were carried out close to the farm. But if we want to say something more about what happened in such a place, how rituals may have been performed, etc. we inevitably have to turn to sources from other areas of Scandinavia and ultimately to the general study of religion which is the discipline in which rituals of various kind are reflected. Thus I do agree with Heide's list of criteria, but will maintain, nevertheless, that if we want to do more than just making an inventory of names of gods or ritual places, comparisons of different kinds must play a part (see also below).

other hand, they feel hunger, they need sex, they are scared of what they do not understand, and so on. That is why we are all of the same species. In other words, we must attempt to get a realistic picture of what is common to all cultures and also what is common to cultures living under the same ecological and technological conditions. Thus, apart from the universals that we find in all human societies, we also have to accept that there are not only different cultures but also different types of cultures: all hunter-gatherer societies have something in common as do all agriculturalist societies etc.[17] This also goes for various social classes: slaves, no matter where in the world and no matter how different they may be in many respects, will have something in common as will also the nobles in a society. This is certainly nothing new and it has been common knowledge, at least since Karl Marx, that the ideology of a person and of a culture will depend to some extent on the material conditions that the individual or the culture has to cope with.[18] I will maintain that, among other factors, this is the main reason why we are able to reconstruct societies and mentalities of the past. If we imagine an archaeologist dealing with the Stone Age, finding post holes and bones, he or she would be unable to say anything about the culture in question if there are not some prior ideas of how that society, its buildings and its graves would have looked. We cannot be sure that the ideas are correct, but without them it would hardly be possible to say anything about the society, except for counting the bones and the postholes. If we are going to draw a picture on the basis of the findings, the archaeologist needs to have ideas, and these will inevitably be based on comparisons with peoples of whom he knows something more, in short: we have to use analogies, whether these are universal social and psychological patterns or concern people who apparently are culturally 'similar'. Thus, we are facing what may be termed typological comparisons, that is comparisons with cultures that are not related to the one we wish to reconstruct, but are of the same 'type'. This kind of comparison is a prerequisite for reconstructions of any historical situation and it is all the more important the poorer our primary sources are, in quantity as well as in quality.

However, when it comes to a specific culture, we also have to take into consideration another kind of comparisons, which I will call 'genetic', which means that the cultures taken into consideration for comparisons have some historical

17 This is a generalization. It should be admitted that there probably are exceptions to any rule, so perhaps we should only talk about strong tendencies.

18 Nobody nowadays would probably maintain that, for example, ideologies, mentalities or psychologies are shaped *exclusively* in relation to the material conditions, but to deny their impact seems to represent a degree of idealism held by very few today.

affinity with the one in focus. This affinity may be constituted by common heritage or by cultural connections of various kinds and thus affinity, in time as well as in space, may be relevant. In our reconstructions and interpretations of myths and rituals or other religious phenomena from, for instance, the Viking Age, we may use some of these related cultures in order to support the non-Christian character of the phenomenon in focus. If a myth which is only known from Snorri can be found to have a parallel in Tacitus, as seems to be the case with the theogonic myth (Schjødt forthcoming), it does not make sense to maintain that Snorri did not know any more about the paganism of his own culture than we do nowadays. The same, of course, applies to comparisons both with other Indo-European cultures and, for instance, Sami cultures: if we are able to find parallels between the pre-Christian Scandinavians and such cultures – parallels which are not shared by Christianity – then it seems inevitable to draw the conclusion that such parallels must be part of a non-Christian heritage. To repeat: we cannot speak of a genuine 'Teutonic' religion or of any 'original' notion, but we can maintain that certain notions and practices are unlikely to stem from Christian influence.[19] The problem is, of course, that we do not very often find such parallels, but those we do find seem to prove at least that we cannot rule out beforehand that such a pagan heritage does exist. This methodological principle is just as valid for the modern folkloristic material as it is for the written sources of the Middle Ages.

The next question is: what to do when we do not find such parallels? Again, the problem is the same whether we deal with medieval sources or with folklore. As far as I see it, we have to apply two principles. First, in a rather pragmatic way, we have to compare the information in a certain (folkloristic) source with what we know from other sources, some of which are perhaps more reliable than the one in focus. If, from various perspectives (philological, source critical etc.), we are able to argue that these other sources probably do reflect pagan conditions, then the information in our primary source is likely also to have a pagan provenance. It is important to be aware that we do not have to look exclusively for direct parallels, but also for information related in the form of transformations, which thus supplies the information given in the

19 Even this, however, will often cause difficulties because Christianity did not come to the North in an 'unpolluted' form. There can hardly be any doubt that Christianity in its process from being a religion for the few to becoming the religion of everybody would have to accept many ideas and practices from 'primary' religions, ideas and practices that we would nowadays classify as folklore. Therefore, the Christianity that was introduced in the North already contained a lot of folkloristic elements which may be hard to distinguish from the folkloristic traits of the North itself.

primary source in a way that 'makes sense' in accordance with our qualified expectations, as discussed above. And this is the second principle: we must be ready to accept that our reconstructions are, in certain ways, constructions. They are constructions of discourses[20] that we make according to an idea of what a certain object (in this case pre-Christian religion of Scandinavia) would be like, and these ideas are generated from our general understanding of culture and nature. So, on the one hand, we have to evaluate a certain piece of information in relation to information from other sources, and on the other hand, we have to evaluate it from the perspective of what 'makes sense'. I am fully aware that these formulations are not particularly precise, but I doubt whether absolute precision is really possible when the talk is of methodological devices within the history of religions and mentalities.

6. Conclusion

So what can we conclude from this? First and foremost, of course, that it is possible and useful to take the late folkloristic material into consideration, if we accept both that comparison is a *sine qua non* in regard to our reconstructions and also that we will never know for sure whether our results are in detailed accordance with pre-Christian reality. However, this is not interesting in itself: some scholars support this view, whereas others, from a more positivistic (and in my opinion less realistic stand) will insist that source criticism is the only fruitful way of proceeding. What I find more important is that the very suggestion that pre-Christian Scandinavian (or 'Teutonic') religion once constituted a religion in the same sense as Christianity does is wrong. Therefore, it is not possible either to determine in any definite way whether this or that myth or practice belonged exclusively to 'Scandinavian paganism' since there were no clear limits between the traditions of the Germanic speaking Scandinavians and those of the Saami, the Saxons, the Slavonic peoples etc. We must reckon with mutual influences ever since the Bronze Age or the Stone Age, traditions being transformed, disappearing, originating, but most importantly changing all the time. Sometimes it is possible to reconstruct the spread of these traditions, but it can seldom be done with absolute certainty. The point here is, however, that when this notion of the 'genuine' Scandinavian or 'Teutonic' culture cannot be upheld, then we have to accept that there is no stable condition, at least not concerning the religion, and as a consequence we must reject the argument of de Vries (and most others who would be sceptical) that we cannot know whether this or that folkloristic tradition belonged 'originally' to the pagan religion, since this 'originally', as we saw, is a notion without content. It is, therefore, up to the interpreter to argue whether a certain piece of information has its roots in the pagan world-view (which was certainly not constituted by a coherent and logical system of notions). It is undoubtedly true that we cannot know for sure, but this is no different for information related in the eddas and the sagas: we will never know for sure whether this or that piece of information is pagan or medieval (as if there were no traces of paganism in the Middle Ages). So if we want to say *anything at all* about pre-Christian Scandinavian religion, we have to rely on our interpretations, which by necessity must be based on the use of comparative material. The criteria that we have to use will then be whether our interpretations make sense, that is whether they are in accordance (as parallels or transformations) with, on the one hand, other sources that may arguably be part of the same discourse and, on the other hand, an informed view on how orally transmitted religions work, sociologically and cognitively. From that perspective, a lot of information presented in the folkloristic material will no doubt be quite promising.

20 I have dealt with the notion of discourse in Schjødt 2013.

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The semantic side of etymology

Comparative reconstruction confined to elements with specific internal connections

ELDAR HEIDE

This article seeks to outline a less uncertain form of comparative religious and cultural reconstruction than has traditionally been done. The weakness of traditional comparative reconstruction is that it is difficult to determine which cultural elements are (historically linked) cognates and thus acceptable as a basis for the reconstruction. In many cases, however, this problem can be minimized by limiting the comparison to elements that constitute the semantic side of formally related words. If the words are linked formally, their meanings are linked, too, even across large time spans and geographical areas. Therefore, it is possible to make much of the many word clusters that have quite simple and thus quite certain formal sides while having semantic sides that are complex and thus rich in information. This is an etymological kind of reasoning, but one that focuses on the semantic side of it rather than the formal side.[1]

The main problem for the study of ancient religions and cultures, including the Northern European ones, is lack of information, because the contemporary sources are few. To be sure, popular traditions and lexical material recorded in post-medieval times represent large amounts of information that may contain reflections of ancient times, but it is usually very difficult to separate those grains of gold from the gravel. However, although pieces of post-Medieval information may be worthless when considered separately, they may be valuable as supplementary parts of a jigsaw puzzle that mainly consists of early, (relatively) reliable pieces. In this article I sketch out one way, aided by etymology, to select such late pieces of information that are fairly confidently connected to more reliable pieces. The etymological or comparative principle, developed in comparative linguistics in the nineteenth century, can be illustrated with

1 Thanks to Oddvar Nes, Vladimir Napolskikh, Odd Einar Haugen, and Karen Bek-Pedersen for commenting on drafts of this article.

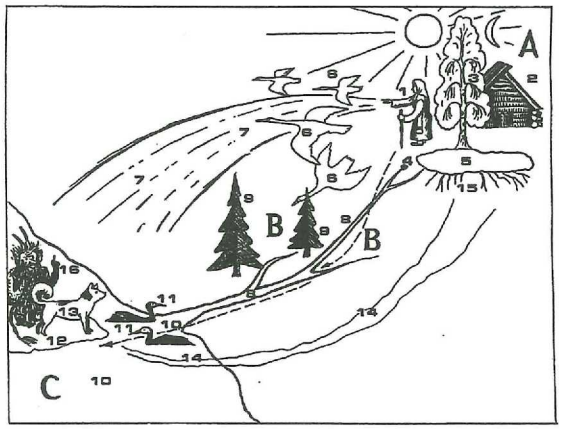

Fig. 1. Reconstructed Proto-Uralic cosmology (Napolskikh 1992a: 11). 'A' is the 'Upper World = South = river head = mountains = heavens'; 'B' is the 'Middle (Human) World', and 'C' is the 'Lower World = North = river mouth = cold sea = underearth'. '1' is the 'Old Woman of the South, mistress of life, protectress of birth and motherhood, sender of souls, mother of gods, mistress of the migratory water-birds', etc.

the following example: on the basis of the cognates *tungen* 'the tongue' in Danish and *tunga* in Norwegian, it is possible to go back to a probable common origin by comparing them and calculating which starting-point would give the observed variants in the simplest way. In this case it is quite easy to determine that the starting-point is **tungan* (as can be confirmed by Old Scandinavian texts; cf. Saarikivi in the present volume).

There is no reason to confine this way of reasoning to what we usually conceive of as etymology. Georges Dumézil's theory of Indo-European religion is an example of an etymology-inspired approach to cultural studies (Dumézil 1935, 1940, 1958). He observed that attested, far-apart Indo-European ancient cultures had a tripartite structure in society and religion: rulers, warriors, and producers. From this he inferred that the Proto-Indo-European society from which these cultures derived had such a tripartite structure. However, tripartite structures can be found in societies all over the world, not only in Indo-European ones. Accordingly, the tripartite structure in the Indo-European cultures does not have to be inherited from the Proto-Indo-Europeans. It can more easily be explained as a result of the development of complex societies, not least because the Proto-Indo-European society probably predated that complexity. Accordingly, Dumézil's argument for a Proto-Indo-European tripartite structure is weak.

However, such failures do not prove the etymological principle as such useless in this kind of historical reconstruction. A more plausible example can be found in an article by the Uralist Vladimir Napolskikh (1992a, summarized from Napolskikh 1992b: 189 ff.). He reconstructs a Proto-Uralic cosmology by comparing the cosmologies of the attested Uralic cultures – roughly twenty cultures distributed from Scandinavia to Siberia – assuming that elements

found in many Uralic cultures are inherited from Proto-Uralic. Napolskikh sums up his reconstruction in the sketch on the facing page.

Napolskikh is more cautious than Dumézil since he does ask the important question: is this system found among other peoples in Northern Eurasia? If so, it does not have to be inherited from the Proto-Uralics. Napolskikh's answer is: yes, in a few cases – but then always associated with Uralic loanwords and other traces of ancient contacts with Uralic peoples, so those cases do, in fact, seem to derive from Uralic influence. This indicates that the reconstructed system is truly Uralic and inherited from Proto-Uralic times. Napolskikh supports his argument (in the Russian version, Napolskikh 1992b: 71–83) by pointing out that certain, similar ideas[2] are found only in some of the Uralic traditions, thousands of kilometres apart. This can most easily be explained if these ideas are inherited from a common origin because the geographical separation by enormous distances makes borrowing implausible. This argument is essential also to much of the work carried out by the mythologist Yuri Berezkin: when for example 'parallels at the level of minor details' are found in myths from Western Siberia and indigenous America, this can be 'explained only by particular historical links between corresponding traditions', in ancient times (Berezkin 2005: 79, cf. 2010).

With the help of such reasoning, it is possible to make quite plausible reconstructions. Even so, no matter how clever the scholar, an etymology-like reconstruction based solely on cultural, non-linguistic elements will always be very uncertain (although easily better than nothing, which in many cases is the only alternative). The problem is that any reasoning based on the etymological principle requires connections between the elements compared, the possible cognates. But in cultural, non-linguistic material, the only observable, potential connections are similarities, which are highly subjective entities, and when the cultural elements change, such similarities disappear. As a result, after thousands of years, it will be very difficult, or impossible, to determine which cultural elements in the different cultures are cognates[3] and which are innovations or borrowings from neighbouring peoples.

In etymology proper this is different because the regularity of sound correspondences allows us to follow the cultural elements far beyond immediate recognition. For example, we know that German *essen* is the same word as Old Norse *eta* 'to eat', even if the words look very different. This is because we know from systematic comparison that Proto-Germanic *-an* regularly goes to *-en* in

2 Among others ideas e.g. about where children's souls come from.

3 Although in some cases the internal relationship between the elements may be recognizable even if the elements themselves have changed significantly.

German and *-a* in Old Norse and that *t* regularly goes to *-ts-* or *-ss-* in German while it is preserved in Old Norse. So, when knowing the sound correspondences, we can recognize both *essen* and *eta* as cognates – and reconstruct their common, Proto-Germanic ancestor as **etan*.

Fortunately, the regularity of sound correspondences can be used as an aid in cultural reconstruction, too. For example, Indo-Europeanists have reconstructed words for (among other things) beaver, cow, sheep, pig, horse, wagon, harrow, sickle, barley, oats, wheat, beer, mead, axe, fort, gold, copper, silver (Mallory and Adams 2006: 523 ff.). This implies that the Proto-Indo-European society knew these phenomena.[4] Thus, the mere reconstruction of words yields information about a society thousands of years ago.

I advocate a combination of reconstruction based upon sound correspondences, and the comparison and connection of semantic elements, as in the examples from Napolskikh and Dumézil. This is possible in the not-so-few cases where a large element of Napolskikh-style reasoning is required *within* the etymological reasoning. To explain this, I have to say more about how etymology works. When an etymologist studies a certain cluster of inherited words, s/he seeks to answer *two* questions:

1. What was the original *form* of the word, or the root that it derives from? The etymologist will compare word *forms* to establish the form that the attested forms most likely derive from.
2. What was the original or essential *meaning*? The etymologist will compare *meanings*, to find the meaning or cluster of meanings that the attested meanings most likely derive from.

In the common perception, etymology is mostly associated with the first of these questions, and this is natural, as the foundation of etymology is the knowledge of the sound correspondences. In many etymologies, this knowledge is enough because the semantic side is banal. The following Old Norse words are one example of this:[5]

4 For most examples, the cognates are found so far apart that borrowing can be ruled out.

5 Cleasby and Vigfusson 1874: 53, 62, 66, 72, 85, 91.

bjúga n.	'a sausage'
bjúgr adj.	'bowed, hooked, crooked, bent'
baugr m.	'a ring, armlet'
beygja vb.	'to bend, bow'
bogi m.	'a bow'
boginn adj.	'bent, bowed, curved'
bugr m.	'a bowing, a winding'
bǽgja vb.	'to make one give way, push one back'
bǽginn adj.	'cross-grained'

To an uneducated eye, it may look as if all these words are related, but they are not. Only the first seven words derive from the same Indo-European root, as only they correspond to the ablaut grades – *eu* – *ou* – *u* – of one Indo-European root: *Bjúg-* from Indo-European **bheug-*, *baug-* and *beyg-* from Indo-European **bhoug-* (*beygja i*-mutated from Proto-Germanic **baugijan-*), and *bug-* and *bog-* from Indo-European **bhug-* (*bogi- a*-mutated from Proto-Germanic **buga-*). To realize this, a high competence in Indo-European and Germanic phonology and phonological history is required. The semantic reasoning, on the other hand, is banal, as all seven words have meanings related to 'something bent or bow-shaped'. It could be possible to include the last two words on the list in this meaning, as 'to push one back' could be seen as 'being bent away', but the formal side excludes this: *bǽgja* and *bǽginn* cannot derive from the same root as the others. As can be seen in this case, competence on the formal side is what the scholar needs; no specialized semantic knowledge is required.

In other cases, the formal side is easy and the semantic side difficult, as in this example:[6]

Common Scandinavian	*vika* /wika/	'a week, seven days'
Old English	*wice* /wike/	
Old High German	*wecha*	
Common Scandinavian	*vika* /wika/	'a sea mile'
Gothic	*wikō*	'a turn (to perform duty)'
Old English	*wice* /wike/	'an office, a duty, function'

6 Cleasby and Vigfusson 1874: 705; Söderwall 1884–1918, III; Bosworth and Toller 1898: 1214; Schützeichel 1969: 225; Streitberg [1908] 1965: 85.

All these words seem to be (formal) cognates and reflections of the Proto-Germanic feminine **wikōn*,[7] which derives from the verb **wīkan* 'to recede, turn to the side, give way, yield'. But there is no immediately obvious semantic connection between all these words internally and between them and the verb. The link nonetheless exists. The Gothic meaning 'a turn (to perform duty)' refers to a rotation of people relieving each other successively. The Old English meaning 'an office, a duty' can derive from this because one is on duty/in office when it is one's turn in the rotation. A week originally referred to a rotation of gods 'in office' one day each. The 'sea mile' probably originally referred to 'the distance covered by one rotation of rowers'. The essential meaning seems to be 'a rotation of people', which fits with the verb **wīkan* because the essence of the meaning 'rotation' is that the person on duty steps aside for the person relieving him.[8]

As can be seen, sound correspondences are only one half of etymology. On this formal half, etymologists are very competent. But they cannot possibly be equally competent on the semantic half, because knowledge of all semantic fields would be required: techniques of crafts, house construction, ship building, fishing, farming; religious life and superstitions, judicial systems, weather, the firmament, cooking, child care, etc. – from ancient times until modern times. This, of course, is far beyond the capacity of any one scholar, which in turn means that etymologists generally benefit from working together in groups and from seeking advice from non-etymologist specialists.

But it also means that there is an unexploited potential for research by scholars who are not etymologists, but have a basic knowledge of etymology and are experts on certain semantic fields – like those mentioned above. Such scholars can potentially make great contributions in cases where (formal) cognates of a word indisputably exist in several languages – usually because they have happened to change little in the development of the different languages – and the relationship between the different meanings is hard to understand, i.e. in cases where the formal side is unproblematic and the semantic side is complex. In such cases, reasoning on the semantic side of etymology is what matters.

7 Old English *wice* is usually spelled with a long *i* in the dictionaries (**wīce*) but for no apparent reason. Vowel length is not marked in the manuscripts so it can only be known from later reflections and comparison with other languages. But neither indicates an Old English form **wīce*. The long vowel of the root **weik-* / **wīk-* proves nothing because the Old Norse short-vowel *vika* is derived from the same root.

8 Wessén 1914: 171 ff.; Heide 2008; Falk and Torp 1903–6: 947; Torp 1919: 864; Holthausen 1934: 392; de Vries 1962b: 662; Lehmann *et al.* 1986: 403; Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon 1989: 1135; Kluge and Seebold 2002: 779.

The **wikōn* complex is an example of this. To realize what the connection is between the different meanings, a very specialized semantic knowledge is required: that of the Gallo-Roman religion on the Roman Rhine frontier in the first centuries AD, which is where and when Germanic peoples borrowed, translated and adjusted the concept of a 'week' from the Romans. In this Gallo-Roman religion there was a popular cult of the seven weekday gods, who were often depicted together in a 'week cycle' around an altar pillar (Wessén 1914: 171 ff.). The knowledge of this is the key to the understanding of the 'week, seven days' meaning of **wikōn*, and consequently to the understanding of the whole complex. But the etymologists have not been aware of this, so all etymological dictionaries give incomplete explanations. Only Elias Wessén (1914) presents what appears to be the solution.

In cases such as the **wikōn* complex, there is Napolskikh-style reasoning on the semantic side of the etymology because no sound correspondences can help us understand the development and ramifications of the meaning(s). The meanings are (indirectly) connected through the formal side of the words, but when we attempt to reconstruct the relationship between the meanings, the formal connections can no longer help us. They only help us to select, out of the hundreds of thousands of meanings that exist in the language(s) in question, the few meanings that are to be compared, and ignore the rest. In the next step – the semantic reconstruction – the only observable connections between the elements that we compare are similarities. Accordingly, this part of etymological research employs the same way of reasoning as we saw in the Napolskikh example above – with one very significant difference: in etymology, we must not compare all the semantic elements that we think resemble each other in the culture(s) we study. We only compare those few that belong to the formal cognates, which are selected through a quite objective criterion that makes it fairly certain that there really is a (historical) connection between them. Thus, one may say that the semantic reasoning in etymology is Napolskikh-style reasoning assisted by (the knowledge of) sound correspondences, because sound correspondences identify those semantic elements that are connected formally and therefore ought to be connected semantically, too.

At first glance, the principle thus outlined – although sound enough in itself – may seem to have a somewhat limited application and therefore not all that much relevance. This, however, is not necessarily so. Quite a number of word complexes have banal formal sides and semantic sides as difficult as the **wikōn* example or even more difficult, and some of them are highly interesting for the history of religion and for other parts of cultural history (a few such examples can be found in Heide 2006a, 2006b, and Heiden 2012; cf. Heide 2009: 365 ff.). In each of these studies, I discuss one word or one group of

closely related words with very different meanings, partly or largely belonging to the religious sphere, and suggest a model of understanding that can contain them all (usually a cluster of meanings rather than one single meaning. In the mentioned works, I discuss Old Norse *gandr* and its compounds and later reflections, and Old and Modern Scandinavian *Loki*, *loki*, *Lokke*, *lokke*, etc.). Here is one example awaiting further exploration:[9]

Old Norse	*níð*	'a libel'
Gothic	*neiþ* /ni:þ/	'envy'
Old English	*níþ*	'envy, hatred; fight'
Old Saxon	*nīth*	'enthusiasm, hostility'
Old High German	*nīd*	'hatred, anger, envy'

Our understanding of *níð* is imperfect. A systematic comparison of the different meanings in the different languages would probably provide us with a deeper understanding than our current one, but no scholar has undertaken this yet. – Here is an example waiting for a group of scholars:

Old Norse	*alfr*	'elf, fairy', receiving sacrifices, related to the gods*
Old English	*ælf*	'elf, fairy, causing diseases'**
Middle and Modern High German	*alp*	'a (night)mare'***
General Scandinavian	'elf'	subterranean beings receiving sacrifices and causing sudden diseases if not treated well, but also helping humans****

* Cleasby and Vigfusson 1874: 42.
** Bosworth and Toller 1898: 14–15; Hall 2007.
*** Ranke 1927.
**** Jón Árnason [1862–64] 1958–61, I; Hyltén-Cavallius 1863–68, I: 249 ff., Feilberg 1886–1914: 241 ff.; Olrik and Ellekilde 1926: 275 ff.; von Sydow 1935: 144; *Norsk Ordbok* 1966–: 61 ff.; Bø 1987: 66.

Our understanding of the elves is currently quite limited. An extensive, systematic comparison of all the (genuine) meanings of the word 'elf' in all the Germanic languages from the earliest sources until modern times would in all probability be very illuminating. – Here is another example waiting for a group of scholars:

9 Cleasby and Vigfusson 1874: 455; Bosworth and Toller 1898: 722; Schützeichel 1969: 137.

'Rhine Germanic', early centuries BC	**Wōðan(az?)* **Wōðin(az?)*	the Germanic cognate of the Roman god Mercury (in the day name 'Wednesday')
Old Norse	*Óðinn*	'The multifaceted leader of the gods'
Old English	*Wōden*	
Old High German	*Wōtan*	
19th c. German	*Das wütende Heer*	'the raging host, riding in nightly gales'*
19th c. Danish/Swedish	*Oden's* hunt	'the raging host, riding in nightly gales'**
19th c. Danish	*Oden's* hunter	'A nightly rider hunting ogresses'***

* Olrik 1901; Plischke 1914; de Vries 1931; Huth 1935; de Vries 1962a.
** Hyltén-Cavallius 1863–8, I: 162, 166; Olrik 1901; Celander 1920; Olrik 1901.
*** Hyltén-Cavallius 1863–8, I: 162, 166; Olrik 1901; Celander 1920; Olrik 1901.

We have considerable knowledge of Óðinn and the gods, but there is reason to believe that a comparison of these traditions would increase our understanding. – Other examples are Old Norse *jǫtunn* 'a giant', and *dvergr* 'a dwarf'. These terms have (etymological) cognates in many medieval and younger languages and dialects throughout Northern Europe, some of them close to the Old Norse meanings, others more distant, but there have been no studies that take as their starting-point the assumption that all the variants together form one corpus.

What I have mentioned are only examples. Many gods, religious phenomena, and other culturally interesting phenomena are described via terms that have etymological cognates in various traditions throughout Northern Europe (and other parts of the world, for that matter). In my opinion, this constitutes a valuable potential that has not been sufficiently realized and exploited. We can select such clusters of cognate terms for studies of history of religion and culture, and in the studies take all their meanings into consideration, because if the terms are connected formally, the meanings are also connected, closely or remotely. This is important because it implies that even certain pieces of late material can be employed in making deductions about ancient times. Thus, this approach can help remedy our lack of ancient material. There is, of course, the risk that the words that seem to be cognates could be homonyms and thus not connected after all, but homonymy is exceptional and should not be an accepted explanation until every alternative avenue has been explored in each case. We should endeavour to explain all the variant meanings as derived from a common origin, that is find a model of understanding that can account for them all – as in the **wikōn* example – because 'accounting for' comes close to 'understanding'. Of course, this implies a risk of forcing the material in order to achieve a positive result. However, this is not the problem in the present situation; the problem is that all too few attempts are made in this direction.

This insistence on accounting for all the evidence can guide us when it comes to selecting our interpretations, because the interpretation that can account for most of the material should be preferred. This requires that all the variant meanings be included because otherwise, the selection of interpretation will be less reliable. As a consequence, the insistence on accounting for all the variants can help us break out of our presuppositions. We must not simply ignore what appears not to fit in. This should go without saying, but often proves hard to live up to. One example of this is the century-long near-universal disregard of the large amount of late traditions connected to the name (or word) *Loki/loki/Lokke/lokke/Luki/luki*. The disregard arose from the seeming discrepancy between the late Loki and the Loki of the Old Norse myths, and it persists in spite of our problems when it comes to understanding the Old Norse Loki, in spite of our need for additional information about him. The ignored variants may provide some keys (Heide 2012).

It is my impression that most scholars are willing to follow me in the reasoning on the semantic side of etymology so long as post-medieval variant meanings are not included, or the meanings do not differ too much, or these two factors combine. If the total corpus is very diffuse, this is often taken as proof that the late variant meanings are corrupt and thus of no value (perhaps most explicitly in de Vries 1933: 240) or even harmful to the reconstruction. However, an etymologist would never reject a meaning of a word as a 'corruption' just because it is attested only in late sources or because it deviates much from other meanings. That is because the idea of 'corruption' in this context is a misconception, as, in a historical perspective, *all* meanings of words would be 'corruptions', because the essence of word history is that the forms and meanings move away from earlier forms and meanings of those words. Some forms and meanings move further away, others not so far, and they are necessarily attested from different periods of time. Even so, there is no difference in principle as the forms nevertheless derive from earlier, common stages that may still be reflected in the forms (individually or combined). Because of this, etymologists see all forms of a word (or a word complex) as valuable input in etymological deductions about that word (or word complex), regardless of whether they are attested early or late and regardless of their semantic distance from their cognates. If the development has made the forms differ a lot from each other, it may be more difficult to see the connections behind them, but ignoring the late forms will only add to the difficulty, as that will remove information from the calculations in a situation where information is the limiting factor. Statistically, late attestations are likely to be more remote from the common origin than early attestations, which means that late attestations will be harder to use in the calculations – but that is only statistics. In individual

cases it may be the other way around, and even the remote forms may potentially throw light upon the common origin of the forms and the relationship between them. Etymologists sometimes reconstruct ancient words solely on the basis of nineteenth-century attestations of a word (e.g. Bjorvand and Lindeman 2000: 156, 347, 349, 453), and reconstructions of the Indo-European language and its vocabulary are based entirely upon late attestations, relatively speaking, as even the earliest attested languages are significantly younger than the Indo-European proto-language. Such studies have provided countless examples of the fact that the semantic side of etymological cognates can remain little changed even after a separation of thousands of years, as exemplified below (and in Berezkin's studies, e.g. 2005).

Actually, even very remote meanings will usually be harmless to the reconstruction. An example of this is the partial association that late Swedish and Danish elf traditions have with alder trees and rivers: the elves are most frequently seen in rivers, especially rapids, where one of them plays the fiddle in a magic way, like *näcken* 'the nix'; or the elves live in or under alder trees (Hyltén-Cavallius 1863–8, I: 249 ff.; Feilberg 1886–1914, I: 241 ff.; Olrik 1918). These notions seem to derive from homonymy and folk etymology. In Swedish, *älvar/älvor* 'elves' became associated with *älvar* 'rivers', and in Danish, after the assimilation of *lf* to *ll*, *ellefolk* etc. became associated with *elletræer* 'alder trees', although these words are unrelated etymologically.[10] Here, it seems that misunderstandings brought completely irrelevant elements into the traditions, so these cases may be seen as clear corruptions that should warn against the approach that I advocate. But this is not necessarily so, because even such new branches of meaning need a semantic connection to the earlier meanings in order to become established. In the mentioned examples, this contact point seems to have been an old association between elves and bodies of water as borders and passages between this world and that of the elves. This idea is attested in the thirteenth-century Icelandic *Þorsteins þáttr bǿjarmagns*, in a passage apparently based upon a medieval variant of a tradition later recorded in the early nineteenth century (*Saga af Þorsteini Bæarmagni* 1827: 176; Heide 2006a: 223): to get to the elves, the main character jumps into a river/lake/pond/the sea (sometimes just holes in the ground), passes downwards through fog, and arrives in the land of elves. Similar ways of entering the otherworld is attested many places in Old Norse sources and other Northern European traditions (Heide 2011). The idea seems to be reflected in the Modern Icelandic term *álfavök* 'a round hole in ice, believed to be made by the elves' (Sigfús

10 The Swedish words may be etymologically related, but if so only indirectly and very remotely, deriving from a common root meaning 'white'.

Blöndal 1920: 28) – the holes would be understood as passages between the worlds, cf. the Western Norwegian shortened form *alvòk* (Ross [1895] 1971: 4, 28) – and also in Danish traditions that associate the elves with wells and marshes (Feilberg 1886–1914, I: 242; Olrik 1918: 133–4). As we can see, the connection of elves with (bodies of) water is ancient and has been widespread until modern times. It is probable that this semantic element permitted the Swedish association of elves with rivers – and also the Danish association with alder trees, because alders usually grow near rivers or on other moist ground. It is improbable that the elves would have been associated with rivers and alder trees in Sweden and Denmark if there had been no 'watery' element in the elf traditions prior to this. Thus, these parts of the Swedish and Danish elf traditions may exemplify that clear 'corruptions' still have a semantic connection to earlier meanings, one that can usually be uncovered. This implies that the problem of 'corruptions' is smaller than sceptics frequently believe. In many cases it is, in fact, possible to account for the 'corruptions', too.

The recognition of late attestations of cognates does not imply a claim that all meanings really are ancient or original or that all meanings are equally valuable or useful. As mentioned, early attestations will normally (statistically) be closer to an essential, common meaning than late attestations, which means that we should regard the quality of late attestations as lower and put greater emphasis on early attestations. However, this does not imply that the lower-quality pieces of information are useless or harmful. All the meanings of cognate words should be taken seriously, placed in relation to each other and explained, because this is what will give a deeper understanding as more input into our calculations is simply better than less input. We are not in a position to reject information *a priori*.

A comparative approach confined to the reflections of one etymological root is not a new idea. A famous example of it is the linking of Old Norse *Týr* 'a certain (obscure) god' (<**Tīwaz*) and *tívar* m. pl. 'the gods', Latin *deus* 'a god', Ancient Greek *Zeús patēr* 'the father of the gods', and Sanskrit *Dyáuṣ Pitā* 'the god (father) of the sky', etc., which has formed the basis for reconstructions of an Indo-European supreme (sky) god **Dyēus ph_2tēr* 'the sky father' (Mallory and Adams 2006: 408 ff., and many others). Another famous example is the linking of Lithuanian *Perkūnas* and Old Russian *Perúnu* 'the thunder god', and Old Norse *Fjǫrgyn* (<**Per-*) 'the mother of the thunder god', and possibly Sanskrit *Parjánya* 'the god of storm and rain', which forms the basis for the reconstruction of an (North-West-) Indo-European **Perk^{w}unos* 'the god of thunder (and rain)'.[11] In these cases, the semantic elements are not assumed to have a

11 Mallory and Adams 2006: 409–10; Jakobson [1950] 1985 and [1970] 1985; Turville-Petre 1964: 97–8; de Vries 1962b: 126; Puhvel 1987: 226 f., 234.

connection just because they resemble each other (semantically) and belong to cultures that belong to the same language family (as in the Napolskikh example above). They are actually connected, with near certainty, through the formal side, namely: the word forms.

Still, these examples do not exemplify my idea, because they are produced by means of a formal, linguistic competence rather than a semantic one, and because they are heavily studied already. I want to draw attention to an unrealized potential, namely the clusters of cognate terms that are formally banal yet semantically rich. Because of the formal banality, such clusters of cognates have not been interesting for etymological studies, whose focus has been the *formal* reconstruction. The demand for formal banality implies that the candidates for study usually will be found within branches of a language family – like *gand(r)* in the Scandinavian languages and 'elf' in the Germanic languages – rather than across a whole language family. This again implies that the formal comparison will be less daring, because the elements compared will be closer to each other in time and space. In addition, the candidates for study will be more plentiful when it is sufficient that cognates be found within one language branch.

Some scholars are sceptical about the etymological principle itself because it only recognizes inheritance in isolation and ignores borrowing between languages and cultures. But this, too, is a misunderstanding. The 'contamination' caused by borrowing complicates the reconstructive work and reduces the number of cognates and thus the possible reconstructions. However, it does not make this kind of scholarly work impossible, nor does it make it worthless. Reconstructions like **Dyēus ph_2tēr* 'the sky father' etc. are still both possible and plausible, and they can even be assisted by loanword studies because ancient loans in other languages may represent 'petrifacts' from the proto-language that we are after. A famous example of this is Finnish *kuningas* 'a king', which helps reconstruct the Proto-Germanic form **kuningaz*. A study of the *jǫtnar* in Germanic traditions (pl., sg. above) would benefit from the borrowed Sami form of this word, *jiehtanas* (sg.) and its meanings (Kåven *et al.* 1995: 269; cf. Fellman [1830s] 1906: 102 f.; Qvigstad 1893: 202).

One objection to comparative reconstructions is that they can only be roughly placed in time and space. This is true but that should not count against them. It is useful that etymology can tell us that the Indo-Europeans knew cereals, livestock and metals, and that they probably believed in a 'sky father' **Dyēus ph_2tēr*, although it cannot tell us who the Indo-Europeans were or where and when they lived. I am also glad that we can reconstruct the essential meaning of **wikōn*, although the method that makes this possible cannot tell us where or for how long that meaning dominated or existed. If a method can tell us something, by getting more knowledge out of the limited sources

we have, we should appreciate this rather than reject it because it cannot tell us everything.

A related objection is that what we reconstruct probably never existed. This is also true, but again, it should not count against a comparative approach, because this objection would hit any theory of the past, regardless of approach. Our theories never match past reality completely; all we can do is attempt to formulate theories that seem to get closer than alternative theories. If this demand is met, the approach that brought us there is by definition acceptable.

For studies of past cultures, by far the most preferable situation would be to have plentiful, contemporary written sources from within the cultures we study. But, as we all know, this is hardly ever the position we find ourselves in. Instead, we are left to try to squeeze the most information out of the limited sources that we do have. In this toil, a variety of approaches is needed, and which one should be preferred in each case depends upon the problem in question. The semantic etymology approach outlined in this article is only applicable to a minority of problems, but in those relevant cases it may help expand our material with late attestations and thus increase our chances of understanding the past. An essential element in this approach, the principle of taking all the available information into account, has a wider application. While many scholars would in principle agree with this, we could all try harder to fulfil the potential that it opens up for us.

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Scandinavian folk legends and Icelandic sagas

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The article argues that Scandinavian folk legends recorded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often explain supernatural episodes in Icelandic sagas better than comparison with other medieval sagas. Saga scholars have in several cases come to the wrong conclusions from too narrow a focus on written texts contemporary with the sagas. The interest in supernatural motifs is a characteristic feature of the 'post-classical' *Íslendingasögur*. This is an important reason why they are usually seen as fundamentally different from the 'classical' *Íslendingasögur*, whose realism is linked to an origin in oral tradition that was perceived as essentially historical. The 'post-classical' sagas with their many fantastic motifs are in contrast seen as unhistorical, pure fiction, influenced primarily by written literature like *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. Sometimes this is certainly correct. But in many 'post-classical' *Íslendingasögur* such parallels are few and superficial. In the article some concrete examples from the sagas are given where late recorded legends seem to provide much better parallels than any contemporary saga text. The conclusion is that the time gap of *c.* 600 years should not prevent us from using these sources if they seem to be more conclusive than the contemporary ones. This conclusion also has consequences for the perception of *Íslendingasögur* in general. The view of the 'post-classical' saga as bookish fiction which emerged under the influence of the written *fornaldarsaga* is hardly sustainable. Nor is the contrast between the supernatural orientation and the realism of the classical saga evident. The stories in the later folk legends about encounters with the supernatural were also seen as basically true, and these stories were part of the image people had of a real past. There is reason to believe that this applied to many of the motifs of the 'post-classical' sagas as well.

In *Sturlunga saga* there is a fascinating story: On his way home from a fishing-trip a certain Guðmundr meets a large and mysterious stranger who calls himself Járngrímr. He carefully explains where he plans to go and what places he will visit: 'Upp í Hornskarp', sagði hann, 'ok þaðan til Akra ok þaðan vestr til Línakradals' ('Up to Hornskarp, he said, and from there west to Linakradalr'). Finally it is said that a murder was committed that evening at Hornskarp by a man called Glámr: 'Þat sama kveld var veginn á Hornskarpi sá maðr, er Geirr hét. Glámr svartmönungr vá hann, systur[sonr] hans' ('In the same evening the man called Geirr was killed in Hornskarp. Glámr svartmönungr killed him, his nephew; *Sturlunga saga* p. 441).

Jonna Louis-Jensen has recently linked this to a story in *Bǫglunga sǫgur*. There we find a story of a blacksmith in Norway who is visited by a mysterious stranger who after a while identifies himself as Óðinn. He asks the blacksmith to shoe his horse. The stranger mentions what places he has just come from and where he is going, namely to Sweden, 'ek ætla nú at fara austr í Svíaveldi' ('I now plan to go east to Sweden'), and the same evening to a place called Sparmǫrk, 'Austr í Sparmǫrk' ('East to Sparmörk'). After the conversation he leaves. Finally, it is said that the battle between King Sverker and Erik took place three days later in Sweden: 'Fjórum nóttum bǫrðusk þeir síðar í Leinum Sørkvir konungr ok Eiríkr konungr' ('Three days later they fought in Lena, King Sverker and King Erik'; *Soga um birkebeinar og baglar* p. 123).

Louis-Jensen's view is that the Járngrímr episode is influenced by the *Bǫglunga sǫgur* episode, and her aim is to use this relationship to support the idea that the mysterious man in *Sturlunga saga* is, in fact, Óðinn, just as in the *Bǫglunga sǫgur* episode (Louis-Jensen 2009: 260–3).

The marked similarity between the episodes – in Louis-Jensen's words: 'I begge tilfælde oplyser Odin-figuren over for sin samtalepartner hvor han agter sig hen, og I begge tilfælde sker der voldsomme begivenheder med dødsfald til følge umiddelbart efter samtalen' ('In both cases the Odin figure informs his interlocutor where he is heading, and in both cases violent events resulting in death take place immediately after the conversation', Louis-Jensen 2009: 262–3) – strongly indicates some sort of connection. But does there necessarily have to be an influence from one of the sagas on the other? Louis-Jensen seems to take for granted that the striking similarities must be due to literary influence between written texts.

But in C.-M. Bergstrand's collection of Swedish folk legends, *Bohuslänska sägner* (no. 3 in the collection), there is a legend recorded in the early twentieth century, which also recalls the stories above.

There a large and mysterious stranger asks a ferry-man to row him across a strait. It turns out to be the Devil, and he mentions the name of the place he is going to visit: 'Jag skall till Rastad och hålla bouppteckning' ('I shall go to Rastad and keep probate'). In the end it is said that two persons were hanged in this place the same night: 'På natten var de upphängda bägge två där' ('In the night they were hanged, both of them there'; *Bohuslänska sägner* 1947: 11–12). This legend exists in several versions in Swedish records from the early twentieth century (see also 1289:2 and 1609:2 in *Folktro och folksed på Värmlandsnäs* 1962: 12–14).

The fundamental elements are the same in all three stories. Exactly those elements that constitute the similarities between the episodes in *Sturlunga saga* and *Bǫglunga sǫgur* are also present in the Swedish folk legend:

- A man meets a mysterious stranger.
- He carefully explains where he is going and he mentions specific place-names from real geography (Hornskarp, Sweden, Sparmörk, Rastad).
- At the end of the episode, it is said that people have been killed in the place that the mysterious man was on his way to; in all cases it is understood that there is a link between the mysterious man's arrival there and the killing.

The Swedish legend shares some similarities only with the *Bǫglunga sǫgur* episode:

- The mysterious stranger comes to the man and asks him for a favour connected to his profession (ferry-man and blacksmith respectively).
- The mysterious man is explicitly identified with a powerful supernatural being, regarded as evil – the mightiest evil supernatural being (the Devil and Óðinn respectively).

The Swedish legend also shares one detail only with the *Sturlunga saga* episode:

- The mysterious stranger is explicitly described as large, 'en förfärligt stor och tung människa' ('a terribly big and heavy man'); 'maðr . . . mikill' ('a big man').

I find the Swedish folk legend so similar to the two saga episodes that I believe a connection between them is probable. Neither *Sturlunga saga* nor *Bǫglunga sǫgur* have been so influential that one of them is likely to be the direct source for the folk legend (although this is of course not entirely impossible). It seems much more plausible that it is independent of these two written works. As I see it, the Bohuslänian legend thus represents *one* version of an old and wide-spread story, and the two saga episodes represent two independent versions, which are 700 years earlier. If that assumption is correct, there may be no direct link between the written *Bǫglunga sǫgur* and the written *Sturlunga saga*. Both are, rather, based on the same oral folk legend that is also extant in Sweden in the twentieth century. This solution seems to me more likely than a literary connection. In any case, the possibility must be taken into consideration when discussing the relationship between *Bǫglunga sǫgur* and *Sturlunga saga*, although no scholars have, as far as I know, done so yet.[1] Instead, they

1 The editor of *Bǫglunga sǫgur*, Hallvard Magerøy, actually describes the story about Óðinn and the smith as 'ei folkesegn' ('a folk legend', Magerøy 1988: 154), and points to its presentation of the main character's name, home, and occupation, a feature which is said to be 'typisk for ei slik segn' ('typical for such legends'). Magerøy does obviously not mean that this story belongs to any known type of folk legends, since he in the same commentary does exactly the same thing as later Louis-Jensen, suggesting literary connections with other written sagas (in this case a quite different episode in *Sturlunga saga* [Magerøy 1988: 153], a parallel questioned, with good reason, by Louis-Jensen).

have focused exclusively on the possible parallels between written texts, and Jonna Louis-Jensen does not even consider the possibility of another sort of connection.

Are there more cases of parallels that could support the general idea of such a link between an Old Icelandic saga and a Scandinavian folk legend recorded in modern time?

1. The post-classical *Íslendingasögur*

During a year at Stofnun Árna Magnússonar in Reykjavík I examined the so-called post-classical *Íslendingasögur*. In particular, I studied their emphasis on supernatural motifs, which is usually described as their main peculiarity and as the most important feature that separates them from the classical *Íslendingasögur*.

The post-classical *Íslendingasögur* are usually considered bookish literature, pure fiction written by authors who invented their stories like modern novelists, instead of transmitting oral tradition as the classical saga writers are claimed to have done. Vésteinn Ólason provides an example of this when he talks about the 'elements of free invention' in the post-classical *Íslendingasögur* as one of their most peculiar features in contrast to the classical ones (1998: 21). They are usually claimed to use other written works as models rather than oral tradition. As their main sources *fornaldarsögur* are mentioned, but also *riddarasögur* and learned and continental literature (e.g. Sigurður Nordal 1953: 261, 268–9).

This alleged connection has primarily been used as the explanation of the episodes about supernatural beings. This *is* a feature that is prominent in both *fornaldarsögur* and post-classical *Íslendingasögur* and is much more rare and less important in the classical *Íslendingasögur*, which in turn appear to be more credible and seem to be transmitters of a genuine historical tradition while post-classical *Íslendingasögur* appear more fictitious – to us. Actually, the entire group of post-classical *Íslendingasögur* is usually claimed to have originated under the influence of a specific genre, namely the written *fornaldarsögur*.[2]

2 This view is clearly expressed by several scholars. Sigurður Nordal says about the family sagas from the time after 1300 that: 'de efterhaanden blev mindre realistiske,

The post-classical *Íslendingasögur* are thus seen as mainly bookish works which are not based on oral tradition, and this theory is due largely to their use of supernatural motifs.

But is this correct? During my year at Árnastofnun I eagerly searched for parallels and models in *fornaldarsögur* for the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*.

It is clear that there are post-classical *Íslendingasögur* which have quite close parallels in specific *fornaldarsögur* and certainly may have been based heavily on *fornaldarsögur*.[3] In many cases – probably most of them – however, no such close parallels can be found. Usually, I could not find any really convincing parallels in the *fornaldarsögur* to the supernatural episodes in post-classical *Íslendingasögur*. The similarity was found mainly in the *general* interest in encounters with Otherworld beings. Unfortunately, I could not identify any parallels in any other written literature from the Middle Ages either. I found it, in short, difficult to identify better sources or models.

At the end of the project, I began to have the feeling that I was looking in the wrong place. At that time, I started to take an interest in the folk legend material that is recorded much later in Iceland and has been published by Jón Árnason. I found in several cases significantly better parallels to episodes in the post-classical *Íslendingasögur* than the *fornaldarsögur* or *riddarasögur* usually considered could provide. Yet, as a comparativist historian of literature I still preferred identifiable literary connections between written sources, and I tended to explain the parallels I found as stemming from the influence of the written saga on the later folk legend.

But when I started to look at the Norwegian and Swedish legend material too, it became more problematic to maintain that attitude. Slowly, I have realized that written sagas from the fourteenth century and oral traditions recorded in the twentieth century in several cases are probably independent of each other even though they transmit essentially the same stories.

stærkere paavirket af de flittigt dyrkede oldtidssagaers smag' ('after some time they became less realistic, and more influenced by the much appreciated taste of the fornaldarsögur', Nordal 1953: 261). Jan de Vries also comments on the family sagas from the fourteenth century, saying that one of their typical features is that they: 'zeigen besonders stark den Einfluß der zur Vorherrschaft gelangten Fornaldarsaga' ('show particularly clearly the influence of the fornaldarsaga, which had become dominant', 1967: 529). Einar Ólafur Sveinsson describes one of the most typical features of the saga literature after 1300 as: 'the influence of Heroic Sagas on Family Sagas' (1958: 124–5).

3 One example is *Jǫkuls þáttr Búasonar* 47–59, where a specific *fornaldarsaga* episode (in *Hálfdanar saga Brǫnufóstra*, pp. 297–308) can be pointed out as a direct parallel and probable model.

2. *Bárðar saga*

I will start with *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*. It is a fairly typical post-classical *Íslendingasaga*. It is full of trolls and giants and un-dead mound dwellers; its whole story and plot are actually dominated by supernatural motifs, with encounters with the Otherworld. As usual, the standard explanation has been influences from written *fornaldarsögur* (e.g. Þórhallur Vilmundarson in the preface to the saga, p. lxxix).

One of these episodes, the story of Ingjaldr and Hetta, tells of the fisherman Ingjaldr. He gets advice from the troll-woman Hetta about the best fishing ground. She recites a verse for him listing the landmarks, which will show him the location of the best fishing ground:

Róa skaltu fjall Firða	You shall row past the mountain of fjords
fram á lög stirðan;	out on the troubled sea,
þar mun gaurr glitta,	there the cod will glitter,
ef þú villt Grímsmið hitta;	if you would find Grim's Bank.
þar skaltu þá liggja –	There you shall then lie at anchor.
Þórr er víss til Friggjar – ;	Thor has love for Frigg.
rói norpr inn nefskammi	Let the snub-nosed shiverer row
Nesit í Hrakhvammi.	along the headland in Hrakhvamm.
(*Bárðar saga*, pp. 124–5)	(Trans. Sarah M. Anderson)

At the designated site, Ingjaldr catches a huge amount of fish. The place-names in the stanza are all real.

There is no *fornaldarsaga* displaying the slightest resemblance to this episode, even though there are indeed many that feature troll-women. However, there is a close parallel in much later Norwegian records of a folk legend. In this folk legend, a fisherman meets a supernatural being who gives him advice on how to find the best fishing ground. The advice is given by reciting a verse listing the landmarks that will show him the fishing ground. For example:

Svarte bal i Sømnes skal	[The skerry] Svarte bard in the cleft above Sømnes
og Svingel i Søli rot.	and [the skerry] Svingel against the edge of [the island] Søla.
Det var mean.	That were the bearings.[4]
(After Strompdal 1939: 49)	

4 The translation follows the explanation in Hovda 1961: 233–4.

Or in another variant of the legend: 'Han skulde ro til han fekk Randåsen over Bandåsen og Siggjå over Sira, der var det hove i hove og romp i romp' ('He should row until he had Randåsen over Bandåsen and Siggjå over Sira, there was head to head and tail to tail'; text from Nauthella s.d.). At these locations the fishermen then catch enormous amounts of fish.

This folk legend exists in many variants in several parts of Norway and it is always real, local, landmarks and fishing grounds that are referred to. The parallel with the Norwegian legend is marked, and a connection seems irrefutable here. Since it is hardly probable that the Icelandic *Bárðar saga* has given rise to the Norwegian legends, we here have a reasonably secure example of how a post-classical *Íslendingasaga* in a typical episode describing an encounter with the Otherworld is based on a story from oral tradition, a legend that independently of this has been transmitted in oral tradition and then recorded in Norway in the twentieth century.

Certainly, earlier scholars have seen that *miðavísur* is a phenomenon that is also known from later times. However, I think it is more important to stress that the entire episode where the stanza in *Bárðar saga* is included, has parallels in much later recorded legends. It is thus the *legend* which is common to *Bárðar saga* and the Norwegian folk tradition of the twentieth century – not only the stanza type.[5]

The conclusion is that we have here an old tradition which has survived relatively unchanged in terms of the key elements in the story during at least 600 years. This legend is present in both *Bárðar saga*, written in the fourteenth century, and in a legend recorded in the twentieth century. There are certainly episodes in *Bárðar saga* which have a closer resemblance to the type of stories we meet in the *fornaldarsögur*. But I wish to argue that the influence from oral tradition of folk legends is generally more important for *Bárðar saga* and its supernatural motifs than influences from written *fornaldarsögur*.

3. *Bergbúa þáttr*

Bergbúa þáttr is one of the least-known works categorized as *Íslendingasögur*. Its content is this: A man and his *húskarl* are travelling to the church far from home. In the evening they are surprised by a snowstorm. They get lost in the darkness and storm and take shelter in a cave, but do not go far into it. They say prayers to God. They hear sounds from inside the cave and see two eyes

5 It should, nonetheless, be noted that Þórhallur Vilmundarson in the preface in the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition correctly points to similarities with Norwegian and Faroese legends in this case (1991: lxxv).

shining but do not see the creature itself. The *húskarl*, but not his master, becomes very afraid. Then they hear a voice reciting a long poem three times, but still they do not see anybody. The poem shows that it is a *bergálfr*, a sort of troll who lives in the mountain. In the morning they set out and arrive at the church. Finally, it is said that the *húskarl* died one year after the event (*Bergbúa þáttr*, pp. 441–50).

This saga too is consistently included among the 'post-classical' *Íslendingasögur*. Its entire contents is about the encounter with an Otherworld being, a *bergbúi*, a troll. Neither in this case are there any real parallels in any *fornaldarsögur*, although these abound with trolls.

Bergbúa þáttr has, regarding the basic character of the story, much in common with many folk legends in the depiction of the encounter with the Otherworld. It all takes place in the vicinity of familiar places and not in fantasy places. It mentions exact place-names from the real environment. The disease that later follows the encounter with the supernatural is a typical feature in a lot of folk legends about encounters with Otherworld beings. The fact that the encounter takes place under bad perceptual conditions (storm, darkness) is worth mentioning; the men only hear the Otherworld being, but never see him nor come close to him and there is no real interaction. This recalls the tendency in especially memorates, and it is something very different from the tendency in the adventure-like encounters with trolls and giants in the *fornaldarsögur*.

This means that this saga and its story about an encounter with a supernatural being has a lot of features typical of folk legends. These are all features that are not at all typical of the *fornaldarsögur's* descriptions of encounters with the Otherworld.

But let us now turn to an Icelandic legend recorded in the nineteenth century and included in Jón Árnason's collection. Some fishermen are on a journey south. They are suddenly surprised by a storm and get lost. They take shelter in a cave. There they discuss if they should recite Andrarímur or Hallgrímsrímur. They hear a voice from the darkness inside the cave without seeing the speaker, and the voice says that he wants to hear Andrarímur. They recite Andarímur. Then they hear the voice again saying that his wife wants to hear Hallgrímsrímur but he does not. They sing hymns, Hallgrímssálmar. Afterwards, the voice says that he is unhappy about the hymns, but his wife is happy. They are riven porridge without seeing the giver; all of them eat except one who is very afraid. In the morning they continue their journey and come to settled areas. Finally, the narrator mentions the general opinion that it was a troll ('tröll') in the cave (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýr*, p. 186, no. 196).

There are obvious similarities between these two stories:

- Some men on a long journey are taken by surprise by a storm in the mountains.
- They get lost and do not know where they are.
- They therefore take shelter in a cave.
- It is very dark in the cave.
- They hear a voice speaking from within the cave's darkness, but they never see the speaker.
- It turns out later that the voice belongs to a troll/*bergálfr*.
- The verbal communication between the travellers and the troll consists primarily of the recital of long poems.
- The travellers perform religious texts in the cave (prayers and hymns respectively).
- One, but only one, of the men shows fear of the supernatural, although it is not particularly threatening.
- They spend the night in the cave.
- In the morning the travellers leave and come to inhabited places.

The total lack of similarities between *Bergbúa þáttr* and *fornaldarsögur* strongly indicates that *Bergbúa þáttr's* source was not a written *fornaldarsaga*. We can hardly exclude the possibility that the legend in Jón Árnason's collection is influenced by the written saga. But nothing indicates that this saga was influential and well-known, and the most likely option would still be that the nineteenth-century legend and *Bergbúa þáttr* are independent versions of the same legend from oral tradition.

4. Discussion

What general conclusions can we draw from these parallels? It cannot be denied that several scholars (even in such a hardcore book-prose work like *Íslenzk fornrit*) sometimes refer to folklore tradition in connection with isolated phenomena in the sagas. But I want to emphasize that whole stories, whole episodes of the *Íslendingasögur*, have parallels in late recorded folk legends and that the entire saga *episodes* thus would be based on the same stories that we have in the late recorded legends. This is a thought which has hardly been generally present during most of the twentieth century, since the philologists seem to have regarded 700 years as too long for a quite fixed story to live in the oral tradition.

The fundamental reason for arguing in favour of the late recorded legends in these cases – and in many other cases of post-classical *Íslendingasögur* – is that these parallels are so much closer than what one can find in the traditionally suggested models, namely written *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. The conclusion should not be overstated; there are, as mentioned, cases where a connection of some kind with the *fornaldarsögur* seems likely. Sometimes these connections probably go back to an oral stage (of 'folktale' like stories of a *fornaldarsaga* kind), but sometimes there is almost certainly a literary connection (that is, between written texts). In general, however, the *fornaldarsögur* do not exhibit striking similarities on the very point where they are supposed to exercise their influence on the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, namely the encounters with the supernatural. Similarly, usually no other written literature from the time of the *Íslendingasögur* can show real parallels to post-classical *Íslendingasögur* in these cases. But folk legends often exhibit striking similarities to post-classical *Íslendingasögur* exactly in the depiction of encounters with the Otherworld.

I believe that my parallels and the conclusions I draw from them have consequences for how we should regard the so-called post-classical *Íslendingasögur* and their special character.

Their interest in supernatural motifs has not been borrowed from *fornaldarsögur* or from written literature in general. That interest is instead rooted in a living oral folk legend tradition, which is largely separate from and independent of both the written *fornaldarsögur* and the more folktale-like adventurous stories that lie behind them. It follows from this that the post-classical *Íslendingasögur* are not so unequivocally a purely literary, bookish, phenomenon as is usually claimed. Even this saga type is, at least to a high degree, based on tradition, just like the classical *Íslendingasögur*, and does thus not differ fundamentally from them on this point.

5. Sage and Märchen

In folkloristic theory there is an important distinction between folk legend and folktale (*Sage* and *Märchen* in German), which seems useful here.

Both folktale and legend are deeply concerned with people's encounters with supernatural beings, beings from the Otherworld, but in many ways the differences between the two categories are more important. One difference is that the legend is often tied to specific locations in the narrator's vicinity, while the folktale is set in a diffuse distant location. The Swiss folklorist Max Lüthi has pointed out that a standard feature of the legend is that people meet the Otherworld in the vicinity, close to home, while people in the folktale often

have to travel far to get to the Otherworld. Lüthi has also argued that the legend in its depiction of the encounter with the Otherworld is two-dimensional, while the folktale is one-dimensional. In the legend, there is a distance to the Otherworld in the form of man's fear of the Other, his wonder and doubt. In the folktale, by contrast, the Other is obvious and raises no wonder or fear (Lüthi 1992: 8, 10, 12; 1962: 27, 29).

Regarding all of these points, the episodes of encounters with the Otherworld in our two post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, *Bárðar saga* and *Bergbúa þáttr*, conform to the basic peculiarities of the legend. On the other hand, these peculiarities are not present in most episodes about encounters with the Otherworld of *fornaldarsögur* or *riddarasögur*. There, on the contrary, we have many of the characteristics of the folktale. This recalls my earlier conclusion that the episodes in *Bergbúa þáttr* and *Bárðar saga* discussed above can be described as legends, and this in basically the same sense as the legends that are recorded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Another of the differences is that the legend was regarded as fundamentally *true*, while the folktale was not perceived as true but as pure 'entertainment', that is: not as history. This does not at all mean that the legend really *was* true, but that it generally was told with that claim and appears to have been perceived as such by its intended audience. I have pointed out exactly legends as a fundamental element of at least two post-classical *Íslendingasögur*. They are based on oral tradition rather than on written *fornaldarsögur* (and other similar oral narratives) of a folktale kind. In the light of Lüthi's theories, this might also indicate that these stories of the post-classical *Íslendingasögur* were perceived as basically true, perceived as history rather than fiction.

This means that a cornerstone of the usual description of post-classical *Íslendingasögur* and their peculiarity – that they unlike the classical *Íslendingasögur* are made-up fiction without background in the oral tradition – is quite unlikely. Sagas like *Bárðar saga* and *Bergbúa þáttr* do certainly not present historical truth, and to us they seem anything but credible. But this holds true for most of the folk legends from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries too, with all their stories about encounters with Otherworld beings. In terms of provable fact, there is a substantial difference between what is true and what is perceived to be true.

My conclusions about the importance of the folk legends for at least the post-classical *Íslendingasögur* discussed here thus provide support for the idea that they also transmit oral tradition, that they are not 'pure fiction', 'made up' stories of a modern kind.

6. Closing

To sum up, my conclusions concern two specific issues:

1. *Methodological*: late sources often give more information than literate-comparative (*rittengsl*) ones do – we have the same legends in Old Norse sagas and in late records from the nineteenth century.
2. *Literary-historical*: the interest in supernatural motifs in several post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, and possibly post-classical *Íslendingasögur* as a phenomenon, cannot in general be explained by means of the written *fornaldarsögur*, but has a different, oral, tradition, a tradition of the folk legend, which was perceived as true, distinct from the more folktale-like *fornaldarsögur*, which were perceived as pure fiction. Several post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, probably most of them, are, as are the classical *Íslendingasögur*, generally based on oral tradition.

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Guldgubber and retrospective methods

RUDOLF SIMEK

The Iron Age Scandinavian *guldgubber* present us with a significant corpus of iconographic material, despite the fact that it is highly contested what these minute depictions actually show. The material – gold foil – makes it clear that the *guldgubber* played a role in either the cult or the representation of the social elite – or both. As we lack both comparative texts and iconographic sources to explain the meaning of the detailed pictures stamped on gold foil in Southern Scandinavia during this period, we have to revert to retrospective methods in any attempt at unravelling their function and symbolism. The present paper thus tries to establish a link between the preliterate set of information gleaned from the *guldgubber* and contemporary sources with religious and law texts from later periods to see if any plausible explanation can be found for the symbols and gestures stressed on the *guldgubber*.

The so-called *guldgubber*, little gold foil figures found in many places of Scandinavia, but not outside, now furnish the largest corpus of Migration Age iconographic depictions by a large margin. Numbers are (including fragments) close to 3500 such pictures, of which 2500 have been found on Bornholm alone. These finds from Bornholm represent over 425 out of the 600 dies known, with the result that three quarters of the iconographic samples come from a very small geographical area and thus may not be very representative.

However, despite the concentration on Bornholm and the surrounding areas of Denmark (Uppåkra in Scania and Gudme on Fyn yielding large finds too), the *guldgubber* have been found in a far wider geographical area, including all of Denmark, Sweden south of and including Uppland, and Norway as far north as Borg on the Lofoten Islands.

As *c.* 98 per cent of the *guldgubber*, 'which range in size from 4 cm down to 5–6 mm, are made of thin gold foil of varying purity (some mixed with copper and even a few of almost pure silver)' (Watt 2002: 83), have been stamped into metal foil, with only a small group being cut out of somewhat thicker foil, the finds of some dies with which the *guldgubber* were produced are of additional importance beyond the technical aspect: 'Six bronze stamps for guldgubber

have been found at two localities on Bornholm (one of them close to Sorte Muld), two at Uppåkra in Skåne and two on Sjælland' (Watt 1999b: 180, 183; 2002: 84). These localities can thus be assumed to have served as production areas for many, if not all, *guldgubber*.

At first sight those *guldgubber* stamped into metal foil seem to have only a limited inventory of iconography: men, predominantly with a staff, form the vast majority of the imprints, followed by a couple shown in profile and facing each other, followed by a much smaller number of women shown frontally (as opposed to men and couples). A closer analysis, however, show that despite the minute size of the *guldgubber* the details show a much richer variety.

Firstly, there really are four major categories of anthropomorphic images on *guldgubber*: male, female, *doublegubber* and what may be termed *wraiths* (or simply dead persons). The male figures fall into two main categories: on the one hand the staff bearers, who are normally dressed in a richly decorated kaftan. On the other hand the cupbearers holding a (glass)vessel of the *Sturzbecher* type and also richly dressed. The third group shows men, dressed in varying styles, either with a variety of cryptic attributes, or without any attributes or gestures.

There are, possibly due to the much smaller numbers, no such major categories for the distinction of women on the *guldgubber*. There are women who bear a kind of drinking vessel, which might be a horn or beaker, but there are also women who do not have any attributes whatsoever. They are dressed in a wide variety of styles from very rich to very simple, but all in a common Scandinavian dress style still found in Viking Age iconography (see below). The only common item is the *Irish-ribbon-knot* hairstyle which all of them seem to have.

The so-called *doublegubber* have as their common feature a couple always facing each other and having some sort of physical contact, either in an embrace or by holding on to each other. Their dress style can vary widely in detail and decoration.

A category of the *guldgubber* not identified before the studies of the present author (Simek 2001, 2003b; Simek and Rathke 2006a, 2006b) as a separate group are the *wraiths* or the dead. The dominant feature of all *guldgubber* belonging to this category is that they apparently do not wear clothing, or if so, then only extremely schematically (like a belt only). The eyes are mostly exaggerated in size despite an otherwise very simple iconographic representation, or are, like all other facial features, simply missing. The most striking detail is that they have absolutely no indication as to their gender. The hands are always shown very clearly and are normally greatly exaggerated in size; in about half the cases the arms are shown parallel to the body, the hands are



Fig. 1. Three so-called wraiths. The one on the left has exaggerated hands and rudimental facial structures. The middle one is a *gubbe* formerly addressed as a 'dancer' and seems to be standing on tiptoe. Bornholm's Museum, photos by Sharon Ratke.

unnaturally large and are held with the palm to the viewer, the thumb thus stretched outward. Their feet are normally pointing to one side with the tips stretched out, as if on tiptoe or lying down (see fig. 1). The only attribute that occurs on this type of *gubber* is very rarely a collar (*torques*) made from a tiny separate strip of gold material or imprinted.

Earlier interpretations have seen the *guldgubber* mainly as an expression of Migration Age religious practices in Scandinavia and tended to interpret the figures on the foil pictures predominantly as gods. Several theories connected the figures and their attributes with mythological beings known from later sources of Germanic mythology, thus trying to link the iconographical sources of the *gubber* and the learned literary sources of the Middle Ages.

However, we have no direct means of identifying the persons depicted on *guldgubber* with gods, and the only way of coming closer to an identification of their personel is by very close iconographic analysis. The only person to have undertaken such an analysis to date is Margarete Watt, who has very sensibly refrained from trying to identify the depicted persons with either historical or mythological entities.

Only a systematic comparison of the various single elements with contemporary iconographical and literary sources and, failing this, later iconographic parallels can lead to more reliable results.

The hairstyle and clothing, especially of the female figures, have already been investigated in some detail (Simek 2000: 468–79; 2002: 93–124; Munksgaard 1990: 97–100), and so have the interesting brachial gestures of the figures on the *guldgubber* (Watt 1999a: 181 f.; Simek 2000: 468–79; 2002: 93–124). Other attributes have received much less attention; these include, for the male figures, the glass beaker of the *Sturzbecher*-type, the staff (or lance/scepter?), the ring, the strange paddle-shaped object, in rare cases swords and in only one known instance a type of crown or rather diadem. With the female figures, the drinking-horn held by the women has attracted attention, otherwise only the iconographically exaggerated and thus stressed fibulae and necklaces. On the *doublegubber*, attributes play only a minor role.

The closer analyses of the brachial gestures of the *doublegubber* have resulted in three different types:

1. The male is grasping the female by her hip or at least puts his hand on her hip; in a few cases he puts his hand against her cheek or chin.
2. The woman grasps the man by his wrist.
3. The man and the woman are holding or hugging each other.

The position of the couple reminds us at first sight of a love scene, but the highly formalized gestures point more plausibly to a marriage scene. If we have a look at the Germanic types of legal marriages (preserved in early German laws), we see that there are at least three different types: The first is the common *munt* marriage, where the woman is handed over from the *munt* of her father into the *munt* of her husband, normally confirmed by both sides through some material arrangement. The second one is the so called *Friedel*-marriage, where man and woman are allowed to live together without a formal contract – it is more or less a love marriage. The third type is a sub-form of the so-called *Friedel*-marriage, in which women (normally widows) are allowed to choose their husbands without the consent of a man wielding the *munt* over them, and at the same the woman can keep her property without loosing her legal status even if she marries below her rank. However, in this type of marriage she seems to have forfeited some of her inheritance rights, unless she is a widow with extended inheritance rights (Meissner 1939: 11, §17, p. 209).

The first category of iconographic depictions, where the man obviously holds the woman in some way or touches her with his hand, while she remains static and does not show any gesture whatsoever, might be identified with the standard *munt* marriage (Simek and Rathke 2006a). The reason for this interpretation is that the meaning of Old High German *munt* was 'hand, protection', Old Norse *mund* 'hand, guardian', Old Norse *mundr* 'bridal gift;

dowry', and that the protection and tutelage provided by formal marriage may have been depicted on the *gubber* by the somewhat exaggerated hand being protectively extended towards the female.

The second category, where the woman in some way grasps the man's wrist nearest to the viewer, may be connected with that particular sub-type of the medieval form of *Friedel*-marriage, namely the 'widow' marriage, the reason being that the female here is obviously the active part and she may be choosing him rather than the other way round.

The third category seems to show the marriage between two equal and consenting partners without the formal ritual of conference of the *munt*; this type of marriage would be typical for love matches and was perfectly legal, although normally without dynastic consequences; after the Christianisation, this type of marriage was not considered fully legal by the Church or at least not of equal legal standing, but it was nevertheless quite common. Medieval manuscripts show the distinction between this *Friedel*-marriage and the formal arranged marriage iconographically by hugging and embracing in the first case and the formal way of joining the partners' hands by a priest in the second case (Ebel *et al.* 1988: 171).

The pictures of *wraiths* or dead people show two kinds of gestures that have not been discussed in previous publications to any extent but that all have one thing in common, namely that their medieval iconographic counterparts are both identified as gestures of refusal and incapability.

One of them is by far more common on the *guldgubber*, namely the outstretched arms parallel to the body with palms forward and with a greatly exaggerated size of hands. The other, more common in medieval usage, is a person clutching his right wrist with his left hand; for this gesture we have only three examples on *gubber*. For a further related gesture of refusal, namely the arms crossed on the chest, the *gubber* provide only a single imprint from Bornholm.

The large group of *guldgubber wraiths* shown with large hands turned palm forward are typical for Bornholm. They have so far escaped scholarly notice as a separate group and have partly (and totally wrongly, in my opinion) been identified as dancers (Holmqvist 1961); the few examples published (Watt 1999a: 180) have been explained as dancers mainly on the grounds of the position of the feet, which makes it seem as if the figures are standing on tiptoe. There is, however, no indication of movement in these depictions and the stiffness of the posture as well as the lack of facial features (blindness?) speaks another language.

This type of posture is unknown in contemporary material and can only be explained by medieval parallels. In medieval iconography, parallel arms and

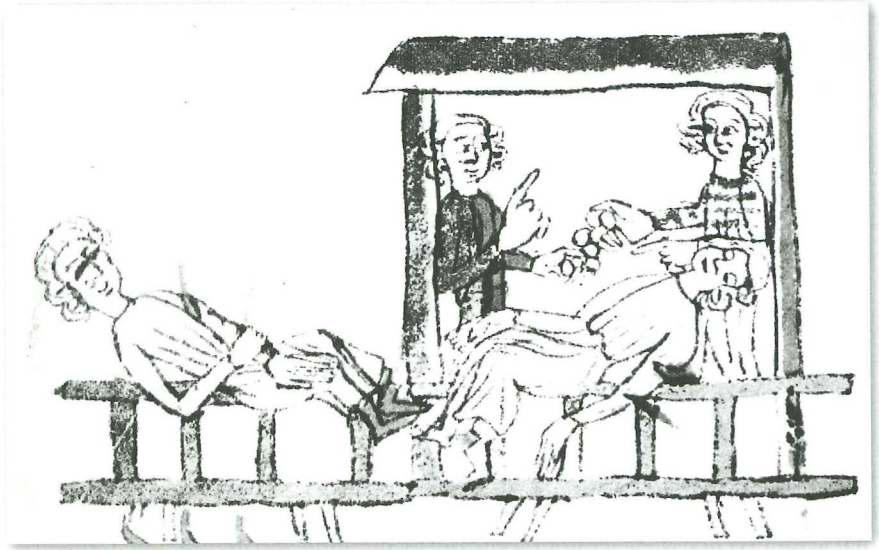

Fig. 2. Two gestures of incapacity from the Heidelberg MS of the Middle High German *Sachsenspiegel*.

flat palms are found in two different contexts, namely as a sign of incapacity due to death on the one hand and as a gesture of refusal on the other hand. Both types of gestures are found in legal texts and should therefore be seen to have predominantly legal relevance. The closest parallel to this posture on the *guldgubber* can be found in the illustrations of the Heidelberg manuscript of the *Sachsenspiegel*, where dead persons are presented in that posture throughout (see fig. 2). If we accept this as a parallel, the first consequence for the *gubber* will be that we should view the *wraiths* in a horizontal position rather than upright; they are not only depicted as reclining, but also with their palms upward, naked and without detailed facial features which makes an interpretation of them as dead persons by far the most likely and it explains the posture of the feet as well. It is natural that dead persons are shown with gestures of refusal or incapability. The other, less common, gesture of incapacity found on the *guldgubber*, namely the clutching of one wrist with the other hand, is in medieval iconography usually connected not with dead people but with severely injured ones, as shown in the *Sachsenspiegel*. In the manuscript illustrations of the *Sachsenspiegel* it signifies refusal of all kinds, both unwillingness and incapability of fulfilling a task. Since in medieval iconography both types of gestures of incapacity are very common and absolutely clear in their meaning, it seems likely that such an emphasis on the relevant iconographic details must point to a similar meaning on the Merovingian Age gold foil pictures.

This may be the stage at which to touch upon the relevance of the *guldgubber* – and their possible connections – as an example for retrospective methods, and this may here be exemplified by a single instance, namely the depiction of women on both those *gubber* showing them alone and frontally as well as on the *doublegubber*. Throughout and without a single exception, they are depicted with their hair combed back, tied into the *Irish ribbon knot* and worn long. Their clothes consist of a floor length shirt, a dress of similar length and one of two types of cape-like coat: either ending parallel to the floor or above knee-length, the other type much shorter and obviously made up of a triangular piece of cloth and ending in a singe point low at the back. The only two types of jewellery ever shown – but never together – are either a *rygknop*-fibula worn in front of the neck (obviously holding together the coat), sometimes of enormous size or iconographically exaggerated, or a triple or even quadruple pectoral chain of beads, pearls or even hollow baubles made from precious metals. It can be excluded from the way the beads are strung that the pectoral is made up of bracteates as has been claimed by Karl Hauck (1998) and others in his wake. The only attributes ever found on *guldgubber* depicting females are horns or beakers.

This highly standardised image of women – variants being found only in the decorations of the dress and coat and the actual length of hair – conforms to a very high degree with all other images of Scandinavian women from the seventh to the eleventh centuries: picture stones, rune stones, wood carvings, Viking Age textiles, metal brooches and pendants found in graves all testify to the fact that (upper class?) women's clothes, hair-style and typical attributes hardly changed at all between the Migration Age and the post-Viking Early Middle Ages. They survived the political changes at the advent of the Viking Age, the Scandinavian state-formations that marked the end of the Viking Age and the Christianisation at different points of time in different areas. And as it can be ruled out from context that all the depictions of women actually show the same goddess,[1] we can indeed assume that women's style was conservative in the extreme and survived at least half a millennium virtually unchanged.[2]

If even the outer appearance of women in Scandinavia – and we have far less material for men to argue the same with certainty – remained so conservative, it is very likely that gestures in an area as notoriously conservative as law

1 Such a thing has been absurdly claimed by Näsström 1998.

2 This allows us, by the way, an insight into the recently found minute figure from Lejre, seated in a high chair accompanied by two birds and therefore frequently but wrongly called Odin: the figure wears a cap over combed-back hair, cape, floor length dress and a quadruple pectoral and is thus clearly marked as female

remained much unchanged over the centuries as well. The laws were adapted to Christianity, no doubt, but the underlying principles in inheritance laws, marriage laws, and even *wergild* payments remained much the same. The external signs of legal actions, the symbols, acts and gestures may have been even more conservative. Thus it seems legitimate to relate enigmatic gestures shown on *guldgubber* to perfectly lucid gestures in medieval manuscripts – and thus shed light on the meaning of Migration Age iconographic sources.

If I have not talked about religion, and certainly not about mythology, it is because I believe that the religious changes of the Viking Age and conversion period make it more difficult to bridge the gap between Migration Age and Middle Ages in the field of religion. But if we can show that legal customs have retained their meanings and their symbols, we may by further research even reach the stage where we might relate these symbols and gestures, with a fuller understanding of a wider range of them, to religious customs as well and thus arrive at a better understanding of pre-Christian religion.

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Retrospective methods in dating post-medieval rigmarole-verses from the North Atlantic

YELENA SESSELJA HELGADÓTTIR

Post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* were not systematically documented until the mid-nineteenth century. They share much with other North Atlantic and continental Scandinavian rigmaroles, however, which indicates that most of these verses must have migrated to Iceland before 1500. Direct textual parallels between certain post-medieval *þulur* and Old Icelandic *þulur* – and other genres of poetry – highlight a continuity between the respective traditions and serve to anchor these and potentially other post-medieval rigmarole-verses in Old Icelandic literature. At the same time, the roots of post-medieval *þulur* do not appear to be found in Old Icelandic *þulur* alone; they may draw from folk poetic traditions that thrived alongside more literary *þulur* during the Middle Ages. While there are pros and cons to using comparative and retrospective methods to explore the roots of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*, these methods can nonetheless shed new light on North Atlantic rigmarole traditions and their narratives.[1]

The general claim of this study is that it is technically possible to anchor post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*[2] in the Old Icelandic literature of the thirteenth century and at the same time posit the existence of an Old Icelandic tradition of popular rigmarole-verses, of which almost nothing was written down. The term *anchoring*, as it is used in this article, implies demonstrating that at least

1 I am grateful to Eldar Heide, Karen Bek-Pedersen, Margaret Cormack and Katelin Parsons, as well as to the participants of the Retrospective Methods Network seminar in Bergen (September 2010), for their useful comments.

2 Old Icelandic *þulur* (sing. *þula*) are skaldic lists of poetic synonyms (*heiti*) in metrical form. Post-medieval *þulur* are folk lists/sequences of *heiti* and other names, motifs and/or narrative episodes in very free metrical form (see section 1). While the word *þulur* is used to describe both Old Icelandic and post-medieval Icelandic verses, this does not in and of itself prove a direct continuum between older and younger traditions. In the context of this article, the term should be understood as referring to the post-medieval genre unless otherwise stated.

some roots of the younger poetic tradition (post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*) can be traced back to the older one (Old Icelandic *þulur* from the thirteenth century or even earlier); showing the continuity of the genres of Old Icelandic *þulur* and post-medieval Icelandic ones – without claiming that these genres are identical – by establishing connections between abundant later evidence in post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and scanter early evidence in Old Icelandic ones. Old Icelandic *þulur* thus function as an *anchor* for the post-medieval ones.

Questions concerning application of retrospective methods in this context include:

a. How extensive should Old Icelandic evidence (e.g. textual parallels) be, and how close should it stand to the post-medieval rigmaroles to be used as an anchor? (See sections 2 and 3)
b. How far back is it possible – and sensible – to stretch the dating of those rigmaroles, which do not have Old Icelandic parallels that have been preserved, but which belong to the same post-medieval tradition as the rigmaroles anchored in the Old Icelandic literature? (See section 3)
c. Some rigmaroles contain mainly lists of *heiti*[3], others have narrative elements. To what extent is it possible to reconstruct narratives? (See section 4)

In this article, which discusses advantages and limitations of retrospective reasoning, the emphasis is on the following postulates of the general claim set forth above:

1. The similarity of genre and compositional principles of Old Icelandic *þulur* and post-medieval Icelandic ones, together with occasional – though not numerous – textual parallels, provides a clear analogy, anchoring post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* in Old Icelandic ones. (See section 2)
2. It should be possible to postulate old roots even for verses that do not have direct Old Icelandic parallels on the basis of the dense web of textual interrelations between most post-medieval Icelandic and other post-medieval Scandinavian rigmarole-verses. This could be achieved by combining comparative and retrospective methods.[4] (See section 3)

3 The world *heiti* means 'name' in a very broad way. In skaldic verse (and some later Icelandic poetry), *heiti* is a 'poetic synonym, an alternative and often descriptive term or name for a frequently-occurring object or person' (Gade 2009: xli).

4 For a concise overview of the use of retrospective methods and criteria for validating late evidence, see Heide 2009.

3. It is possible to reconstruct if not exact narratives, then notions of the narratives, that is, basic concepts of narratives and their outlines. (See section 4)

1. Icelandic post-medieval *þulur* and similar Scandinavian rigmarole-verses

Icelandic post-medieval folk-rhymes called *þulur* are relatively short (usually less than 100 lines), fragmentary, intersecting, ever-changing sequences in very free poetic form, which are mainly chanted or declaimed. They may include narrative episodes (which often do not, however, form a coherent story), lyrical motifs, and lists of different names: names of people, domestic animals, months, and so forth (see examples below). Some of them are still recited or sung for children. They are closely related to the Faroese tradition of post-medieval verses called *skjaldur* and to some post-medieval continental Scandinavian *rim* or *remser*; such verses are here referred to as *rigmaroles*.[5]

Distinctive features of post-medieval *þulur* and *skjaldur* include:

- Enumeration of names and/or short narrative elements, organized by semantic and phonetic similarity (see Yelena Yershova 2003).
- Substantial borrowing and accommodation of motifs drawn from a wide range of literature, including other Icelandic and Faroese genres (such as *sagnadansar* and *rímur*) and kindred poetry from continental Scandinavia.
- A dense web of textual interrelations between most Icelandic post-medieval rigmaroles, along with many Faroese, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and some Shetland ones (cf. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2008 and 2010).

The first written sources documenting post-medieval *þulur* in Iceland are from the seventeenth century when a few of these verses were copied down by amateur and occasional folklore collectors; the first examples of *skjaldur* are younger still. The systematic collection of *skjaldur*, post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and comparable continental Scandinavian material only started in the middle of the nineteenth century.

My material in this study consists mainly of so called *Grýluþulur* and short verses, both medieval and from later times, associated with Grýla (and

5 The word *rigmarole(s)* is not used in this sense in modern English. However, Jakob Jakobsen ([1928] 1985: xcv, ci) uses it to describe both a post-medieval Icelandic *þula* and some comparable Shetland verses.

kindred ogres) all over Scandinavia, as well as of so called *kúaþulur* (*þulur* of cows) from *Snorra-Edda* and post-medieval Scandinavian sources.

2. Anchoring post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* in Old Icelandic literature

This section deals with finding the roots of the post-medieval tradition of *þulur* in Old Icelandic literature and with dating *þulur* using 'traditional' methods and retrospective ones. One of the most urgent questions in this context is how extensive Old Icelandic evidence should be and how close it should stand to the post-medieval rigmaroles to be used as an anchor.

The fourteenth century

Post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* are clearly not a seventeenth-century innovation. One of the key sources for dating *þulur* is the poem *Grettisfærsla*, found in a manuscript of *Grettis saga*, AM 556a 4to (ff. 52r–53r) from the fifteenth century; the poem itself is believed to date back to the fourteenth century (Ólafur Halldórsson [1960] 1990: 20, 37–41, 50; cf. Heslop 2006 and 2010). According to the saga, *Grettisfærsla* was composed by the inhabitants of Ísafjörður when they caught Grettir and discussed his fate, and later on people added to the poem 'many comical words'. Ólafur Halldórsson ([1960] 1990) has shown that a number of Icelandic *þulur* from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrate close textual parallels with several parts of *Grettisfærsla*. Thus, the genre of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* can be anchored at least as far back as the fourteenth century.

Textual evidence and the number and diversity of redactions of *þulur* and *skjaldur*, together with their wide distribution, support this anchoring and suggest that the *þulur* tradition must have been active at least throughout the fourteenth–nineteenth centuries (and the greater part of the twentieth century). Jón Samsonarson considered the distribution of rigmaroles in different Scandinavian countries and came to the conclusion that those post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* that are kindred to Norwegian or Faroese rigmaroles are at least from the pre-Reformation times. After the Reformation in 1550, the communications between Iceland, on the one hand, and Norway and Faroe, on the other, decreased considerably and Danish influence became much stronger (Jón Samsonarson 1979: 173, cf. 155, and 1975: 427–428).

In his comprehensive study of *sagnadansar*, Vésteinn Ólason shifts the date of the breakdown of communications between Iceland and Norway still further back to the year 1530 and concludes that '… a considerable number of the ballads preserved in Iceland were imported from Norway or Faroe no later than about or a little after 1500' (Vésteinn Ólason 1982: 109). The migration

conditions were supposedly quite similar for ballads and rigmaroles, which makes this conclusion also applicable to post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*. Since those *þulur* that presumably came to Iceland from Norway and the Faroe Islands constitute a considerable part of all post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* (Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2008), migration of rigmaroles must have been taking place during the fifteenth century and probably occurred in the fourteenth century as well. Thus, dating with more 'traditional' methods brings us to the time period suggested by the anchoring of the post-medieval *þulur* in *Grettisfærsla*.

Further back in time

Terry Gunnell, in his study of North Atlantic traditions related to Grýla, anchors a couple of Grýla-verses from Shetland and the Faroe Islands (cf. examples 1 and 2) securely in the first half of the thirteenth century on the basis of a Grýla-verse in *Sturlunga saga* (example 3) and other appearances of Grýla in Old Icelandic literature (Gunnell 2001[6]; cf. Jón Samsonarson 1991: 48–54).

(1) Oman kemur grýla frá görðum
við fjöriti hölum,
bjálg á baki, skálm í hendi,
kemur at krivja búkin úr börnum

ið gráta eftir kjöti í föstu.
(Hammershaimb 1852: 308)

Down comes Grýla from the outer fields,
with forty tails,
a bag on her back, a sword/knife in her hand,
coming to carve out the stomachs of the children
who cry for meat during Lent.

(2) Skɛkla komәna rina tūna
swa'rta hæsta blæ^{i}ta brūna,
fo'mtәna (fjo'mtan) hāla
and fo'mtәna (fjo'mtan) bjadnis
a kwāra hāla.
(Jakobsen ([1928] 1985: xciii)

Skekla (an ogress) rides into the homefield
on a black horse with a white patch on its brow,
with fifteen tails
and fifteen children
on each tail.

(3) Hér ferr Grýla í garð ofan
ok hefir á sér hala fimmtán.
(*Sturlunga saga* 1878, I: 246)

Here goes Grýla down to the yard,
with fifteen tails on her.

6 Translations in examples 1–3 are quoted from Gunnell 2001: 35, 38, other translations are my own.

The Faroese and Shetland verses in question are, in turn, closely related to so-called *Grýluþulur* (a branch of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*) and to shorter Icelandic Grýla-verses (see example 5). The next written Icelandic example of such a verse is from around the middle of the seventeenth century (Holm papp 25 8vo, f. 126v; see example 4), but the verse is apparently also alluded to in an Icelandic manuscript from the middle of the sixteenth century, in the sentence: 'Suo margt grylu lid xxx þusunder ij M j einum hala' ('So big Grýla's crowd thirty thousand[,] two thousand in one tail'; Add MS 11242, f. 50r; cf. Jón Helgason 1979: 84–5). In the nineteenth century, when a good number of these verses were written down (see e.g. example 5).

(4) Gryla reid ï gard ofan
hafdi hala xv –
en i huorum hala
hundrad belgi
enn i Belg huorum
bórn : 20.
(Jón Samsonarson 1975: 428)

Grýla rode down to the yard,
[she] had fifteen tails –
and on each tail
a hundred bags
and in each bag
twenty children.

(5) Grýla reið fyrir ofan garð;
hafði hala fimtán,
en á hverjum hala
hundrað belgi,
en í hverjum belg
börn tuttugu.
Það vantar í eitt
og þar skal fara í barnið leitt …
(*ÍGSVÞ* IV: 146)[7]

Grýla rode above the yard,
[she] had fifteen tails,
and on each tail
a hundred bags,
and in each bag
twenty children.
One child is lacking,
and the annoying child will be going there …

These examples show that the nineteenth-century *Grýluþulur* are rooted in the thirteenth-century literature and demonstrate the continuity of the tradition of Grýla-verses from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. A short textual parallel from the thirteenth century and a number of later verses from the North Atlantic are sufficient to anchor a post-medieval *þula* soundly in the Old Icelandic literature of the thirteenth century.

7 This edition of *Íslenzkar gátur, skemtanir, vikivakar og þulur* (Jón Árnason and Ólafur Davíðsson 1887–1903) includes the first extensive – and, to this day, the most prominent – printed collection of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*.

Another attempt at anchoring post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* in Old Icelandic literature is my study from 2003 – to some extent, also a retrospective one (Yelena Yershova 2003: 158–78). It demonstrates that post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* likely developed out of the Old Icelandic ones, which consist mainly of lists of poetic synonyms and personal names and are preserved chiefly in *Snorra-Edda*, although they also appear in the *Poetic Edda* and a number of other sources. Lists of names (both common nouns and proper names), found in the *þulur* of *Snorra-Edda*, gradually became lists of names and/or motifs, as we find them in post-medieval *þulur*; at all stages, the lists are organized by semantic and/or phonetic similarity. This development can be seen in the so-called *kúaþulur* (*þulur* of cows). The first example here below is an Old Icelandic *þula* from *Snorra-Edda* and features a list of names and one motif (in the last line); most of the cow names are connected by alliteration, which is shown in **boldface** (example 6). The second is a post-medieval Icelandic *þula*, which consists of a list of cow names and motifs. Again, most of the names and motifs are connected by alliteration (example 7). The motifs are underlined; alliteration is shown in **boldface**. The names that are common to the cow names in rigmaroles from other North Atlantic regions are in *italics* in the Icelandic text.

(6) … **G**neisti Apli	… Spark, Dappled,
ok **g**ollinhorni	Golden-horny,
auðr kvígr **ǫ**ldungr	Wealth, Bullock, Alderman
ok **A**rfuni	and Heir,
griðungr olgr **g**ellir	Rutting, Swelling, Bellowing,
glymr ok hre<i>ði	Ringing and Stormy[?],
tí*ðungr *boli	*Tíðungr* [full-grown bull], *Boli* [bull],
tarfr aurgefinn.	*Tarfr* [bull], Muddy[?].
Kýr heitir skirja	Cow is called *Skirja* [restless heifer],
kvíga ok frenja	Heifer and Unruly,
ok **Au**ðhumbla:	and *Auðhumbla* [humble cow of wealth?],
hon es **œ**zt kúa.	she is the oldest of cows.

(*Edda. Skáldskaparmál* 1998, I: 130–1)

(7) Þegiðu heilla	Be silent, my darling,
sonur minn sæli,	my dear son,
þángað til kýr okkar	till our cows
koma' ofan af fjöllum.	come from the mountains.
Heim ganga þær	They walk home

háttbaulandi	loudly bellowing,
hún **H**yrna' og hún *Stjarna*,	Horny and Star,
gánga þær **dr**ýnjandi	they walk noisily,
hún **D**rafna' og hún Hríngja,	Spot(ted) and Buckle,
Íla og *Ála*	Straw-hair(ed) and Strap(ped)
ofan úr skála,	down from the hut,
Flekka og hún *Fræna*	Spot(ted) and Piebald
fylla þær skjólur,	they fill buckets,
Geita og *Grána*	Goaty and Grey
gánga í helli …	walk in a cave …
Lykla og *Lína*	Jowly and *Lína* ['thread' or 'linen'?]
og hún *Lángspena* …	and Long-teats …

(*ÍGSVÞ* IV: 234)

The composition of these two *þulur* rests on the same essential principle: names and motifs are chosen and arranged so that they alliterate (in post-medieval *þulur* there also seems to be a preference for rhyme, cf. *Hyrna : Stjarna, Íla : Ála : skála*) and/or associate in some way with the other names/motifs (the line *Flekka og hún Fræna* in example 7 features such association: the two names denote cows of a similar colour scheme). However, the cow names in these two *þulur* are quite different. Many names from this post-medieval Icelandic fragment (as well as from a number of other Icelandic rigmaroles) have parallels in post-medieval cow-verses from the Faroe Islands, Shetland Islands and continental Scandinavia (as shown in the table). This results in quite similar sets of cow names in many post-medieval rigmaroles of the North Atlantic (cf. Jón Samsonarson 1979: 158–59, and Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2010: 191–230); the same is true for names of other livestock, as for example goats in Norway (and Sweden) who share a number of names with cows, both in reality and in verses.

While approximately one third of all cow names from post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* have parallels in post-medieval cow-verses (and/or kindred goat-verses) in other North Atlantic countries, the cow names from post-medieval Icelandic *kúaþulur* and their Faroese, Shetland and continental parallels are seldom found in Old Icelandic *þulur* – and only few names from Old Icelandic *kúaþulur* have possible parallels in post-medieval rigmaroles:

Iceland	Faroe Islands	Shetland Islands	Norway
Stjarna	Stjarna	Sterna, Starna	
Íla, Ýla	Íla, Ýla		Ila
Ála	Ála		(Åla)
Flekka	Flekka	Flekka	
Fræna	Fræna	Ferna	
Geita	Geita		
Grána	Grána, Græna		
Lykla			(Lykla)
Lína	Lina		Lina
Langspena	Langspina	Langspina	Langspena

Table. Cow names used in example 7 in Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Shetland Islands and Norway. The names in brackets are predominantly goat names in Norway. The main source for table 1 is Jón Samsonarson's ground-breaking article from 1979 (see also sources referred to therein). However, the material on cow names and related names was also collected in a wide range of editions of post-medieval rigmaroles. Among those otherwise mentioned in this paper are Jón Samsonarson [s.a.], *ÍGSVÞ* III and IV, Hammershaimb 1852 and Jakobsen [1928] 1985; see also sources referred to in Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2008 and 2010.

- *frenja* 'cow', cf. *Fræna* (Iceland, Faroe), *Ferna* (Shetland),[8]
- *Gollinhorni* 'Golden-horny' (masculine) has a structure and components that can also be found in later cow-verses in names such as *Gullinhyrna* ('Golden-horny', feminine; see for example *ÍGSVÞ* IV: 234),[9]
- *Rauðr*, *Rauður* 'Red(ish)' (a rather common bull name) is found in *Snorra-Edda* (*Edda. Skáldskaparmál* 1998, I: 130) and in post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* (for example in *ÍGSVÞ* IV: 185).

A number of names from the Old Icelandic cow-verses are of a very different origin than the cow names from post-medieval *kúaþulur*. In example 6, *Auðhumbla* is the name of a mythological cow, and some bull names are borrowed from other mythological beings: *Freyr*, *Reginn*, and *Jǫrmunrekr*. Such names are not usual in post-medieval *þulur*. At the same time, many cow names in Old Icelandic and post-medieval cow-verses – also those names

8 This parallel is, in fact, not quite clear (cf. Jakobsen [1928] 1985: xcix).

9 Both *Gull(in)-* and *-hyrna* are widespread components in post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*, cf. *Gullintoppa* 'Golden-forelock', *Mjóhyrna* 'Slim-horny', *Greppinhyrna* 'Ugly-horny', 'Little-horny' (see *ÍGSVÞ* IV: 235).

that only occur in one of these genres – have a similar structure. Common nouns denoting cattle of either specific age and sex (*kvíga*) or certain physical characteristics, such as pattern (*Stjarna*, *Drafna*), are used as names. Names falling into the former category are predominantly found in Old Icelandic *þulur* whereas most names in post-medieval rigmaroles fall into the latter category. Derivative nouns that highlight characteristics like noisiness and colour (*gellir* 'bellowing one', *Grána* 'grey one') – as well as compound nouns describing a cow (physically, as *Gollinhorni*, or otherwise, as *Árvakr* 'Early awaking' and *(Stóri) Velbrokkandi* '(Big) Well trotting' (see respectively *Edda. Skáldskaparmál* 1998, I: 130 and *ÍGSVÞ* IV: 235) – are also among the types of characterising names that are common for Old Icelandic *þulur* and post-medieval Icelandic ones.[10]

Direct textual parallels between Old Icelandic and post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* (and other post-medieval cow-verses) are not so numerous. At the same time, Old Icelandic *þulur* and post-medieval ones have a number of common characteristics (as shown above), including:

1. composition: lists of names and/or motifs, organized by metrical and semantic similarity;
2. some of the ways in which names are constructed;
3. some other general characteristics, such as common topics, a preference for accentual verse with two stresses per short line, etc.[11]

Given this similarity, even a few fairly direct textual parallels (both in *kúaþulur* and Grýla-verses) can function as anchors and should be sufficient to conclude that post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* have strong connections with Old Icelandic ones and are indeed rooted in them – at least to some extent. These roots reach at least as far back as the thirteenth century when Old Icelandic *þulur* were written down. In cases like those of *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur*, retrospective methods are readily applicable and give sound results.

10 For further discussion of name-making in *þulur*, see Yelena Yershova 2003 and works referred to therein (in particular Gurevich 1992).

11 Note, however, that the rhythm is stricter in Old Icelandic *þulur* where the meter is most often *fornyrðislag*, while post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and other similar Scandinavian rigmaroles do not have a stable meter.

3. Expanding the anchoring

As only some post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* – and even fewer post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles – have direct textual connections with Old Icelandic *þulur*, as described in the previous section, the question is: how far back in time is it possible – and sensible – to anchor other post-medieval rigmaroles which belong to the same tradition as those that have direct textual parallels with Old Icelandic *þulur* but do not themselves have extant Old Icelandic parallels or anchors? Can all post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* be anchored in Old Icelandic ones on the grounds of common tradition?

Among the distinctive characteristics of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* is a dense web of textual interrelations, both amongst post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and between them and many Faroese, Shetland and continental Scandinavian rigmaroles, as I have discussed in detail elsewhere (Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2008: 175–99). To illustrate this mechanism briefly: since the texts of *þulur* are not stable, one and the same name, motif or larger fragment often occurs in different contexts in different *þulur* – and it tends to bring along its neighbouring names, motifs and fragments when it is incorporated in subsequent *þulur*, since the composition of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* is very flexible and easily allows additions and/or replacements of names, motifs and larger text blocks.[12] Over the ages during which this mechanism has been active, the web of textual interrelations has covered most texts of post-medieval *þulur* in Iceland. This web of textual interrelations in post-medieval *þulur* has strong connections with similar webs in Faroese *skjaldur* and in rigmaroles from different Scandinavian regions. This suggests close contacts between the rigmarole traditions in the North Atlantic, presumably chiefly before *c.* 1500.[13]

Those post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* that clearly have Old Icelandic roots intermingle with other rigmaroles, even though both *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur* are relatively isolated streams in the tradition of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*.

12 Thus, textual interrelations in post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* are of quite a different nature than those in literary texts; they are inextricably connected with the composition of *þulur* and in fact they operate as bonds between names, motifs, fragments and the various ways of putting them together (rather than as allusions or quotations).

13 These webs of textual interrelations are of a different density in and between different regions. The web in Faroese *skjaldur* is for example not as dense as in Icelandic *þulur*. In Shetland, there is hardly any web, since very few rigmaroles are preserved. The bonds between post-medieval *þulur* and Faroese *skjaldur* are stronger than between post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and other post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles, while *skjaldur* have stronger bonds with continental Scandinavian rigmaroles, and so on (see Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2008: 184–94).

They – or their fragments – can, for instance, form *þulur*-texts together with other fragments. Shorter fragments of *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur*, especially their introductions, are occasionally adopted as parts of (most commonly introductions to) other post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles.[14] Motifs from *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur* also sometimes make their way into other post-medieval *þulur*.

To take an example, a *kúaþula* (or part[s] of it) often follows the post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*-fragments that begin with the words *Sat ég uppá hólnum, leit ég niðrí dalinn* ('I sat on the hill, I looked down into the vale'), or a variation on these words, and where a cow and a calf are mentioned (see Jón Samsonarson [s.a.], II: 47–8, 109–10, 134). Some redactions of this latter *þula* also contain motifs from *Grýluþulur*.[15] The *þula* in question is quite widespread in Iceland and has numerous and close connections with many other post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles. Thus, those post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* that clearly have old roots, like *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur*, are deeply imbedded in the web of textual interrelations that covers all post-medieval *þulur*, together with Faroese *skjaldur* and Shetland verses (both traditions have examples of Grýla-verse and *kúaþulur*), Norwegian and other Scandinavian rigmaroles.

Ultimately this means that the great majority of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* are related (directly or indirectly) to those verses that have textual parallels in Old Icelandic *þulur*, and thus have some roots in those last-mentioned. In addition, various *heiti* from Old Icelandic *þulur* make their way into post-medieval ones – particularly into *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur*. Formally, this could be enough to anchor most of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and many other Scandinavian rigmaroles in Old Icelandic *þulur*. The question is how reliable this application of retrospective methods would be.

It is interesting in this context that both *kúaþulur* and *Grýluþulur* – those post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles that apparently have the strongest connections with Old Icelandic *þulur* – are relatively separate streams within the tradition of post-medieval *þulur*. Besides, they are evidently more often sources for names, motifs and fragments for other *þulur* than recipients of these elements from other rigmaroles; while names and motifs from *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur* have gone into the broader tradition of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*, they are themselves reluctant to incorporate motifs from this tradition. This can,

14 See, for instance, *ÍGSVÞ* IV: 236 (incl. footnote 1) and 226, the text beginning *Viltu eg gefi þér*; the introduction of this text is highly reminiscent of introductions to the lists of names in post-medieval *kúaþulur*.

15 See e.g. the top example in *ÍGSVÞ* IV: 185. Bonds between *Grýluþulur* and other post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles are discussed in detail in Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2010: 200–10.

in fact, be another argument for the relatively greater age of *kúa-* and *Grýlu-þulur* as compared to other post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles. Moreover, analysis of the distribution of names and motifs from *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur* in other post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles shows that their impact on other post-medieval *þulur* is minimal. This may suggest that *kúa-* and *Grýluþulur* have blended with other post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* relatively recently, which would weaken the significance of the indirect textual connections of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* with Old Icelandic ones – and thus undermine retrospective reasoning in this aspect.

Within 'mainstream' post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* (that is, other than *kúaþulur*, *Grýluþulur* and some other separate traditions within post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles), other content, tightly connected with some material of other post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles but only very loosely with Old Icelandic *þulur*, apparently prevails. The rate of direct or indirect interrelations with Old Icelandic *þulur* is therefore rather low for these post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles. It is thus disputable whether there are due conditions for application of retrospective methods.

Another important point concerns the continuity of the tradition of *þulur* from Old Icelandic ones to post-medieval rigmaroles. It is commonly recognized now that *Snorra-Edda*, our main source of Old Icelandic *þulur*, was designed as a guide to the Old Icelandic *dróttkvætt* poetry, and *þulur* are believed to have acted there as a lexicon for *dróttkvætt* poets (cf. though Gurevich 1992). The *þulur* of *Snorra-Edda* are clearly a product of literary activity, even though they might have some folk roots and/or have become folklore at a later date. The *þulur* of the *Poetic Edda* are parts of the mythological poems and thus also a part of learned activity. They are, therefore, of quite different nature than the post-medieval folk-rigmaroles (cf. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2010: 199), and this makes Old Icelandic *þulur* less likely to be the only ancestor of post-medieval ones. Besides, the *þulur* of *Snorra-Edda* were hardly so widespread in Scandinavia that they could be the only ancestors of post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles.

Thus, it is questionable whether being part of a post-medieval rigmarole tradition, belonging to its web of textual interrelations and having compositional characteristics and other features in common with Old Icelandic *þulur* is sufficient evidence for firmly anchoring *all* post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles and other similar post-medieval Scandinavian verses in Old Icelandic *þulur*. It is clearly necessary to consider individually each verse to evaluate how strong are its connections to those rigmaroles with clear Old Icelandic roots. If a verse only has an isolated loan motif from another verse that has deep Old Icelandic roots and if this loan is likely only occasional and

late,[16] then the connections are surely not strong enough to anchor the verse in question in Old Icelandic literature. On the other hand, a good number of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and other similar post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles show much stronger connections with those that clearly have Old Icelandic roots. Taking into consideration composition, name-making and other characteristics that such rigmaroles have in common with Old Icelandic *þulur*, along with these indirect but close textual connections, it is possible to infer that these rigmaroles are likely to have Old Icelandic roots themselves, even though no direct textual anchors are preserved today.

Such hypothetic roots do not have to be found exclusively in the *þulur* of the *Eddas*. Considering the large amount of material that is common to many post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles, it is possible and indeed logical to suggest that another folk poetic tradition, kindred to some extent both to Old Icelandic *þulur* and to post-medieval Icelandic ones, as well as to other post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles, might have existed in the Middle Ages: predominantly oral, not learned (this would also explain why it was not written down; cf. Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2011: 93), sufficiently widespread in (late) medieval Scandinavia, organized according to similar compositional principles as those which are valid for post-medieval Icelandic and Old Icelandic *þulur* and containing at least some material common to post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles.

There are no direct sources to confirm this suggestion. However, the retrospective methods (together with the comparative ones) used above to anchor post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and other post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles in Old Icelandic *þulur* show that such anchoring is only partly convincing and that Old Icelandic *þulur* – as they are preserved in our times – can hardly be the only ancestor of post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles. Besides, such a hypothetic folk *þulur*-like tradition would also explain similarities between so many post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles (for instance, the numerous common cow names that are not preserved in Old Icelandic *þulur*), as well as the many differences between post-medieval and Old Icelandic *þulur* in spite of apparent continuity between these two traditions. If this suggestion holds, then the tradition of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and Faroese *skjaldur* originated at the junction of the Old Icelandic tradition of

16 In order to determine the nature of the loan, we often have to opt for more 'traditional' methods and analyse, among other things, how widespread the presumable loan motif is in this particular context, how and where the loan could have taken place, and whether the motif fits well into its new context.

þulur, as we see them in the *Eddas*, and more popular and widespread Old Icelandic folk tradition of rigmaroles.

Communications between Iceland and other North Atlantic and continental Scandinavian countries, *inter alia* under the auspices of the Church, were constant until the first third of the sixteenth century (Vésteinn Ólason 1982: 106–8), whereas more informal (and less active) communications continued into later centuries. Thus, the hypothetical folk rigmaroles tradition does not necessarily have to date back as far as the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the amount of material that travelled from country to country and island to island is considerable, and it is likely that the migration took place over an extended period of time. This moves the beginning of this migration further back in time. By the time of this migration, the hypothetical folk rigmarole tradition was apparently manifold and quite advanced. It is thus reasonable to allow one or even two centuries for this tradition to take shape. This brings the hypothetical folk tradition, again, back to the thirteenth century at least.

The audience of this postulated folk poetic tradition apparently consisted of both children and adults. Post-medieval rigmaroles include, on the one hand, texts that presumably have a long tradition as lullabies, and on the other hand, those that feasibly served as entertainment for adults (such as a number of *dansþulur* and other texts related to dances, games and mumming, cf. Gunnell 2001 and 2007: 287–326). Texts for adults apparently moved into the sphere of children's entertainment in the course of time – possibly quite recently, that is in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, since this development was presumably related to the decline of traditional adult entertainments, *gleðir*, in the last decades of the eighteenth century.[17] The dual nature of this hypothetic folk poetic tradition is reflected in the earliest source of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*, the aforementioned *Grettisfærsla*. It contains both a coarse and erotic *þulur*-like chapter (hardly addressed to children) and a *þulur*-like chapter that resembles closely a (mock-)lullaby. Both the erotic and lullaby-like chapters have close equivalents in *þulur* recorded in the nineteenth–twentieth centuries (Ólafur Halldórsson [1960] 1990: 22–5 and 32–7).

Using the retrospective approach in order to date those post-medieval rigmaroles which do not have extant Old Icelandic parallels or anchors, even though they belong to the same tradition as the ones that have direct textual parallels with Old Icelandic *þulur*, shows once again that retrospective

17 Compare descriptions of *gleðir* from the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries (Jón Samsonarson 1964: xxviii–cxvii), including those held by Guðmundur Einarsson (pp. lxxx–lxxvii), Brynjólfur Jónsson (pp. xciv–xcvi) and Jón Árnason (pp. cii–cxii), all from the mid- and late nineteenth century.

methods are applicable to a wide range of post-medieval material, and a direct anchor is not always necessary to make retrospective reasoning relevant. At the same time, the use of retrospective methods calls for specific conditions; in the case considered in this section, they include sufficient demonstrable connections of those post-medieval rigmaroles that do not have extant Old Icelandic anchors with those post-medieval *þulur* that are clearly rooted in the Old Icelandic *þulur* tradition. Where these conditions are weak or absent and it is not possible to validate retrospective findings by other methods, retrospective reasoning only leads to feasible suggestions that, however, do not reach the level of assertion – as the hypothetic Old Icelandic folk *þulur*-tradition postulated above.

4. Reconstructing narratives

There are clearly differing views on the matter of reconstructing narratives. At one and the same conference, the 14th International Saga Conference in Uppsala, 2009, Eldar Heide (2009: 366) stated that '[o]ne should only try to reconstruct notions not narratives', while the author of this article presented her results of a reconstructional study where she traced the main story of the Faroese ballad *Sniolvs kvæði* (written down at the end of the eighteenth century), through Icelandic sagas of the thirteenth century (*Ásmundar saga kappabana* and *Þiðreks saga af Bern*) and *Gesta Danorum*, and all the way back to *Hildebrandslied* (written down around 800 AD), and made an attempt to reconstruct the ending of *Hildebrandslied*, which is now lost (Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir-Yershova 2009: 1064–71).

It is quite hopeless to try to reconstruct in detail a narrative as it was performed many centuries ago. However, each folk singer and his or her audience has *a notion of the narrative* performed (that is, a general concept of the narrative and its outlines), and this notion is passed from generation to generation. Details change, but the narrative core may still remain relatively stable for centuries (though it can also change, as my study of *Hildebrandslied* shows). This notion of the narrative could be used to reconstruct essential characteristics of the narrative in question. Below is a short example of such reconstruction, based on the material discussed above.

In the Old Icelandic Grýla-verse from *Sturlunga saga* (example 3) and in many post-medieval Icelandic *þulur*, Grýla comes down to the farm. The Old Icelandic verse is only two lines, but already in the six-line verse written down in the seventeenth century Grýla is seen to bag children (see example 4). In later *þulur*, Grýla leaves freely; the children sometimes escape from her, but in many *þulur* this is not touched upon (which is also the case in many Faroese

skjaldur and in the Shetland verse discussed in section 'Further back in time', see examples 1 and 2).

In the Orkney Islands, in a verse of clearly Norn origin (which the informant reportedly learnt from a Fair Isle fisherman), the *Great Muckle Grul(l)yan* tries to penetrate a house, but is repelled by Nicodemus and leaves howling and bellowing (Marwick 1929: xxxvi). No children are mentioned, but this Great Muckle Grul(l)yan is clearly very similar to Grýla. Except for one thing: he is male.

This verse is part of a complicated web of textual interrelations between post-medieval rigmaroles (including some post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* that apparently thrived alongside *Grýluþulur*) which I discuss in detail elsewhere (Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2010: 200–10). These post-medieval rigmaroles feature similar patterns of intrusion and retreat, but various types of intruders (including an old Laplander with a sack, in a verse from as far away as Swedish Lapland; see Ström [1941] 1968: 48)[18] and of their opponents, various endings, and many other diverse details. To be sure, the post-medieval rigmaroles in question also have a great number of parallels. One thing that virtually all the post-medieval rigmaroles concerned have in common – and that separates them greatly from Icelandic *Grýluþulur* – is that the intruder is male.

The name *Grýla* belonged to giantesses and foxes in the *þulur* of *Snorra-Edda*. It is uncertain whether this was a proper name in Old Icelandic, whereas *grýla* 'ogre, bugbear' feasibly existed as a common noun[19] and still exists as such in Modern Icelandic alongside the proper name Grýla.[20]

It is likewise uncertain whether this *heiti* is masculine or feminine. Most other foxes' names in the respective *þula* of *Snorra-Edda* (usually referred to as *Grýlu heiti*; see Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, AI: 688) are masculine. Grammatically, the word appears to be feminine; on the other hand, masculine names declined as feminine are not unknown in Iceland (cf. Sturla). It is not impossible that the name could be common both for giantesses and giants. Some medieval men bore names related to Grýla (e.g. Grýlu-Brandr and Steingrímr Skinngrýluson; see Gunnell 2001: 36). The verse in *Sturlunga saga* is recited by

18 This verse shows that the tradition of versified Grýla-like narratives was likely very widespread.

19 To be sure, the use of capital letters in medieval Icelandic manuscripts is rather arbitrary if compared to their modern use. However, it is noticeable that in no single case when Grýla is mentioned in poetry does her name start with a capital letter in the respective medieval Icelandic manuscripts.

20 It is also worth mentioning that *grýla* is apparently a common noun in modern Faroese.

a man – the chieftain Loptr Pálsson, who is considered to refer to himself as Grýla. Last but not least, in no Old Icelandic verse (and not even in the verse from the seventeenth century) is Grýla clearly feminine.

This is not enough to assert that the medieval Grýla (or *grýla*) was in fact masculine but later developed into a feminine ogress in Iceland.[21] However, this is enough to postulate that in medieval Iceland there existed a versified narrative, similar to the one about Grýla but featuring a male intruder who also hunted for children. Compare the following verse, which is sometimes considered to be from the eleventh century and can be reasonably dated to the thirteenth century, and that is clearly good as an anchor:

(8) Hafr es úti / hvítr í túni,	A billy-goat is outside, / white, in the yard,
skúmir augum, / hefr skegg mikit;	he grows dark in the eyes, / has a huge beard,
brestir klaufum, / vill bǫrn taka;	bangs his hoofs, / wants to take children;
sá's geitar son / gerr við erru.	he is a goat's son, / ready for a quarrel.
(Gade 2009: 346)[22]	

The oldest manuscript featuring this verse by some Hjǫrtr from *Hemings þáttr* is AM 326 b 4to (*c.* 1700). On the other hand, AM 326 b 4to is the only extant copy of *Hemings þáttr* that was made directly from *Hauksbók* (AM 544 4to) before its last folio in front of f. 69 was lost. The account of Hjǫrtr and his three verses apparently were among the material on that lost folio (Fellows Jensen 1962: lxiv–lxv). Judging by the rest of *Hemings þáttr* in *Hauksbók*, the copy in AM 326 b 4to is very accurate. Thus, Hjǫrtr's stanzas in AM 326 b 4to must also have been present in *Hauksbók*. *Hemings þáttr* in *Hauksbók* is in Haukr Erlendsson's own hand, and so are the folios both ways around (ff. 60r–80r); they are dated as *c.* 1310 (ff. 60r–68v, preceding the lacuna before f. 69), and *c.* 1302–10 (ff. 69r–107v; among them those extant folios that contain the conclusion of *Hemings þáttr*; see Stefán Karlsson 1964: 119). There is thus reason to assume that the now missing folio, which likely contained the story of Hjǫrtr and his stanzas, was also in Haukr's hand, dating from the very beginning of the fourteenth century. The verse is considered to resemble nursery rhymes (Gade 2009: 344, cf. Einar Ó. Sveinsson 1962: 84–5), which are a highly traditional genre. Whether Hjǫrtr uses a pre-existing nursery rhyme or alludes in his original composition to a known tradition, the tradition is

21 It is notable in this respect that many Faroese informants during my fieldwork there in 2008 considered the folklore phenomenon (ogre) *grýla* to be masculine.

22 Grýla and goats belonged to similar mumming traditions (see Gunnell 2007: 275–326).

clearly older than the earliest reasonably well attested instance of the verse. It is not possible to say exactly how much older, so we still cannot assert that Hjǫrtr's verse about the billy-goat is as old as from the eleventh century, but we can at least be fairly sure that it is not younger (and feasibly older) than from the thirteenth century.

Anchoring the narratives of Grýla-verses and related poetry, with both female and male intruder, in the thirteenth century (and likely even earlier times) in this way suggests that some roots of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* can go still further back in time than previously argued in this article.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the considerable potential for using late evidence – rigmarole-verses written down in the nineteenth–twentieth centuries – in dating post-medieval rigmaroles and identifying their roots (see section 2), as well as in reconstructing what the Old Icelandic tradition of *þulur* might feasibly have looked like, both suggesting the existence of an Old Icelandic tradition of popular rigmarole-verses with certain presumed characteristics (as was done in section 3) and reconstructing – to some extent – essential features of individual narrative traditions (cf. section 4).

Indeed, the similarity of a number of essential characteristics of Old Icelandic and post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* (including their compositional principles) in combination with even a relatively few direct textual parallels between the two traditions of *þulur* appears to be sufficient to identify the roots of the younger tradition in the older one, to show the continuity between the two traditions and to determine how far back in time the tradition of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* reaches. Retrospective methods help to demonstrate that at least some groups within the tradition of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* (such as *Grýluþulur* and *kúaþulur*) can be firmly anchored in the thirteenth century (see section 2) and conceivably even earlier times (see section 4), and that it is quite likely that other groups of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* (those that do not have direct textual parallels with Old Icelandic ones) are ultimately also rooted in Old Icelandic *þulur*, even though this should be carefully verified for each text (see section 3). The findings from the application of the retrospective approach are in turn verified by more 'traditional' dating methods, among them comparative ones.

At the same time, this study highlights some limitations to the use of retrospective methods. Where the retrospective approach stands alone and there is virtually no old written evidence to support a reconstruction made on the base of retrospective reasoning (as in the case of the hypothetical Old Icelandic folk

tradition of *þulur*), then it is difficult to lift such a reconstruction from the level of suggestion to the level of assertion, even though the suggestion conforms to the applicable criteria of validating late evidence (see Heide 2009: 364–5). Indeed, the model for the hypothetical Old Icelandic folk tradition of *þulur* suggested in this study explains the evidence concerning the origin of post-medieval Icelandic *þulur* and does so better than other models (e.g. than the assumption that post-medieval Icelandic rigmaroles evolved on the ground of Old Icelandic learned *þulur* and early post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles). Besides, the late evidence – post-medieval Scandinavian rigmaroles recorded in the nineteenth–twentieth centuries – occurs geographically far apart and contains a great number of widespread motifs that are not unlikely to belong to the hypothetical old tradition. This also makes the suggested model more plausible.

Even though due precaution should be taken in retrospective reasoning, it is apparently applicable to a wide range of problems where rigmarole-verses from the North Atlantic are concerned, and it provides useful insights into the development of the tradition.

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Germanic traditions of the theft of the thunder-instrument (ATU 1148B)

An approach to *Þrymskviða* and Þórr's adventure with Geirrøðr in Circum-Baltic perspective

FROG

This article addresses two Germanic traditions associated with the 'Theft of the Thunder-Instrument', identified as tale-type ATU 1148B. It provides a broad schematic outline of ATU 1148B as a narrative (section 1) followed by a brief survey of aetiologies of thunder relevant to developments of ATU 1148B in different cultures (section 2). A short survey of ATU 1148B traditions east of the Baltic Sea (section 3) and the single example in Greek from c. 500 AD (section 4) provide a frame for showing the association of Geirrøðr with this narrative and for considering the question of whether the Geirrøðr adventure was a reflex of ATU 1148B, or ATU 1148B was merely identified with the name Geirrøðr by saga authors (section 5). *Þrymskviða* is subsequently shown to be a mythological burlesque developed from ATU 1148B, composed in and for a Christian cultural milieu, where its popularity as a secular song persisted relatively unchanged into the twentieth century.

Reflexes of a myth of the stolen thunder-instrument, ATU[1] 1148B, are found among Baltic, Finnic, Germanic and Samic linguistic-cultural groups in a Circum-Baltic isogloss.[2] Finnic and Samic evidence is predominantly from

1 ATU = Aarne–Thompson–Uther, designating tale-types according to the system presented in *The Types of International Folktales* (Uther 2004).

2 This narrative was initially approached simply as type 1148 'Der Teufel und der Donner (das Gewitter)' (Aarne 1910: 45; 1911: 108); Thompson (1928: 156) separated 1148 'The Ogre Afraid of the Thunder (the Storm)' into subtypes A 'The ogre asks the man to tell him when it thunders. The man deceives him until at last the thunder kills him [K1177]' and B, 'The ogre steals the thunder's instruments (pipe, sack, etc.) [G610]'; Uther (2004, II: 48–50) reclassifies 1148A as 1147 and titles 1148B 'Thunder's Instruments' with a synopsis based on the Estonian tradition (adding 'hammer' as a possible instrument). Cf. Thompson's (1955–8) motifs A162.3 ('Combat between thundergod and devil'), A162.3.1 ('Devil [ogre] steals thunder's instruments'), A162.2 ('Thunder and lightning slay devils'), G610 ('Theft from ogre'), K1816.0.1 ('God disguised as menial'), also A189.1.1 ('Man as helper of thundergod').

3 E.g. Olrik 1905: 140–6; 1906; Krohn 1922: 202–7; de Vries 1933: 99–124; Loorits 1932; Anderson 1939; Balys 1939; Masing 1944; on the early Historical-Geographic Method as an approach, see Krohn 1926; Frog 2013b.

4 Balys (1939: 50–2, 208–9) held that ATU 1148B was ultimately Germanic, but hypothesized an early Germanic tradition close to the North Finnic form, of which *Þrymskviða* and *Hymiskviða* were adaptations.

5 Although Franz Rolf Schröder (1965: 18–38) took up Masing's Greek analogue to approach *Þrymskviða*, he ignored Masing's argument: the Finno-Ugric traditions are mentioned and dismissed in a single paragraph opening with the statement that he has already shown the tradition's origin in Asia Minor (Schröder 1965: 28).

6 Relevant sources and traditions that will not be addressed here include the relationship between Þórr's fishing expedition with the fishing adventure in Finnic ATU 1148B traditions (see Frog 2011b: 88–91); the legend of Thor's Road from Telemark, Norway (Mandt [1777] 1989: 54–5); the problem of *Sǫrla þáttr* (cf. Frog 2011b: 83–4).

the nineteenth century, and Baltic examples from the twentieth century. ATU 1148B had largely dropped out of circulation in all these cultures in the period of collection (see further Frog 2011b). Germanic evidence is primarily (documented) from *c.* 1220–1915. Otherwise, there is a single isolated Greek example from *c.* 500 AD. Early research on ATU 1148B was undertaken using the Historical-Geographic Method.[3] These studies were generally inclined to give pride of place to *Þrymskviða*. During World War II, J. Balys (1939: 33–52, 206–9) presented a survey of ATU 1148B sources which introduced examples from Baltic cultures along with an argument that other ATU 1148B traditions could not be dependent on *Þrymskviða*.[4] A few years later, Uku Masing (1944) advanced Balys's discussion by identifying the Greek example, which shook earlier hypotheses to the ground. However, research emphasis shifted during the years following World War II: Balys's study went unnoticed by Germanic scholarship (cf. Bertell 2003: 185–90) and Masing's contribution became rather like a postscript to the discussion.[5]

The present article builds on my survey of ATU 1148B as a Circum-Baltic phenomenon (Frog 2011b), which expanded the evidence presented in earlier surveys with a current theoretical and methodological perspective. Attention is here turned to the problematic evidence of the Germanic traditions within the context of ATU 1148B as a cross-cultural phenomenon. Owing to constraints of space, an exhaustive survey of materials relevant to the discussion of ATU 1148B traditions in Germanic cultures will not be offered here.[6] Rather, discussion will concentrate on two probable central reflexes of the

Germanic ATU 1148B traditions which circulated for some time in tandem, one of which most probably reflects a parodic response to the other. The first of these is Þórr's adventure with the giant Geirrøðr, which emerges as reflecting an ATU 1148B tradition when situated in a Circum-Baltic context (whether this adventure was historically an ATU 1148B tradition or it was an unrelated adventure that assimilated such an ATU 1148B tradition). The second is the handling of ATU 1148B in the eddic poem *Þrymskviða*, assessed within that same Circum-Baltic perspective.

The 'retrospective' aspect of this paper is four-fold. First, in the short-term perspective, it assesses what can be said about a historical tradition as a social phenomenon on the basis of limited and sometimes highly diversified sources that exhibit specific reflexes and manipulations of a tradition. This approach confronts the common misconception that a single documented text may be considered equivalent to a tradition. In more than one of the examples addressed here, it is not indisputably clear whether the single example of an ATU 1148B tradition in fact derives from the linguistic-cultural group to which it is ascribed, nor whether it was socially conventional in such a cultural milieu. Second, in cases where diversified forms of a tradition appear to be socially established varieties of a broader, common cultural tradition, longer-term perspectives can be developed. In these cases, evidence of synchronic (but socially established) variation is regarded as the outcome of diachronic processes. Consequently, evidence of different conventional forms can provide a means for approaching historical processes which produced the variation, whether these are associated with internal socio-historical processes, outside influences or cultural exchange. Third, comparisons of the forms found within each linguistic-cultural group can be compared cross-culturally. The relative 'depth' of historical processes may be limited to a hypothetical relative chronology which can only address a limited set of elements (e.g. certain images, motifs, conceptual models, mythic figures, story patterns) rather than accounting for all of them, while the processes which produced historical variation may remain ambiguous. Perspective (to build on the metaphor of perceiving relative historical 'depth') is offered through the employment of long-term continuum models through comparative research, augmented by comparison across continuum models developed for the relevant phenomena across different cultures.[7] In the present case, for example, ATU 1148B is found across both Indo-European and Finno-Ugric cultures. As representatives of different language families, ATU 1148B does not appear attributable to a common

7 For a general introduction to the method used here (the Parallax Approach), see Frog 2013a.

linguistic-cultural heritage. The narrative is so unusual in the world and so exceptional within each culture that its distribution appears most likely attributable to historical cultural contacts rather than independently emergent parallel traditions. The present discussion of the potential historical 'depth' of ATU 1148B is facilitated by an isolated example from *c.* 500, which demonstrates that the narrative is not itself something quite 'new'. The aetiology of thunder with which it is associated will also be situated in relation to others, some of which can be dated in relation to their dependence on, for example, iron-working technologies (giving them a *terminus post quem*) or archaeological evidence. Fourth, late evidence showing the long-term persistence and social functions of a tradition will be employed to inform us about how a tradition was used and received as a historical process. In this case, the secular uses of the Þórr-bride reflex in singing traditions recorded into the twentieth century will be introduced to better inform an understanding of the eddic poem *Þrymskviða*, recorded in the thirteenth century. Relatively late evidence thus has a role in constructing a continuum model on which *Þrymskviða* can be situated as a reflex and phase in the life of the ATU 1148B tradition, traced from the shadowy depths of the Iron Age or earlier period and stretching ever onward in many cultures, even into the twentieth century.

1. Outline of ATU 1148B

ATU 1148B is neither reducible nor reconstructible to a single ideal form. It is here abstracted as a letter-coded outline rather than summarized. These letter-codes will be used throughout the text when discussing individual traditions.

A
Aa: Adversaries of the thunder-god ('devils' hereafter) fear thunder
(Ab: A devil tires of hiding from/being disturbed by thunder)
Ac: and determines/plots to steal the god's thunder-instrument(/lightning-weapon)

B
Ba: The devil steals the thunder-attribute
Bb: literally or metaphorically identifiable as a (self-playing) instrument
Bc: while the god sleeps

C
Ca: The devil hides/locks the thunder-instrument away
Cb: in his realm

D
Da: There is no thunder
Db: and therefore no rain
Dc: for many years
Dd: threatening the world order/causing plants and animals to die

E
Ea: The god assumes a disguise
Eb: and becomes a servant (of a fisherman/as a shepherd)
Ec: The servant is the narrative protagonist
Ed: who plans/orchestrates narrative action
(Ee: performs strength-feats while fishing [cf. Hb])
(Ef: and/or catches the devil/devil's servant while fishing)

F
Fa: The god's master is invited to a wedding
Fb: in the devil's home
(Fc: as a ransom prompted by the god [preceded by Ef])

G
Ga: The god enters the devil's home in disguise
Gb: as a servant
Gc: with a companion who is the invited guest
Gd: in a master–servant relationship

H:
Ha: The devil holds entertainments/games
(Hb: in which the thunder-god performs strength-feats [cf. Ee])

I
Ia: The thunder-instrument is brought out
Ib: The devil and his guests cannot play the instrument
Ic: which does not resound/play properly
Id: because he/they lack sufficient physical strength

J
Ja: The god organizes that
Jb: he is challenged to play the instrument

K
Ka: The host unwittingly presents the thunder-instrument to the god
Kb: to 'play' in a display of power/skill
Kc: expecting a positive return (entertainment)

L
La: The god plays the instrument
Lb: louder and louder
Lc: creating thunder (lightning/storm)
Ld: destroying the host/household/everyone present
Le: while protecting his companion/master
Lf: with whom he arrived

M
Ma: The god departs with the instrument and his companion
Mb: to return to his role as thunder-god

N
Na: This narrative explains drought
Nb: This narrative explains why the thunder-god hates/strikes/hunts devils

2. Thunder in the Circum-Baltic region

The Circum-Baltic region has a long history of habitation by both Indo-European (Baltic, Germanic, later Slavic) and Finno-Ugric (Finnic, Samic) linguistic-cultural groups. Linguistic evidence reveals a long and rich history of cultural interaction among these groups (see Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Wälchli 2001). This history impacted mythologies and belief traditions over millennia, of which one outcome is the centrality of the thunder-god across these cultures and the exceptional prominence of narratives about 'thunder and a/the devil'.[8] ATU 1148B is part of this broader phenomenon.

The literal or metaphorical identification of thunder as deriving from a musical instrument (Bb) is generally unconventional in Circum-Baltic cultures.[9] The competition/reconciliation of this aetiology with more conventional aetiologies of thunder has impacted ATU 1148B in different cultures. Structural pragmatics of ATU 1148B require the thunder-instrument to be an

8 See Frog 2011b and works there cited.
9 Reference to 'drumming' in ATU 1165 appears to be metaphorical/analogical rather than aetiological.

object which a devil can obtain (BC), but not get to function properly (Ibc), and which can be presented to the disguised thunder-god (EGKa) as though appropriate use or 'playing' is not in itself dangerous from the devil's perspective and may even be positive and desirable (KbcL). Mapping ATU 1148B over another aetiology of thunder can have significant consequences for structural pragmatics of the narrative resulting in radical adaptations. It is useful to review some major aetiologies of thunder in the Circum-Baltic both to place the aetiology of ATU 1148B in a broader context and in order to address culture-specific adaptations.

2.1 A supernatural being it-/himself

Lexical identification of the god and phenomenon of 'thunder' (rather than 'lightning' or 'fire') seems to have been common across these cultures in an early period, suggesting a semantic correlation that persisted through lexical renewal in these languages.[10] This is a potential indicator of a more direct identification of the god as the phenomenon (cf. Frog 2012b: 31) that may have been widespread in an earlier era. Baltic and South Finnic traditions may attribute thunder to the voice of the god. Early Finnic and Samic cultures probably held conceptions of a 'thunder-bird'. Only scattered traces remain of this conception, which was gradually displaced by an anthropomorphic figure with a lightning-weapon/thunder-instrument. Sources frequently do not specify how the god creates thunder or they treat it as an abstract manifestation of the god's power. The Christian God also received this attribution without mediation by an artefact.

10 Terms for thunder and the thunder-god in Baltic, Finnic, Germanic and Samic are etymologically unrelated (except where Germanic Þórr appears as a loan or the name is veiled under a common avoidance term 'Old Man'). The etymology of the Baltic theonyms need not be disputed: it is sufficient that these are indistinguishable from the common noun for 'thunder' in spoken language. Nor need the origin of the Germanic theonym be resolved: it is sufficient that the theonym and common noun for thunder both changed to be lexically indistinguishable (although subsequently disambiguated in Scandinavia). Lexical identification is found in Samic languages furthest from Germanic influence (see Rydving 1992: 29–31). It is also found in South Finnic while in North Finnic, 'thunder' is designated by a diminutive form of the term for the god.

2.2 The lightning-weapon

The thrown/swung weapon

The weapon of the thunder-god (axe, hammer, club) is identified with lightning and thunder (cf. thunder-stones) and may have been part of an Indo-European heritage. This was particularly prominent in Baltic and Germanic cultures, and became firmly established in Finnic and Samic cultures. It is connected with beliefs that the thunder-god strikes devils whenever he sees them (Nb). In narratives, the identification of the lightning-weapon with thunder/lightning is often implicit.

Shooting weapons

In Finnic and Samic cultures, the thunder-arrow shot from God's bow (the rainbow) exhibits an earlier centrality (Harva 1948: 81, 88–90; Rydving 1992: 31, 34) and is found across Northern and Central Eurasia more generally. Archaeological evidence seems to suggest that this aetiology was prominent around the Circum-Baltic in the Merovingian period, although in the Indo-European cultures its traces are primarily lexical (Salo 2006: 34–5).

2.3 Other object-attributes

The thunder-wagon

The Thunder-Wagon is associated with St Elijah. Orthodox Christian impacts are evident in Finnic cultures. The wagon/chariot was an attribute of Baltic and Germanic thunder-gods. This aetiology is reflected in the skaldic poem *Haustlǫng* 14–16 (late ninth century) leaving its history in the Circum-Baltic region unclear. In North Finnic traditions, the identification of this aetiology with the wheels of the wagon specifically grinding against stones in heaven suggests the assimilation of another aetiology.

The smith of heaven and the nail-star

Iron-working technologies carried a package of mythological conceptions and traditions through the Circum-Baltic (Laurinkienė 2008; Frog 2011e: 30–3; 2012a: 216–18). This included an aetiology of thunder/lightning as produced by a mythic smith at the top of the vault of heaven.[11] This became connected

11 Exhibited in North Finnic (Sarmela 1994: 128–9), South Finnic (Loorits 1926: 51–2), Latvian (Biezais 1972: 105–6, 125–8) and in medieval Sweden (Olrik and Ræder 1931: 350).

to the cosmological image of the North Star as a 'nail' (< Proto-Germanic **naglan-* in the Finno-Ugric languages) at the top of the *axis mundi*. This image is reflected in fire-striking rituals in which a nail is mounted in an *axis mundi* image (see e.g. Tolley 2009: 272–91). There is also a probable connection to the spread of ritual stone fire-strikers through the Circum-Baltic during the first centuries of the present era – symbolic fire-strikers specific to the Baltic Sea region (see Salo 2006: 36–49).

The 'musical' instrument

South Finnic traditions maintained a conventional aetiology of thunder from a blown instrument (often simply *pill,* 'instrument') 'played' by the god (Loorits 1932: 109–11; 1949–57, II: 22–3). Eldar Heide (2006: 293) associates this with the use of *básun,* ('trumpet' < [?Old] Swedish) as a term for 'thunder' in a western dialect of South Sami (northern Sweden) (Rydving 1992: 32, cf. 29, 36). His comparison with the Old Swedish expression *thordyns blaster/bläster* ('thunder-din's blast/blowing') is more ambiguous. Greek ATU 1148B (section 4) describes the thunder-instrument as an ὀργανον αὐτοβόητον ('self-playing instrument'; *Dionysica* I.432), where successful playing is enabled by physical strength (I.294–320). Within Greek mythology, this description or metaphor is unique to ATU 1148B, suggesting an archaic or foreign feature has been suspended in ATU 1148B as a narrative tradition (see section 4).[12]

12 The phenomenon described here as 'suspension' is well documented at the level of formulaic phrasal use in diverse contexts and languages. A theory for its causes in more complex semiotic frameworks, such as traditional narratives, has yet to receive a detailed treatment in cross-cultural perspective (cf. Frog 2013a: 111–21). Conceptual models or motifs can be considered 'suspended' in a traditional narrative when they are not reconciled with the broader conceptual system or belief traditions, or when they are otherwise maintained although their significance has become obscure or completely opaque (rather than being revised, renewed or obtaining new socially established interpretations). Such suspended elements may appear completely dislocated from other traditions and beliefs in the cultural milieu or specific genre and may even contradict them. The type of contrast between ATU 1148B traditions and more common belief systems proposed here is thus by no means unique. In Scandinavia, for example, the European 'soul-mouse' tradition is maintained in belief legends even where conceptions of the separable soul are not otherwise identified with members of the in-group community (on Swedish traditions, see af Klintberg 2010: 299; on Finnish and Karelian traditions, see Sarmela 1994 and also Frog 2012a: 220–1). Similarly, the smith of heaven aetiology of thunder became 'suspended' in North Finnic traditions, allowing it to remain attributed to the earlier sky-god long after he had been displaced by the later thunder-god Ukko (Frog 2011e: 30–1; 2012a: esp. 218). The phenomenon of 'suspension' appears to be associated with structural coherence in a narrative (or other tradition phenomenon – e.g. riddles, poetic formulae, idiomatic expressions) as a socially recognizable entity comprised of a system of constituent motifs. Suspended elements seem to be either structurally integral to the narrative as a coherent entity or else to function as uniquely recognizable and characterizing markers for the tradition embedded in a structural function. On the other hand, they seem to be secondary to the social function or significance of the narrative or to the belief tradition. In ATU 1148B, for example, the conception of the thunder-attribute is essential to the narrative at the structural level, and it is the structure of the narrative describing the theft and recovery (rather than the conception of the thunder-attribute) which appears to be central to ATU 1148B's social functions (e.g. entertainment) and relationships to belief traditions (N).

The thunder-mill

North Finnic ATU 1148B refers to the stolen object with the plural *jyristimet* ('objects which thunder'), not otherwise associated with Finnic aetiologies of thunder (see above) and identifiable with quern-stones through their description.[13] A corresponding aetiology may underlie the etymology Þórr's hammer *Mjǫllnir* ('Pulverizing-One'), connected with 'milling', Perkōns' weapon being called a *milna* ('stick; quern-handle'), and the Lithuanian conceptual identification of the sound of a mill with thunder.[14] A Komi-Zyrjan aetiology of thunder suggests that a thunder-mill tradition may have been more widespread: this aetiology presents a 'self-grinding' mill worked with great effort (like the Greek 'self-playing instrument') by a goat living with the supreme sky-god (Konakov *et al.* 2003: 96). This goat–thunder association has led to comparison with Indo-European traditions (*ibid.*). The goat is only an attribute of the Indo-European thunder-god in cultures where ATU 1148B is attested (Baltic, Germanic, Greek) (cf. West 2007: 240, 248, 250), presenting the possibility that these were features of a more complex mythological phenomenon.

2.4 Overview

This survey suggests that cultural contact has been significant in the history of aetiologies of thunder in the Circum-Baltic. The earliest strata of aetiologies have left little evidence (section 2.1 above) as alternative aetiologies assumed

13 Kaarle Krohn (1922: 203) makes this identification explicitly. Krohn collected the majority of North Finnic examples of ATU 1148B (Frog 2011a: 82), and it is unclear whether this identification is his own extrapolation or reflects unrecorded discussion from one or more interview contexts.

14 On Mjǫllnir, see West 2007: 253–4; cf. Simek 1996: 219–20; on *milna*, see Mühlenbach and Endzelīn 1923–32, II: 627; cf. West 2007: 253–4; on the Lithuanian traditions, see Vėlius 1987: 132–3.

currency – with the exception of the (Indo-European) lightning-weapon. The musical thunder-instrument and thunder-mill exhibit complementary distribution and both are identified as objects of ATU 1148B. Influence of a mill-aetiology on terms for the god's attribute in Germanic and Baltic mythological lexicons would indicate an earlier central significance. Richard Perkins (2001) discusses an aetiology for wind from Þórr blowing in his beard (an action produces a sound analogical to wind).[15] If 'blowing' were prominent in Þórr's production of other weather, this could potentially have shaped conceptions of an ambiguously described thunder-instrument as specifically 'blown' (cf. Loorits 1949–1957 II: 23).

The musical-/mill-instrument emphasizes the sound of thunder, in contrast to other persisting aetiologies (with the possible exception of the thunder-wagon). This emphasis is consistent with the music-metaphor of ATU 1148B and belief traditions east of the Baltic Sea more generally (cf. also section 2.1). The musical-/mill-instrument cannot be identified with either a Finno-Ugric or Indo-European heritage.[16] Its distribution and emphasis on 'thunder' suggests an early aetiology largely displaced probably during the Iron Age. ATU 1148B would then have presented a meaningful environment in which the structural pragmatics of the narrative could allow this aetiology to be suspended and maintained in a narrative-specific context while it was displaced from other roles and functions owing to historical and semiotic processes (cf. note 12 above; section 4 below).

3. ATU 1148B East of the Baltic Sea[17]

Each linguistic-cultural group exhibits a distinctive form of ATU 1148B and distinct reflexes within a broader linguistic-cultural area can often be identified. Historical-Geographic studies of ATU 1148B were problematized by

15 The associated verb *þeyta* is a causal of *þjóta* (see Perkins 2001: 40–2), giving a basic meaning of 'to make whistle, resound, howl'; it does not necessarily carry an implicit metaphor of Þórr's beard as an instrument being 'played' although the verb may be used with blown instruments (cf. Perkins 2001: 42, 45; Heide 2006: 292–4).

16 Franz Rolf Schröder (1965: esp. 25–6) was inclined to see the origin of this tradition in Hurrian (called 'Hittite') mythology (cf. West 2007: 247). Although his comparative study of *Þrymskviða* is cacophonous and unconvincing, this raises a significant point for consideration: behemoth language families like Indo-European and Finno-Ugric spread and rose to dominance at the expense of other, largely unknown languages, assimilating linguistic-cultural groups that undoubtedly had their own mythologies that are lost to us (cf. Frog 2012a: 213).

17 For the specific published and archival sources surveyed here, see Frog 2011b.

removing the traditions from social and semiotic processes, seeking diffusionist explanations for the tradition as a 'text' according to manuscript-stemma models. In the Circum-Baltic, the forms of ATU 1148B exhibit a continuum of forms and features. This continuum is better explained according to ATU 1148B's relationships to individual cultures' semiotic systems, its social value, significance and functions within those cultures, and extended histories of interaction between the linguistic-cultural groups that maintained ATU 1148B traditions (see Frog 2011b: 91–3).

3.1 South Finnic ATU 1148B

The tradition remained richest in Estonia, where examples are generally the longest and most complex. Estonian traditions exhibit the full basic outline of ATU 1148B in which the god enters service with a fisherman (section 1) (normally lacking EeHb and Lb). The Seto (Southeast Estonia) identified the thunder-god with Ilja ([Orthodox] 'Elijah'), sometimes taking service as a shepherd. ATU 1148B was identified with both drought of mythic proportions (DNa) and the hostility between thunder and the devil (Nb).

3.2 Latvian ATU 1148B

Only one Latvian example of ATU 1148B has been identified. The god takes work as a shepherd and the thunder-instrument is identified as a 'horn' (also found in southern Estonia). The god's master is never introduced; invitation to the celebration (F) is replaced by the god seeing a devil while herding and following him. The basic (simplified) structure is otherwise maintained. The example mentions the lack of thunder (Da) but connections with the belief tradition are uncertain.

3.3 North Finnic ATU 1148B

North Finnic examples are oriented to humour and rarely mention the devil's fear of thunder (A) or the circumstance of the theft (B). The god's master has become identified with the thief: the god enters the devil's household in the role of a servant (Gabd), and thus the devil is the companion/master on the fishing adventure (E). Both the invitation (F) and celebration (H), which otherwise provided conditions for the god's presence in the devil's home, are absent. The god's strength is emphasized (Ee): he terrifies the devil on the fishing expedition when beating the water to drive fish into the net (cf. Krohn 1922: 205–6) and/or rowing with such force that the boat splits in half (ATU 1087; on the relation to Þórr's fishing expedition, see Frog 2011b: 88–91). Making the *jyristimet* 'thunder' is fully developed (I–L) but may occur as nothing more than

one strength-test among several. Connections between the instrument and rain are rare (D).

A unique late (1935) example maps the theft over the more conventional thunder-wagon, unleashing destructive power rather than causing drought (D). The adaptation inverts motifs, making the undisguised devil a servant in God's house (E/Gabd) and it omits the recovery of the stolen object (GcH–M) in an aetiology of God's hostility toward devils (Nb) (cf. section 3.5 below). As the example is unique, it is uncertain whether this reflex of ATU 1148B was ever socially established.

3.4 Samic ATU 1148B

ATU 1148B was documented among Inari(?)[18] and Skolt Sami. The god is called *Termes/Tiermas* ('Thunder'), not Germanic-based *Hovrengaellies* ('Þórr-karl') as in e.g. South Sami (section 2.3 above).[19] The 'instrument' has been omitted: the god 'Thunder' was attributed the power of thunder without explicit mediating artefact (section 2.1 above) and is himself captured (Ba) and locked away (Cb/C) by the devil. The Inari(?) tradition (Finland) emphasizes life-threatening drought (D). The god's servant frees the thunder-god (Ba?, Ed) while the devil is asleep (Bc), and the liberated god unleashes a flooding storm to destroy the devils (L). The narrative was referred to in proverbial sayings and identified with a sacred/sacrificial cave, clearly connecting it with belief traditions.

18 The legend is identified with a sacred site (at which the event purportedly took place) on a sacred island (called 'Island of the Thunder-God [Old Man]' in both Sami and Finnish) in Lake Inari. Inari Sami is a small Samic language in a region where Skolt and North Sami interacted. This tradition may reflect an Inari Samic tradition, but the god is referred to as 'Termes' rather than *Äijih* ('Old Man') in the description of the tradition, which appears more consistent with Skolt Sami (Rydving 1992: 29–31). The informant's language could even have been Finnish and identification with Inari Sami therefore remains only a possibility inferred from the location of the tradition where it is attached to the landscape (cf. Frog 2011b: 81).

19 Maths Bertell (p.c.) has pointed out that Erich Johan Jessen-Schardebøll (1767: 20) describes how (South[?]) Samic shamans would 'free' 'Horagalles' with yoiking, drumming and sacrifice. The motif of 'freeing' the god could be traditional and related to ATU 1148B, but the motif of capture is absent and the description of the god seems to represent him as no more than a shamanic helping spirit (whether the conflation is attributable to the tradition or an outside author). Observing that Skolt Samic ATU 1148B shift the role of the thunder god from protagonist to magic helper (below), it is not unreasonable to consider this isolated motif as *potential* evidence that a form of ATU 1148B may also have circulated in South Samic cultural areas. (Frog 2011b: 81).

At the northern periphery of the Circum-Baltic ATU 1148B isogloss, Skolt tradition (Norway and Russia[?][20]) synthesized a corresponding form of the myth into other tales, making the god's servant the protagonist (Ec) and servant/prisoner of the devil (Gb) where s/he discovers and frees the captured god (Ba?); Skolt examples preserve only the capture and release of the god by the servant with no connection to the belief tradition; the liberated god is reduced to a magic helper in tale material to which it is attached.

3.5 Lithuanian ATU 1148B

At the southern periphery of the isogloss, Lithuanian ATU 1148B was attached to aetiological legends – primarily of the hostility between thunder and the devil (Nb), but adapted to others as well. Like Samic traditions, these exhibit an established pattern of development: they focus exclusively on the theft (Ba), which may be reduplicated (Perkūnas ['Thunder'] first steals his axe and chariot attributes as well as a knife) or integrated into other belief legend material. The stolen object may correspond symbolically to Perkūnas's lightning-weapon (axe, stone), but where the lightning-weapon is present, another object is stolen (e.g. the knife above) and the god pursues the devil/devils with the retained lightning-weapon. The only example to associate the theft with sleep (Bc) directly identifies the object with the thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon (gun/bullets) (Ba). The god's disguise and recovery of the object (E–L) became disassociated with ATU 1148B and appear assimilated into another conventional thunder-god narrative (ATU 1165; see Frog 2011b: 86).

3.6 Overview

Although ATU 1148B was dropping out of cultural activity in all these areas, the traditions generally exhibit clear historical maintenance of associations with belief traditions. ATU 1148B was maintained most strongly in South Finnic traditions, where it was supported by conventional aetiologies of thunder. North Finnic and (potentially) Latvian traditions exhibit reduction/simplification but maintained the narrative in spite of its unconventional aetiology of thunder. Radical adaptations became established at the peripheries, where relevant aetiologies were no longer found (cf. sections 2.1–2). Consequently, ATU 1148B was mapped over different material for different functions with new objects that did not support the pragmatics of the narrative whole (sections 3.4–5). This suggests cross-cultural contacts had a function in

20 As a source from Soviet Russia, it seems probable that the original narrative was documented within the Soviet Union rather than outside of it.

the maintenance of the narrative tradition as a historical process, which finds some support in that ATU 1148B seems to exhibit a continuum of linguistic-cultural forms on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea.[21] The absence of ATU 1148B among Slavic groups may suggest that it was not established in Slavic cultures as they pressed increasingly into the region (for about the past millennium) and was not assimilated owing to its peculiar thunder-aetiology.

4. The analogue in Greek

Outside of the Circum-Baltic, the only identified example of ATU 1148B is the Greek account of the theft of Zeus's lightning – described as a 'self-playing instrument'– by his traditional adversary Typhoeus (cf. West 2007: 257–8), in the *Dionysica* of Nonnos of Panopolis.[22] Nonnos combines ATU 1148B with a corresponding myth about the theft of Zeus's sinews (attested elsewhere) and integrates these into a complex narrative. He presents Zeus's servant (rather than Zeus) disguising himself as a shepherd (Eb). The playing contest is not fully realized and does not destroy Typhoeus, who survives for a more familiar mythic battle with Zeus. In spite of Nonnos's reworking, the analogue still presents: the theft during 'sleep' (Bac); thunder as a 'self-playing instrument' (Bb) which nonetheless requires strength to play (Id), should be played appropriately (Ic), and cannot be played by the 'devil' (Ib); hiding the instrument (Cab); a master–servant relation (Gd) in which the role of servant is treated as the protagonist (Ec) with a disguise as a shepherd (Eb); and a challenge of playing (J) which results in the 'devil' offering the/a stolen power

21 Early text-centered approached were inclined to interpret such continuums according to diffusion models, in which variation tended to be approached as a consequence of a tradition's first arrival in a cultural area while later social processes and other consequences of interactions across social groups were generally discounted (cf. also Frog 2011b: 82–3; 2013a: 125–7). Cultural adjacence has been suggested to be historically relevant to the persistence and development of a number of cultural phenomena, such as epic singing (Bailey and Ivanova 1998: xxxvii) and lament poetry (Stepanova 2011), alliteration (Roper 2009: 90–2) and other features of oral poetics (Frog 2010c), much as cultural adjacence is relevant to other aspects of language and phonetics (Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001). Adjacence has been revealed to be relevant not simply across broad linguistic-cultural groups, but to function on more localized levels across living communities (Frog and Stepanova 2011: 209–11). A general hypothesis on the significance of cultural adjacence to the persistence and evolution of traditions is still being developed (see further in Frog 2011b: 92–3).

22 See further Masing 1944; Schröder 1965: 18–29; Hansen 1995; 2002: 305–14; cf. Masing 1977: 124–9.

attribute to the 'servant' (Ka) to play as a musical instrument (Kb) for him as entertainment (Kc).

Nonnos's adaptation presents evidence of ATU 1148B as a complex narrative whole in a remote cultural area (Panopolis is in Egypt) in *c.* 500 AD. It is not entirely certain when or within what horizons the tradition underlying Nonnos's account may have been conventional, nor even whether that tradition was linguistically or culturally 'Greek' (cf. Rouse 1940: xiii). However, it is reasonable to interpret this material as having a historical relation to Circum-Baltic ATU 1148B, particularly in light of the identification of the lightning-weapon as a musical instrument. Even if the Greek example is attributed directly to foreign models, ATU 1148B would have to be established and widely circulating in the fifth century to reach Nonnos, with the implication that it could be much older. Conversely, if the tradition was Greek, the isolation of the representation and the exceptional aetiology of thunder it presents would suggest that it may have already been an archaism.

5. Þórr and Geirrøðr

Within the context of known Norse mythology, Þórr's adventure of visiting the giant Geirrøðr was popular: it is attested in eddic and skaldic verse, and in vernacular and Latin prose (see Mogk 1924; de Vries 1933: 57–65). In his analysis of the story-pattern associated with this adventure, John McKinnell (1994: 57–86) divides the Geirrøðr material into two main categories, with a third of parody (cf. section 5.1 below). The skaldic poem *Þórsdrápa* and Snorri's *Edda* are representative of the first category, which will be more familiar to modern readers. In this form, Loki manipulates Þórr into travelling to the home of Geirrøðr without his hammer but with a servant (Gd). There is no disguise (E) or celebration (FH). Emphasis is given to a dangerous journey on which Þórr overcomes Geirrøðr's daughters before meeting the giant. Geirrøðr is a smith and throws a piece of hot iron at Þórr in a 'sporting contest' (Ha) (McKinnell 1994: 72–3). Þórr catches it and throws it back, piercing the house-pillar and killing his adversary without his lightning-weapon (Hb). In the second group, the god is in disguise/invisible (Ea). Rather than the dangerous journey, he first encounters Guðmundr of Glæsisvellir, a positive traditional figure paired with Geirrøðr elsewhere (Simek 1986: 264–70; Ellis Davidson 1991). Guðmundr becomes a guide or is on his way to visit Geirrøðr as an invited guest (Fab). Þórr becomes his travelling companion or servant (Eb). Emphasis is on Geirrøðr's feast with sporting entertainments (Hab) and Geirrøðr is not explicitly identified as a smith. The second of these will be addressed first.

5.1 Geirrøðr's feast

Þorsteins þáttr bœjarmagns

The comical *Þorsteins þáttr* (fifteenth century) presents a euhemerized Þórr-hero, Þorsteinn bœjarmagn. Þorsteinn has a magical stone (*hallr*) and metal spike (*broddr*): when the stone is pricked with the spike, different varieties of weather are produced. The stone and spike will hit anything they are thrown at and return to Þorsteinn's hand (Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vihjálmsson 1943–4, III: 400–2). The property of the object to return to the hero after being thrown and its use as a thrown weapon for destroying a giant (below) suggest equivalence to Mjǫllnir (Simpson 1966: 5–8). The production of 'weather' differentiates this object from the lightning-weapon (section 2.2) and associates it with the thunder-instrument of ATU 1148B.

Guðmundr has been invited to a celebration in Geirrøðr's hall (F). Þorsteinn joins him and pretends to be his servant (EabcG). In Geirrøðr's sporting entertainments (Ha), Þorsteinn invisibly supports Guðmundr and his men with strength and wit (EdHb). He arranges for Guðmundr to depart (Lef). Þorsteinn himself is left as a gift to Geirrøðr, who demands a display of Þorsteinn's abilities (J) for his entertainment (Kc). Þorsteinn begins 'playing' (*leikinn*) his stone and spike (BbLa), generating different weather (Lc). Þorsteinn plays with increasing intensity (Lb; cf. Kb) producing a 'shower of sparks' (*gneistaflaug*) (Lc?) and throws the self-returning stone and spike into the eyes of Geirrøðr (Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vihjálmsson 1943–4, III: 405–13). The story-pattern corresponds to the recovery of the thunder-instrument of ATU 1148B with the exception that the thunder-instrument is never possessed (BC), tried (I) or provided (Ka) by the devil/giant, and at the climax of the 'playing', the adversary is slain by throwing the thunder-instrument rather than by the playing itslef (section 5.3 below). The thunder-instrument of ATU 1148B is otherwise non-percussive (section 2.3; cf. Frog 2011b: 83, 92). However, the stone–spike combination used to produce a *gneistaflaug* is immediately identifiable with fire-striking and the thunder-aetiology of the smith of heaven (section 2.2). Parallels to ATU 1148B are unlikely to be accidental when they clearly correlate with the peculiarities of *a*) a magic object associated with characteristics of Þórr's thunder-weapon while *b*) simultaneously identifiable with an aetiology of thunder and *c*) explicitly attributed with the ability to create weather and fire (if not specifically lightning) – *d*) a use which is literally or metaphorically identified with an instrument being 'played', and *e*) this 'playing' is identified with increasingly destructive power when *f*) played by a figure named for the thunder-god *g*) who is disguised as a servant *h*) of a guest invited to the host's celebration. Þorsteinn's 'playing' can therefore be reasonably identified with a form or adaptation of 'playing' the thunder-instrument. Within the context of ATU 1148B traditions, the absence of a theft (B) consequently eliminates the acquisition of the object in the hall.[23]

Þorsteins þáttr's free handling and synthesis of Þórr's adventures for humorous entertainment presents the possibility that ATU 1148B could have been conventionally associated with another adversary that was identified with Geirrøðr and Guðmundr by the saga author. Such a hypothesis requires support from other materials which, if taken independently, would appear more equivocal as examples of ATU 1148B.

Bósa saga ok Herrauðs

Bósa saga is a fourteenth or fifteenth century *fornaldar saga* burlesque. It engages names, narratives, genealogies, motifs and story-patterns to situate the burlesque in relation to traditional mytho-heroic sagas, and manipulates a remarkable range of traditions for comic effect (see e.g. Vésteinn Ólason 1994; van Wezel 2006; Frog 2011c: 25–7). A parallel of Geirrøðr's feast is integrated into a popular *fornaldar saga* story-pattern (Power 1984) as an additional narrative sequence concerned with the recovery of a kidnapped (stolen) bride-to-be (rather than the thunder-instrument).[24] Identification of the adversary as Guðmundr of Glæsisvellir appears to be a parodic inversion, which enables a connection with Geirrøðr by association. Guðmundr holds a wedding (H) and the hero and a companion disguise themselves as an invited guest and his

23 Although ATU 1148B is commonly designated in terms of the motif of the theft of the instrument from the god (Thompson 1955–8: motif A162.3.1), the present study is concerned with ATU 1148B as a complex system of narrative material and how that system or portions thereof functioned and developed in different and changing cultural environments. Consequently, although the omission of the theft means that this narrative is not an example of the 'theft' of the thunder-instrument *per se*, it does not follow that this narrative is unrelated to ATU 1148B as a system of narrative material (cf. sections 3.4–5). Cross-cultural evidence supports that the sequence corresponding to the recovery of the thunder-instrument discussed here was associated with a contemporary ATU 1148B tradition or a contemporary tradition historically rooted in ATU 1148B. There is nothing to suggest that a historically independent myth is presented here or that a myth which was synthesized into ATU 1148B in other cultures as far afield as Greece/Egypt had maintained independence in Germanic culture (see also section 6).

24 A corresponding phenomenon is found in developments of the Finno-Karelian Sampo-Cycle, where the mysterious mythic object called a *sampo* became opaque and was reinterpreted and/or the adventure narrative of its theft was mapped over new objects – including a maiden (Frog 2012a: 228 and works there cited).

servant (EbGacd) where the hero plays a harp with magical effect (La), with gradually increasing intensity (Lb), until it compels even inanimate objects to dance, overwhelming the guests and enabling the recovery of the stolen object/bride (L[d]ef). Guðmundr is overcome with a blow in a motif transposed from the *fornaldar saga* story-pattern (Power 1984: 9, 11). The hero places the bride inside the harp, identifying the recovery of a stolen object at a wedding in the devil's/giant's home (BaCGH) with taking the musical instrument played with magical effect (KcLabgMa). Magical music is very rare in Old Norse literature (cf. Boberg 1966: D1210–31, D1415). Its appearance within a narrative sequence paralleling ATU 1148B with a position and function structurally appropriate to the thunder-instrument is unlikely to be accidental, particularly when the name of the adversary can be associated with ATU 1148B. The burlesque presentation appears to have mapped 'playing' the thunder-instrument over another form of magical 'music' (such as that played by Þorsteinn), consistent with adaptations of other mythological narratives in *Bósa saga* (cf. Frog 2011c: 25–7). The handling of material in *Bósa saga* offers little insight into the underlying myth, but it nonetheless supports an association of ATU 1148B with Geirrøðr and Guðmundr.

Þórr and Útgarða-Loki

John McKinnell (1994: 82–4) shows that Snorri's account of Þórr's visit to Útgarða-Loki (Faulkes 1982: 37–43) is a parody of the Guðmundr–Geirrøðr-feast story-pattern (cf. Frog 2011b: 89–90). Snorri appears to have manipulated traditional material to create a parable on poetic language to which a recovery of the thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon is irrelevant and would be antithetical to the presentation of Þórr as consistently overcome by his adversary (Frog 2011c: 18–23). Snorri presents 'Loki' as both Þórr's companion and otherworld host, leaving the underlying adversary uncertain.[25] If this is a

25 With the exception of kennings (and noting that *týr* functions as a common noun 'god' in many constructions), there is to my knowledge no other case of a Norse god's name combined with an epithet to designate a different mythic being. 'Útgarða-Loki' and 'Loki' could almost certainly not remain distinguished in circulating discourse any more than 'Ása-Þórr' and 'Þórr', and Saxo Grammaticus uses 'U[t]garthilocus' to refer to the image of Loki bound (as a punishment by the gods), an image identified with Loki in Snorri's *Edda*. The epithet *útgarða* (lit. 'of out-yards; of out-realms') is a genitive of the unusual (plural) term *útgarðar* used for 'outlying places; outlying buildings' and in the idiomatic expression(s) *færa við/um útgarða* ('to harass or abuse to the limit; to drive out or cast out'). Saxo Grammaticus maintains the idiomatic vernacular term *útgarðar* when translating the latter expression literally into Latin

parody of ATU 1148B, it anticipates uses of ATU 1148B in later sources (sections 5.1 and 6) and also presents the speculative possibility that the peculiar use of Loki's name to identify the adversary here was stimulated by Snorri's identification of Geirrøðr with the other form of the story-pattern elsewhere in *Edda* (section 5.2 below).

Gesta Danorum VIII

In book VIII of *Gesta Danorum*, Saxo Grammaticus presents a description of a mortal Þórr-hero retracing this journey and touring the aftermath of Geirrøðr's hall. The Þórr-hero first stays with Guðmundr, who acts as a guide. The description of Geirrøðr's hall includes sporting entertainments (Ha). Geirrøðr is described as destroyed by a thrown piece of iron and Geirrøðr's daughters are said to be destroyed by lightning bolts (*fulmina*) (Olrik and Ræder 1931: 243). This could reflect some version of the recovery of the stolen thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon, but Saxo's reorganization, reinterpretation and manipulation of material within the plan of his work leaves the underlying tradition uncertain.

5.2 Geirrøðr the Smith

Uses of the other form of the story-pattern emphasize adventure over humour and the dangerous journey to the giant rather than activities in the hall (cf. McKinnell 1994: 69–75). Geirrøðr's association with ATU 1148B presents the possibility that this adventure from which Þórr's hammer is explicitly absent could be a radical adaptation of ATU 1148B. The master–servant relationship (Gd) is present, but inverted: the god is the dominant protagonist travelling with a servant rather than orchestrating action while disguised as a servant (EFG) (cf. section 3.4), potentially as a consequence of the omission of the disguise (EaGa, cf. Ka). The 'sporting contest' (McKinnell 1994: 72–3), in which Geirrøðr fails to overcome Þórr with the lump of hot iron followed by his death by the same object, only very loosely parallels playing the thunder-instrument (IJKL). However, Geirrøðr's identification as an iron-smith is central to the semiotics of the encounter. Rather than constructing a contrast concerning the power/ability to control thunder, this narrative frames a contrast

with reference to the expulsion of outlawry ('apud utgarthiam relegavit'; see Storm 1878: 109–10; Liberman 1992: 101). Observing that Saxo uses this epithet to refer to Loki bound, *útgarða*-Loki could mean 'outcast-Loki' or 'outlaw-Loki' (rather than 'outsider-Loki' or 'otherworld-Loki') and potentially have had refined uses or associations such as Loki's prosecution by the gods.

in terms of iron and iron-working technologies, presenting the god's superiority in relation to this technology. *Þórsdrápa* follows this exchange with a description of Þórr destroying all other giants with his hammer (omitted by Snorri, cf. Faulkes 1998: 24–30), suggesting that the hammer was acquired in Geirrøðr's hall. This is interpretable as a recovery of the stolen lightning-weapon paralleling ATU 1148B (Vestlund 1919: 109–12; de Vries 1933: 64–5) or possibly an aetiology of Mjǫllnir as a hammer acquired from a smith.[26] If this narrative was concerned with acquiring the thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon, then that acquisition was subordinated to a new frame of reference: 'thunder'/'lightning' is absent from the conflict entirely. The motif of theft and recovery of the stolen thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon is extremely rare and marked. Even radical adaptations of it elsewhere in the Circum-Baltic area all appear to be local culturally bound reflexes of the ATU 1148B tradition. If *Þórsdrápa* is accepted as representing a traditional feature of the narrative in the acquisition of the lightning-weapon in Geirrøðr's hall, then this has strong implications in the Circum-Baltic context. Although the

26 Margaret Clunies Ross (1981: 388–9) interprets *Þórsdrápa* as an origin of Mjǫllnir according to an Indo-European story-pattern of slaying the adversary with his own weapon. This depends on an identification of the unworked hot iron in *Þórsdrápa* with the hammer, which is not supported by kennings in the poetic text and contrasts with all other sources. Cf. also the unrelated origin of Mjǫllnir in Snorri's *Edda* (Faulkes 1998: 42). However, this does not negate the possibility that the underlying hypothesis could be correct. Traditions of narrating the theft or the theft and recovery of a mythic object, natural phenomenon or cultural object easily fill the function of an aetiology. Eleazar M. Meletinsky (1998: 211–12, cf. 177) has related this to synchronic hierarchies of codes (although any such hierarchies would most likely be the outcomes of diachronic processes). Accordingly, an aitiology of Þórr's attribute would not necessarily exclude a potential relationship to an ATU 1148B tradition. In such a case, mapping ATU 1148B over an object without opening that object's use to a literal or metaphorical interpretation as 'playing music' (which a hammer on an anvil could certainly be) would contradict the pragmatics of ATU 1148B and require adaptation and/or reinterpretation. It is not inherently unreasonable that the recovery of ATU 1148B's thunder-instrument could be mapped over Mjǫllnir ('Pulveriser') and reinterpreted it as an origin of the lightning-weapon, eliminating the theft and its consequences (A–D) as well as the metaphor of a musical instrument (I) and replacing the playing competition (J–K) with an alternative contest (cf. Ee, H). Such a scenario (however speculative) could even potentially offer an explanation for the centrality of the dangerous journey to visit Smith-Geirrøðr: this could be a consequence of displacing the sequence of the theft (A–C) and the thunder-god's actions toward the stolen objects recovery (E–F) with an alternative instigating event and consequent pattern of action leading the god to the home of the smith.

parallels to ATU 1148B are otherwise quite loose, it becomes far more probable that Geirrøðr's association with this motif reflects some type of radical adaptation and synthesis of an ATU 1148B tradition to new functions and priorities associated with iron-working (cf. sections 3.3–5), rather than the alternative that this motif is accidental and unrelated. If this is the case, it would indicate a historical connection between Geirrøðr and ATU 1148B traditions.

5.3 Overview

These two traditions connected with Geirrøðr become mutually reinforcing. The example which exhibits a strong connection to an ATU 1148B tradition handles that material for comic effect (section 5.1 above), and other evidence of handling that material also appears oriented to humour although including multiple potential indicators of an association with Geirrøðr as the adversary. Handlings of material oriented to adventure can be unambiguously associated with Geirrøðr but the connection with an ATU 1148B tradition remains obscure, radically adapted to a different function (section 5.2). The two traditions are complementary, supporting the likelihood that both reflect socially circulating reflexes of ATU 1148B in which Geirrøðr was an adversary. At the same time, the handling of thunder-instrument material for humour or parody and rendering an adventure to which the acquisition/recovery of the lightning-weapon seems incidental (section 5.2 above) is suggestive of the reception of these traditions.

Iron-working technologies appear to have significantly impacted both forms of the tradition. This presents the possibility that the mapping of ATU 1148B over the thunder-aetiology of the smith of heaven (section2.3) has some historical relation to the identification of Geirrøðr as a smith, observing that the adversary always appears 'struck' rather than 'played' to death (Ld). McKinnell (1994: 66) observes that penetration of the house-pillar by the thrown iron is symbolically significant as Þórr was patron of pillars. The image is obscure, but observing that Old Norse *hamarr* also means 'a stone, crag' (see Motz 1997: 340–1) and that this form of ATU 1148B handles an aetiology of thunder associable with the 'nail'-star mounted in the world pillar, Þorsteinn's thunder-instrument could symbolically reflect a conception of the *hamarr* and *nagli* ('nail, spike'), while throwing the spike (or piece of hot iron) through the pillar may have had dimensions of symbolic significance related to the nail-star (cf. Old Norse *veraldar-nagli,* 'nail of the world') or its aetiology (and the god's retention of the *hamarr*?). Whatever their underlying significance, two adaptations of ATU 1148B appear attached to Geirrøðr. Rather than a recent fixation on iron-working, the diverse forms may reflect the settlement

of Iceland bringing together alternative conventional versions of the narrative from different regions of Scandinavia.[27]

6. The Þórr-bride reflex

Þrymskviða is an eddic poem in the *fornyrðislag* meter preserved only in the Codex Regius collection (GKS 2365 4to, *c.* 1270; the so-called *Poetic Edda*). According to this poem, Þórr awakes, angry at the discovery that his hammer is missing. He and Loki visit Freyja so that Loki can borrow her feather-garment and look for Mjǫllnir. The thief ransoms the hammer for the goddess Freyja as his bride. Þórr tells Freyja to go marry the giant and she refuses, stating that marrying a giant would be sexually humiliating for her as a woman. The gods meet at council, and Heimdallr proposes that Þórr go to the giant disguised as Freyja. Þórr objects that the sexual humiliation (augmented by gender-transgression in his case) would be used by other gods to insult him. Loki tells him to shut up and Þórr complies – without another speech-act for the rest of the poem. Loki accompanies Þórr disguised as his handmaiden. The god travels with his chariot, splitting cliffs with lighting and thunder. Þórr's monstrous appetite and blazing eyes (but not his chariot) arouse suspicion, which Loki repeatedly calms. The wedding ceremony is performed, for which Mjǫllnir is brought out to hallow the bride by placing it in 'her' lap, 'slotting Þórr's manhood back where it belongs' (Perkins 1994: 661–2), and the passive 'bride' is transformed into an angry man who kills the groom and the entire wedding party.

6.1 Comparison and contrast to Circum-Baltic ATU 1148B

Þrymskviða is clearly a reflex of ATU 1148B mapped over the lightning-weapon Mjǫllnir as a hammer (section 2.2; cf. section 3.5), which may have already resonated with the Germanic ATU 1148B tradition if this had already been adapted to a smith of heaven tradition (cf. section 5.1). It presents: the

27 Little attention has been given to the fact that diverse forms of common traditions were carried to Iceland from different parts of Scandinavia in the settlement process. The increasing interest in variation in Old Norse mythology has generally been in relation to hegemonic models highlighting historical continuities and seeking to reconstruct ideal uniform models (N.B. – highlighting either continuity or variation is most often at the expense of the other). On the confluence of different groups having a stimulating effect on diverse oral tradition phenomena, see Frog 2011b: 92–3 and works there cited; on the ability of diverse forms of a tradition to persist in close contact, see Frog 2010b: 99–100; cf. 2011d: 25–7 and works there cited.

theft of the lightning-weapon/thunder-instrument (Ba) while the thunder-god sleeps (Bc); this is hidden by the thief (Ca), prompting the thunder-god's disguise (Ea) to journey to a celebration (FaGa) in the otherworld home of the thief (Fb) with a companion (Gc) in a master–servant relation (Gd); the figure disguised as the servant controls the situation (Ed); the thunder-god performs feats impressing the thief (Hb), culminating in the thief bringing the lightning-weapon/thunder-instrument from its hiding place (Ia) and presenting it to the disguised thunder-god (Ka) anticipating a positive return (Kc) but the god uses it to destroy all present (Ld) except his companion (Lef).

The narrative is characterized by contrasts with other ATU 1148B traditions: *a*) the god does not appear as an authoritative figure (his command and objection are ineffective); *b*) the disguise humiliates the god (cf. Eb); *c*) the master–servant relation is inverted to situate the thunder-god as the passive invited guest (bride) and his companion as the disguised servant (handmaiden) who manipulates the action (cf. EFG); *d*) Þórr's attributes and activities threaten his disguise; *e*) his feat is an expression of appetite rather than strength, with no positive suggestion of power or ability (cf. H); *f*) the thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon is unwittingly given to the passive god as a ritual part of the wedding, rather than as a challenge of strength or ability (cf. JK); *g*) the entertainment anticipated by the giant is sexual rather than an amusing display of strength or musical performance (cf. L); *h*) the thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon is not connected to atmospheric phenomena (cf. D), noting especially that a different thunder-aetiology is highlighted in the description of Þórr's chariot (section 2.3); *i*) the adversary neither fears thunder (the thunder-wagon does not prompt suspicion or concern, let alone fear) nor the lightning-weapon in the hands of the god (which the giant will return for ransom) (cf. A).

6.2 Freyja and narrative strategies

Þrymskviða's handling of mythological material can be addressed through the example of Freyja. Freyja has no structural relation to the plot beyond an object demanded by the giant: she is unrelated to Þórr, the stolen object, its theft or recovery, and is never given to the adversary. Freyja is not connected to any other ATU 1148B tradition – Germanic or otherwise[28] – suggesting her appearance here is a development specific to this reflex. She appears twice in the narrative, visited by Þórr and Loki, in a frame both immediately before

28 The problem of *Sǫrla þáttr* will not be addressed here (see Frog 2011b: 83 and works there cited).

and after the giant's demand to have her as a bride. This thee-part sequence accounts for just over one third of the poem's stanzas,[29] lacking transitions to what precedes or follows it. This is only one stanza less than the journey to the giant's realm with Þórr's adventures there.[30]

The first encounter with Freyja presents Þórr borrowing the feather-garment for Loki to journey to search for the hammer. However, a scene mentioning travel and including dialogue is not essential for this.[31] Structurally, the scene introduces the goddess into the narrative before the giant's request and prepares a contrast between her (floridly) positive compliance to this request (*Þkv* 4) and her refusal in the second dialogue (*Þkv* 13.7–10). The second encounter with Freyja is dependent on the giant's demand: Þórr visits Freyja to command her to marry his adversary. Þórr's command contradicts his conventional mythological function of protecting Æsir women from desirous giants (cf. Clunies Ross 1994: 111–15). The statement of Freyja's anger (*Þkv* 13.1–2) verbally echoes the opening line of the poem (*Þkv*. 1–2), thereby contrasting Þórr's anger expressed in his trembling beard (*Þkv* 1.5–6) with the bursting of Freyja's necklace – the *Brísinga men* – (*Þkv* 13.3–6; see also section 6.5). The *Brísinga men* is a significant if obscure mythic object and attribute of Freyja (Simek 1996: 45–6). The bursting of this necklace should be a cosmological event no less significant than would be a splitting of Heimdallr's horn or a breaking of Óðinn's spear.[32] In *Þrymskviða*, this event is a hyperbolic expression of Freyja's emotions while establishing the necklace as an identity-marker of the goddess before it is loaned Þórr for his disguise

29 According to current editorial practice, *Þrymskviða* is divided into 32 stanzas. The poem can be structurally approached as four 'acts': Act I: The discovery of the theft (*Þkv* 1–2; 2 stanzas / 6 %); Act II: Visits to Freyja and the giant's demand (*Þkv* 3–13; 11 stanzas / 34 %); Act III: The gods at council and Þórr's disguise (*Þkv* 14–20; 7 stanzas / 22 %); Act IV = The journey and adventure with Þrymr (*Þkv* 21–32; 12 stanzas / 37.5 %).

30 The 32 stanzas of *Þrymskviða* are of irregular length and proportions change slightly when approached through the 258 lines of text (Act I: 16 lines / 6 %; Act II: 84 lines / 32.5 %; Act III: 56 lines / 22 %; Act IV: 102 lines / 39.5 %). This does not significantly change the relative prominence of Acts II and IV.

31 This scene from *Þrymskviða* is not found in the later ballad tradition.

32 John McKinnell (2000: 4) proposes that Freyja's outrage is itself a comic and parodic feature: 'Freyja's outraged sense of sexual propriety when she is told to marry a giant is not to be taken seriously: this is the goddess who is said … to have slept with every male god and elf in Oðinn's hall, and who … sleeps with each of four dwarves in order to get the necklace which is her emblem. Promiscuity is of the essence of her character, and her real objection to sex with Þrymr is not sexual virtue, but only that giants are sexually repulsive.'

(without comment on its repair/wholeness). Freyja's successful objection to marrying the giant as sexually humiliating (*Þkv* 13.7–10) is verbally echoed in Þórr's unsuccessful objections to taking Freyja's place (*Þkv* 17.3–6), constructing a corresponding contrast (see e.g. Heinrichs 1972: 505–6). Freyja belongs to the narrative strategy of undermining Þórr's authority and emphasizing his impotence and humiliation through comparison and contrast with the goddess he imitates. There appears to be a conscious and active strategy to generate contrasts with mythological conceptions and belief traditions within the poem, and these seem intended to undermine Þórr's significance and authority. Freyja's presence in *Þrymskviða* appears directly connected to this narrative strategy and does not appear to extend beyond the anticipation of Þórr's compelled and humiliating disguise. When Freyja lacks any structural relation to the plot, her introduction and use within the narrative can be reasonably suspected of deriving from an interest in or intention of humiliating Þórr.

6.3 Ransoming the thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon

Ransoming the thunder-instrument/lightning-weapon appears to be a development unique to this reflex of ATU 1148B. It contrasts with the rudimentary conceptual identification of thunder as threatening to giants/trolls/devils and transfers the adversary's focus to a different/unrelated object. Other conflicts with giants over goddesses involve an oath/agreement (which commits gods to the exchange) and/or force (either threatened by giants or actualized as kidnapping), creating a crisis situation owing to an immediate threat. No immediate threat appears in *Þrymskviða*: the giant neither attempts nor threatens to take Freyja by force; he waits patiently at home with no indication of an interest in invading Ásgarðr.[33]

The demand for the goddess affects a shift in the thunder-god's disguise from a servant to a bride, implicating him in a gender transgression, with an accompanying inversion of the master–servant relation (section 8.2).[34] Both

33 Loki's mention of giants settling (*búa*) in Ásgarðr (*Þkv* 18.5–6) refers to a common mythological theme (with a remarkably non-aggressive verb) and appears no more significant than the rhetorical bursting of Freyja's necklace or the unnecessary introduction of Þórr's chariot with its unusual display of lightning (*Þkv* 21).

34 Eldar Heide (p.c.) has made the interesting suggestion that this gender transgression is comparable to the thunder-god disguising himself as a youth in some South Finnic traditions. This possibility, paralleled by other examples introducing a youth or son into the narrative, does not hold up under scrutiny. This disguise does not involve a transgression of gender, nor is there any indication that this transformation 'un-manned' the masculine god into a pre-pubescent child, either in the recorded

the alternative disguise and inverted master–servant relation are connected with the displacement of the god from an active authoritative role. The introduction of the divine community (not found in other ATU 1148B traditions) attributes the plan to another god, with Þórr opposing the plan unsuccessfully. Although the meeting of the divine community implies events of cosmological significance in other contexts (Thorvaldsen 2008: 158–9), their appearance here displaces authority from the thunder-god and allows him to be subordinated to the plan against his will, devoting more than 20 per cent of the poem's stanzas to this meeting and Þórr's compelled preparations. The interrelated gender-transgression and displacement of the thunder-god from an active role are pragmatically dependent on ransoming the thunder-instrument for a goddess, which itself suggests a break from belief traditions (section 6.2 above). ATU 1148B appears to have been mapped over Mjǫllnir as a phallic symbol in a radical adaptation to produce a castration narrative (Perkins 1994; Clunies Ross 2002), which is fully realized when the hammer is placed in Þórr's lap, a motif dependent on his transvestite disguise. This burlesque handling of material employed for humorous effect is consistent with other adaptations of ATU 1148B that both de-emphasize the significance of the theft and emphasize humour (section 5.1), yet in this case that humour is oriented toward the humiliation of the god.

6.4 Later reception versus contemporary and earlier evidence

Þrymskviða was translated directly into the Icelandic *rímur* known as *Þrymlur*, probably *c.*1400 (Finnur Jónsson 1905–12: 278–89). This is one of only three known mythological *rímur*, all of which appear to be burlesques of mythological material. Of these, one is adapted directly from Snorri's account of Þórr's visit to Útgarða-Loki (see Haukur Þorgeirsson 2008), which itself appears to be a burlesque of mythological material rather than a conventional 'myth' (section 5.1). The other is a Christian beggar's farcical visionary journey

examples or, to my knowledge, in the South Finnic traditions more generally. In South Finnic traditions, this feature is connected to entering service with a fisherman and can be directly compared with Þórr's disguise *sem ungr drengr* ('as a young man') in Snorri's account of Þórr's journey to visit Hymir in order to go on his fishing expedition for the world-serpent (Faulkes 1982: 44), a motif presumably echoed in *Hymiskviða* 18.3, where Þórr is referred to as *sveinn* ([servant?] 'lad'). There is no indication that this youthful disguise 'un-manned' the thunder-god in either case, nor has this ever, to my knowledge, been proposed. This disguise may simply be semantically opposed to the Circum-Baltic convention of referring to the thunder-god as an 'old man' or patriarch (Frog 2011b: 79–80).

to Valhǫll. All three are clearly popular secular singing traditions. This offers indications of the reception of both *Þrymskviða* as a poem and the Þórr-bride reflex of ATU 1148B among mythological burlesques disconnected from belief traditions. However limited the evidence, this speaks against *Þrymskviða* being viewed as a poem accurately representing a narrative associated with belief traditions. More remarkably, this or a corresponding translation process eventually carried the Þórr-bride reflex into the Scandinavian ballad tradition:[35] Scandinavian Medieval Ballad type E126 'Tord af Havsgård – Thor regains his stolen hammer from a giant'. The Þórr-bride reflex of ATU 1148B clearly found tremendous popularity as a ballad, spreading throughout Scandinavia and continuing to be recorded into the twentieth century.[36]

Ballad type E126 is the only known Scandinavian ballad narrating a 'pagan' myth (Liestøl 1970: 15–18). There is no evidence of the Þórr-bride reflex in any form outside of Germanic Nordic cultures, and within Nordic cultures it is not found outside of *Þrymskviða* itself and later singing traditions adapted from it (cf. Liungman 1961: 267). All evidence of this reflex of ATU 1148B is attached to a tradition, not just of a narrative, but of *Þrymskviða* as a 'textual entity' (Frog 2011a). Unlike other adventures of Þórr with significant adversaries, *Þrymskviða* is not attested in other contemporary or earlier sources: there is no reference to the narrative, mythic events specific to it (e.g. Þórr borrowing Freyja's necklace) and even the name of the adversary 'kunna vara nyskapade av Þrymskviðaskalden' ('could be newly created by the *Þrymskviða*-poet') (Noreen 1926: 80). Most remarkably, Þórr's gender-transgression is never mentioned in insult-exchanges with other gods, in spite of the express statement within the text of the poem that it will be used by other gods to humiliate him. The 'myth' of *Þrymskviða* appears curiously divorced from all other evidence of the mythology (sections 6.2–3; Frog 2011c: 23–5),[37] and indeed *Þrymskviða*'s later reception presents the possibility that it may have essentially been a popular secular song that was never seen as connected to belief traditions.

35 Cf. Bugge and Moe 1897: esp. 72–8; de Vries 1928: 298–300; Bertell 2003: 53–61.

36 Documented in Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Faroese (Jonsson *et al.* 1978: 252); for recent examples, see e.g. the Norwegian digital ballad archive at the Dokumentasjonsprojektet, <http://www.dokpro.uio.no/ballader/lister/tsb_titler/variantar_e126.html> (accessed 31.7.2011).

37 Franz Rolf Schröder (1965: 3) notes that *Þrymskviða* is also exceptional in the corpus for offering, within the text itself, all essential mythological information relevant to understanding the narrative.

6.5 Language and poetics

The lack of contemporary and earlier evidence for *Þrymskviða* as either a narrative tradition or conventional poem contrasts with the exceptional degree of formulaic and textual relations with other documented medieval poems,[38] the most striking of which is six lines of verbatim correspondence with the opening lines of *Baldrs draumar* (*Þkv* 14.1–6). In spite of rich relations with other texts on the verbal level, formulaic use and these textual relations are nevertheless fully integrated within the narrative style and strategies of the poem, as well as within its strategies of language use and language patterning (cf. Naiditch 2011: 110–116): *Þrymskviða* is clearly a coherent and structured compositional whole.[39] This is significant because evidence of independently documented poems and stanzas of eddic verse indicate that, in social transmission, this poetry was subject to a high degree of fixity or crystallization at the level of stanzas and the stanza-like units that characterized individual poems as 'textual entities'.[40] It was not oral-formulaic in the manner outlined by Albert Lord in *The Singer of Tales* (1960).[41] Rather than capitalizing on potential for variability in reproduction, the tradition exhibits an 'inclination to non-variation' (Frog 2011d: 48–62). The compositional unity of *Þrymskviða* sets it apart from poems apparently developed from larger and smaller sections of established poems, resulting in verbal and/or stylistic incongruities between different sections of the new whole (e.g. *Hyndluljóð*, *Hávamál*, *Vǫlundarkviða*).

One by-product of conventions of non-variation was the maintenance of distinct verbal representations of the same content elements across different textual entities (see e.g. Mellor 1999 [2008]: 131–9). Thus, the correspondence between *Baldrs draumar* 1.1–6 and *Þrymskviða* 14.1–6, although only six lines, suggests a relationship between them, even if the assembly of the gods is a fairly well-attested traditional motif (cf. Thorvaldsen 2008: 161). In addition,

38 See Phillpotts 1920: 65–73; de Vries 1928; Hallberg 1954; Magerøy [1956] 1991; Jakobsen 1984; cf. von See *et al.* 1997–; on the problematics of 'text-loan' approaches to these verbal correspondences, see Thorvaldsen 2008.

39 Variation in social transmission is inevitable, thus any high degree of compositional structuring that is dependent on a zero-variation model seems extremely improbable (e.g. Lange 1955: 342–8).

40 See e.g. Lönnroth 1971; Harris 1983; Quinn 1990; Frog 2009: 273–4; on textual entities at different structural levels, see Frog 2011a: 9–10, 14; at the level of stanzas, cf. Frog 2012c: 31–7.

41 See further e.g. Mellor [1999] 2008; Haymes 2004; Thorvaldsen 2006; Frog 2011d: 19–24.

poetic language does not appear to have been freely generative when realizing an individual poem or to have moved freely between stanzaic structures across poems (cf. Frog 2012c: 24–5, 50–2). Approached individually, the formulaic expressions and language use in *Þrymskviða* appear connected with the broader poetic tradition and mythology in different ways (Thorvaldsen 2008), but taken together, the number and concentration of language and formulaic expressions connecting with other preserved poetry becomes no less striking than the exceptional scope of a six-line correspondence with a single poem. The formulaic density of both externally recognizable and internally repeating formulaic expressions thus appears potentially exaggerated. This should be considered in dialogue with the poem's exceptionally frequent use of so-called expletive particles, which more plainly appears exaggerated.[42] The indicators

42 In *Þrymskviða*, expletive particles appear more than twice as frequently as in almost any other eddic composition (see Fidjestøl 1999: tables 5, 8–10). The expletive particle *of/um* appears to have emerged as a semantically void element in the verbal texture of Old Norse poetry that filled the metrical position of a verb-prefix marking tense that was lost owing to historical changes in the language (Kuhn 1929). In syllable-counting skaldic verse, this lost element was metrically significant. Patterns of relative frequency observed in use of this particle in datable skaldic verse were projected on the eddic corpus to date composition. Expletive particle use has thus been interpreted as an indicator of the early composition of *Þrymskviða* (e.g. McKinnell 2000). However, this should consider *a*) contexts in which these particles appear and *b*) their, so to say, hyper-frequent occurrence in this text relative to the corpus. Use as dating criteria presupposes invariable ideal texts, discounting the centuries of oral circulation implicit between the loss of the verb-prefix and documentation (on the problem of dating this linguistic change, see Schulte 2003). Eddic verse has a stress-based rather than syllabic rhythm (see Kristján Árnason 1991): syllables could be relevant to the rhythmic-melodic template of a formula or line (Frog 2011d: 50–63), but expletive particles often lack any *metrically* significant role or could easily be exchanged for a semantically light word (cf. Frog 2011d: 33–4). Without metrical, semantic or other function, these particles could be dropped or integrated in the realization of a poem without violence to content or metricality: variation in transmission is inevitable (cf. Frog 2011d: 54–7). This implies that use to meet a metrical requirement would evolve into a formulaic strategy (cf. McKinnell 2001: 335), while continued use in other contexts would be as compositional texture (e.g. rhythms of verbs in poetry), presumably developing connotative functions as markers of e.g. 'poetic' discourse generally. As an integrated feature of the poetic idiom, expletive particles can be considered among the system of features belonging to 'a certain way to "sound Eddic"' (DuBois 2003: 243). An individual fluent in the poetic idiom could capitalize on traditional elements for strategic use. Following Hugo Gering's (1903: 753–60) concordance, expletive particles only occur before verbs in *Þrymskviða* (which is not true in all poems!). One third (7/22) appear before verbs in the present tense or infinitive, where their appearances cannot be attributed

of burlesque and parody at the level of content make it reasonable to consider that these exceptional qualities of textual composition are not accidental, but potentially strategic. Formulaic language clearly situates the burlesque in relation to the eddic tradition and to other mythological poetry, while the potential 'as a deliberate means of archaizing the style' (Fidjestøl 1999: 228) must be considered for the exaggerated use of expletive particles.

Þrymskviða is also characterized by pronounced use of terms associated with mythology. This combines with stylistic features to, for example, turn a mention of one mythological name into three through parallelism (*Þkv* 22.6–8), while using mythological terms with greater semantic flexibility than in other contexts (Frog and Roper 2011: 33–4). The density of use gives a mythological 'ambiance' to the poem (cf. von See *et al.* 1997–, II: 522), anticipating the strategies of the mythological burlesques in later *rímur* poetry. Within *Þrymskviða*, the use of traditionally 'eddic' features and mythological language situates it firmly in relation to traditional eddic poetry and mythology (cf. section 5.1). In light of the handling of mythological content (sections 6.1–3), these aspects of composition appear to belong to the burlesque strategies of the composition.

The degree of fixity with which eddic poetry circulated socially can be triangulated with the coherence of *Þrymskviða* as a textual entity on verbal, stylistic, structural and narrative levels, and also with the exceptional degree of verbal relations to other documented eddic poems. Taken together, these clearly situate *Þrymskviða*'s composition as a 'textual entity' in the oral milieu of the environment where the poetic idiom maintained precisely those

to a lost verb-prefix. Nearly one third appear before a significant verb, irrespective of tense, following *hamarr* ('hammer'; 6/22 = 6/10 occurrences of *hamarr*), suggesting emphasis or formulaic use. These two categories of use account for more than half of the expletive particles in the text (12/22). This suggests that expletive particles are integrated into the composition owing to factors or functions other than long-term suspension in positions of lost verb prefixes. The conscious and consistent use of style and verbal strategies throughout *Þrymskviða* suggest strategy in use and that other expletive particles have been used according to the same compositional priorities rather than some being 'authentic' archaisms and others not. Their hyper-frequency in the corpus makes their use seem exaggerated, particularly considering their patterns of use. There is nothing to support the hypothesis that expletive particles in *Þrymskviða* reflect long-term historical maintenance in positions of lost verb-prefixes and evidence instead points to strategic use by someone fluent in the poetic idiom. The textual preservation of expletive particles should not be taken for granted: the transcription process was no doubt slower and more disruptive than performance production (Frog 2011d: 50–1), and these particles must have been perceived as significant and interesting enough both to use and transcribe.

expressions in those forms as opposed to others (cf. Frog 2011d: 54–63). The number of these verbal relations to other known poetry stands out in the corpus, and thus they can be considered too extensive to attribute to a few gradual changes as the poem was assimilated to the local environment from a more distant time or region. Otherwise we should expect the great majority of other documented poetry to have been assimilated to the local dialect of the poetic idiom according to the same process. These verbal relations also cannot be reasonably attributed to a comprehensive shift or translation into the local idiom without this constituting a more comprehensive recomposition.[43] Accordingly, *Þrymskviða*, as a textual entity, was almost certainly composed by an individual fluent in the local poetic idiom[44] in a dialect arena[45] shared by eddic poems to which *Þrymskviða* exhibits verbal parallels and potential intertextual references.[46] This was most likely close, both spatially and temporally

43 In other words, the model would have to receive a verbal overhaul of narrative content producing a new poem. Hypotheses such as John McKinnell's (2001) proposal that *Þrymskviða* may have been composed in York are significantly problematized by the verbal level of *Þrymskviða* as a composition when this is situated in the eddic poetic system's inclination to non-variation. In this case, McKinnell's argument is primarily developed on analogy to evidence of Anglo-Saxon influence in *Vǫlundarkviða*, to which *Þrymskviða* exhibits several similarities. McKinnell's observations may, however, provide valid and interesting insights into trends or stylistic interests which were penetrating the eddic tradition at different levels of composition and style, apparently through models rooted in Anglo-Saxon poetry – such models having been suggested to be the roots of later *rímur* poetry as well (Vésteinn Ólason 1982).

44 The use of circulating eddic formulae and poetic expressions enable *Þrymskviða* to manifest genuine archaic features. For example, the opening line may reflect an archaic/lost alliteration based on a traditional line: [*V*]*Reiðr var þá Vingþórr* ('Angry was then *ving*-Þórr'; *Þkv* 1.1). This should not be conflated with the period of the poem's origin. In this case, a variation of the formula is repeated with alliteration in /f/ – *Reið varð þá Freyja / ok fnásaði* ('Angry was then Freyja / and snorted'; *Þkv* 13.1–2). The variation shows that the use of *reiðr* is not dependent on alliteration in /v/ (de Vries 1928: 260–1, 270–1; Magerøy 1956: 12).

45 On the implication of fluency, cf. Foley 1988: 68; on formulaic features and dialects of oral poetry generally, see Frog 2010b; within Iceland, Frog 2011d: 25–6.

46 The parallel with the opening lines of *Baldrs draumar* could reflect a transposition or the neutral adaptation of socially circulating resources (cf. Frog 2012c: 31–7), but where textual entities develop socially recognized identities, they can also be manipulated for directional reference or allusion, which is not dependent on literate culture (see e.g. Frog 2010b: 101–3). As the opening stanza of *Baldrs draumar*, this description was likely heavily marked and may have been used to refer to the poem like a name or title (cf. Quinn 1997). In an environment where the latter poem was current or popular, the use of this line-sequence in *Þrymskviða* would very probably

to the environment where these other eddic poems were documented – that is, not just in medieval Iceland, but in the environment of relevant thirteenth century centers of learning.

On the level of style and narrative strategy, *Þrymskviða* has been widely considered 'balladesque', associating it with historically later narrative poetry.[47] This is largely owing to its strategies of prolongation exhibiting a penchant for conventionalized repetitions with minor variation, extensive use of parallelism and low information density, as well as its hyperbolic rhetoric, and its tendency to introduce and elaborate figures and details which are secondary to the plot (cf. sections 6.2, 6.4 above). Metrically, the composition presents relaxed primary alliteration, increased secondary/'ornamental' alliteration,[48] gives verbal repetition priority over alliteration,[49] and even employs end-rhyme[50] – e.g. the three-syllable end-rhyme in the first long-line couplet, where generic cues are most expected. Overall, the poem exhibits different compositional priorities than other eddic verse, and those priorities anticipate later poetic traditions. Such compositional priorities may be considered consistent with potentially unconventional composition in the thirteenth century eddic poetic idiom of Iceland.

6.6 *Þrymskviða* in long-term perspective

Taken individually, the diverse aspects and features of *Þrymskviða* appear ambiguous to varying degrees, but the diverse aspects above can be triangulated for the development of a holistic model. Correlations and contrasts with international ATU 1148B traditions suggest that *Þrymskviða* was a parody (section 6.1), a possibility supported by its narrative strategies, emphasis and contrasts with fundamentals of traditions concerning Þórr and thunder (sections 6.2–3). The lack of early evidence suggests that the Þórr-bride narrative was either not in circulation or not interesting in Iceland in the first half of the thirteenth century (section 6.4). The poem's markedly 'local' idiom suggests that it was composed in Iceland in a milieu where other eddic poetry was being recorded, while the compositional strategies and priorities of this poem are consistent

activate *Baldrs draumar* intertextually. The number of indicators that *Þrymskviða* was engaging traditions referentially at multiple levels of content makes corresponding strategies at the textual level of composition probable, complemented by the use of verbal intratextual references within the poem (section 6.2).

47 E.g. Sijmons and Gering 1903: cccxx; de Vries 1928; von See *et al.* 1997–, II: 522.

48 De Vries 1928: 268–72; von See *et al.* 1997–, II: 521.

49 De Vries 1928: 271; Hallberg 1954: 55–6.

50 Sijmons and Gering 1903: ccxlv–ccxlvii, ccxviii–ccxix; de Vries 1928: 272–4.

with later rather than earlier poetic traditions (section 6.5). There is also nothing to indicate that this narrative ever conventionally circulated independent of the poetic composition either before or after the thirteenth century. These facts and the various more particular characteristics of the poem precipitate into a broad holistic probable model: *Þrymskviða* was composed as a mythological burlesque centrally developed from an ATU 1148B tradition with an orientation away from vernacular mythology and belief traditions, most probably in poetic form in thirteenth century Iceland, very likely near the time of its earliest documentation, and most probably intended for 'Christian' audiences in the context of discourses surrounding tensions and conflicts between Christian and vernacular beliefs.[51]

Old Norse scholarship tends to treat eddic oral traditions as already disappearing in Snorri's time and more or less extinct by the end of the thirteenth century.[52] *Rímur* poetry and the European ballad did not emerge until the fourteenth century (see e.g. Vésteinn Ólason 1982). This implicitly proposes a lapse of decades or more than a century during which there was no tradition of narrative poetry in Iceland (not to mention the rest of Scandinavia). This would be the only such period since Iceland's settlement and, expanding horizons from location to culture, it would presumably be the only such time since some era long prior to Proto-Indo-European.[53] Rather than a dying form, *Þrymskviða* is a potential indicator of the tradition's vitality. It (experimentally?) adapts vernacular poetry and mythological narrative as social

51 This does not mean that the narrative was not polysemic, nor that gods must *necessarily* be treated seriously and with reverence within a culture where mythology is vital, only that there is nothing to support the tradition's emergence in a 'pre-Christian' milieu while the spectrum of evidence generally points to a later environment. In addition, although the narrative may have tremendous meaning-potential for tensions related to gender and sexuality (McKinnell 2000: 7–13), emergence in an environment where conversion to Christianity was current, aggressive and political makes it probable that, as a narrative about Þórr, tensions surrounding mythology were central.

52 This view is so established in the discourse of the scholarship that it even seems to show up, for example, in Clive Tolley's (2009) recent work, although Tolley (p.c.) sees the thirteenth century as a period of turmoil and transformation poetically just as it was politically, and from which new forms of eddic poetry as well as new poetic forms such as *rímur* were gradual outcomes. The hegemonic model has been so long taken for granted that challenging it begs controversy, thus even Judy Quinn (2000: 44–5) cautiously states that eddic verse still had productive uses in the second half of the thirteenth century, without mention of the fourteenth.

53 On the position of early vernacular Germanic oral poetry as having a continuity from Proto-Indo-European, see e.g. Watkins 1995.

resources, making them interesting and relevant in a developing Christian milieu – potentially in response to the stimulating effect of Snorri's *Edda* on the cultural activity of mythology and vernacular poetics (see Frog 2011c). The composition anticipates the poetics and narrative strategies of later poetries in a manner suggestive of an emergent or transitional genre in an era when the value and social functions of oral poetry and vernacular mythology were significantly changing. This hypothesis finds support in Haukur Þorgeirsson's (2010) recent survey of *fornyrðislag* in Iceland from 1350 to 1770, which demonstrates the persistence and evolution of eddic verse through later centuries (see also Haukur Þorgeirsson 2012). *Þrymskviða*'s (presumably oral) translation into later sung poetries is a testament to its (unique) success. It became the dominant conventional form of Germanic ATU 1148B, which – like ATU 1148B traditions of cultures east of the Baltic Sea – continued to circulate and adapt into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

7. Perspectives

However radical its adaptation, *Þrymskviða* gave ATU 1148B a narrative form which maintained currency for seven centuries – until, oddly enough, *Þrymskviða* itself underwent a revival in modern cultures through print and translation, even as the oral ballad traditions were disappearing. Across those centuries, the narrative was translated with minimal change into different poetic systems (section 6.4). As a socially circulating textual entity, *Þrymskviða*'s composition is very probably attributable to either a single poet or to a small-group discourse environment and was polished through social negotiation as it began to circulate. Its abrupt emergence in the thirteenth century and long-term continuity to gradually become the dominant or exclusive circulating form of ATU 1148B emphasizes that narrative traditions such as ATU 1148B do not necessarily evolve along a fluid and gradual continuum, but rather in fits and starts (cf. Frog 2013a). When an altered form is asserted and provides a tradition with renewed currency and relevance as a social resource, it may spread across communities within a linguistic-cultural group to permeate a broad area where other forms are already in circulation (see Frog 2011e: 34–5; 2012a: 240–2). This is emphasized by the ballad-form, which appears so verbally and structurally uniform across language areas that all of these appear to be reflexes of a single textual entity which spread as a social process rather than these ballad-forms emerging independently as 'translations' from a form of *Þrymskviða*, *Þrymlur* or unmetered prose in diverse regions of Scandinavia over a period of centuries (cf. Frog 2011a: 14). Similar processes are presumably related to the distinct forms characterizing ATU 1148B among

other linguistic-cultural groups, such as the Samic identification of the god as the captured object (section 3.4) or the Lithuanian disassociation of the theft from the thunder-instrument and eliminating its recovery (section 3.5, cf. section 3.3).

Þrymskviða attests to a contemporary form of ATU 1148B that is subject to parody. Although the specific form of that narrative cannot be reconstructed, elements manifested in *Þrymskviða* that parallel elements of other ATU 1148B traditions (section 6.1) present a high probability of participation in the vernacular ATU 1148B tradition (BacCaEadFabGacdHbIaKacLdef). As a burlesque parody and probably secular song (cf. section 6.4), *Þrymskviða* could naturally circulate in parallel to that vernacular ATU 1148B tradition, the referent of its parody, gradually becoming the 'myth' as that referent dropped out of circulation until *Þrymskviða* stood alone (cf. Genette 1997: 381–4; Frog 2010a: 238–317). That referent – in some form – was presumably still in oral circulation when adapted into *Þorsteins þáttr* in or by the fifteenth century (section 5.1).

The evidence suggests that Geirrøðr was the adversary in the ATU 1148B tradition parodied in *Þrymskviða* (section 5), and that this was a form in which Guðmundr filled the role of the invited guest whom the disguised god accompanied to the feast (EFG) (section 5.1). This form of the narrative exhibits comic treatments (sections 5.1, 6), with the exception of the handling of Saxo Grammaticus, which is the only non-West Norse example. The encounter with Geirrøðr was clearly popular and a central Þórr-tradition. It is therefore unclear whether this form of the narrative had very gradually waned in centrality or been more abruptly reassessed as comical in the wake of Christianity. The second form of this narrative (section 5.2), potentially competing with the first (secion 5.1), does not exhibit the same comical treatment. It appears to have undergone more radical adaptation, lacking both the disguise and an invited guest whom the god accompanies, yet seems to present the acquisition of the lightning-weapon after the god's arrival in the giant's hall. Both of these traditions exhibit strong impacts from iron-working technologies, especially in the slaying of the adversary through a thrown piece of iron (or spike–stone combination *qua* thunder-instrument). A probable relationship between the fishing expedition in Finnic ATU 1148B traditions and Þórr's fishing expedition presents the possibility that Þórr's disguised service with a fisherman in an earlier Germanic ATU 1148B tradition (as an invited guest) was mapped over his (disguised?) confrontation with the world serpent according to the model of fishing for Leviathan (cf. Gschwantler 1968), dislocating it from ATU 1148B as a discreet adventure (see Frog 2011b: 90–1). Both forms of the Geirrøðr adventure may reflect adaptations resolving the dislocation of the fishing

adventure, one presenting an alternative invited guest, and the other eliminating the invited guest whom the god accompanies in disguise. Whatever the case, the significant impact from iron-working technologies on Germanic ATU 1148B could be a potential indicator that it was affected by the package of revolutionary impacts on Circum-Baltic mythologies in relation to these technologies (section 2.3). The possibility that the thunder-mill was earlier established in Germanic ATU 1148B and was displaced remains hypothetical, but a range of indications point to the mapping of ATU 1148B over an aetiology associated with iron-working technologies (implying an antecedent thunder-attribute) and over the associated semiotics and ideology, among the fits and starts of this narrative's evolution. The Geirrøðr ATU 1148B tradition could therefore reflect a characteristic Germanic Iron Age form of ATU 1148B with a continuity of centuries, much as *Þrymskviða* seems to have founded the Þórr-bride reflex, which maintained its own continuity of centuries through the Christian era.

Within the Circum-Baltic ATU 1148B isogloss, Germanic traditions are more removed, being on the far side of the Baltic Sea from other participating cultures. Evidence of the Germanic tradition derives primarily from Iceland and may almost exclusively reflect West Norse traditions. This may have been the outer periphery of the Circum-Baltic isogloss already in *c.* 1000. This evidence does not offer insight into what ATU 1148B traditions may have been like nearer the Baltic Sea. When constructing an overview of the ATU 1148B isogloss, we are faced with an enormous lacuna in the continuum of cultural forms of the tradition – a lacuna extending almost from the Baltic Sea to the shores of Iceland.

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Retrospection of medieval landscape change in mid-Sweden

Historical maps analysed using a retrogressive approach

HANS ANTONSON

Scholars from different historical disciplines use the word 'retrospective' in different ways which might sometimes be confusing. In historical geography, 'retrogressive methodology' is the term for what in history is known as retrospective methodology: using later sources to shed light upon earlier times. In this field, retrospective methodology is the opposite: making earlier sources throw light upon later times. The aim of this article is to present the retrogressive method as I know it from historical geography and in two case studies show how it works and highlight its potential for medieval landscape studies by the use of (post-medieval) maps from the provinces of Hälsingland and Jämtland, mid-Sweden (fig. 1). The cases discuss medieval hamlet and village formation as well as late medieval farm desertion.

> … one must first look at the present, or what was recently the present, in order to understand the past. (Bloch 1966: xxvi)

1. Retrogressive vs. retrospective

Even if he was not the first to use it, the French historian Marc Bloch became the principal advocate of the term *retrogressive* method via his *French Rural History*.[1] He himself called it *la méthode régressive* (Bloch 1931: XIV) but the

1 Most of the studies concerning Hälsingland were conducted jointly with Dr Ulf Jansson (Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University) in 1992–3. The work has been gathering dust since I presented it at the 'International Conference for Historical Geographers' in Kyoto, Japan, 2009, and at the 'New Focus on Retrospective Methods' in Bergen, Norway, 2010. First and foremost my thanks go to the editors Eldar Heide and Karen Bek-Pedersen for valuable comments. I also wish to thank Dr Jansson and Professor Stefan Brink (University of Aberdeen) for reading and commenting on an earlier version of the manuscript.



Fig. 1. The areas studied: Jämtland and Hälsingland provinces. The dotted line marks the southern boundary of Norrland, a region including all land in Sweden north of this boundary.

word *régressive* was never translated in the English 1966 edition. In English it was later referred to as *retrogressive* (Baker 1968). Bloch wrote his book in 1930 while visiting Oslo's Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture. Later, the Norwegian historian and medievalist Andreas Holmsen, who was very committed to the institute, discussed the approach as early as the 1940s (Österberg 1977). It was widely used in Norway by historians, for instance in the Scandinavian Research Project on Deserted Farms and Villages during the 1970s, albeit under the designation of the *retrospective* method (Sandnes 1981a, 1981b). Bloch (1966: xxvi) wrote that he had '... to use evidence from periods close to ours, to shed light on the very remote past, especially when dealing with agrarian regimes', which was something different from the '... strictly chronological approach, [... where one] moves forward step by step from the most remote to the most recent past'. He goes on to make a point which is valid for all historians, agrarian historians especially, namely that 'Since the facts of the distant past are also the most obscure, there is really no escape from the discipline of working back from the better to the less well-known' (Bloch 1966: xxviii). A very short but good overview was delivered by Alan R. H. Baker (1968), who addressed the discussion in greater depth.

The differences between the retrogressive and the retrospective approaches can be visualised by a graph (fig. 2) illustrating landscape history between the year 1300 and today. In this landscape there are many different features that can be studied, such as clearance cairns, settlements, place-names, fields and fences. They came into being at certain points in time and were later documented, either in their original field of application (e.g. meadow) or with a new function (e.g. forest i.e. meadow overgrown with trees). In the archive, using the retrospective approach, the researcher starts with the oldest possible sources (e.g. maps, paintings, tithe records or ethnographical interviews) to study the selected feature, moving forward in time by means of more and more recent sources. The historical features are then compared with the present-day situation in order to bring out the changes. So the focus in the retrospective approach is on today, through the study of the past. The retrospective approach has also been called the progressive method (Baker 1973, see also Jäger 1968).

The retrogressive approach, however, works in the opposite direction. More recent sources are used to study earlier times and the focus is on a past landscape. In fact, it is not unusual to end up in times for which there are no contemporary sources (e.g. Sporrong 1971).

The question is to what degree the physical rural features (e.g. clearance cairns, stone walls, wooden fences, house foundations, terrace edges) of past times in today's landscape can also be used in order to reconstruct past land-

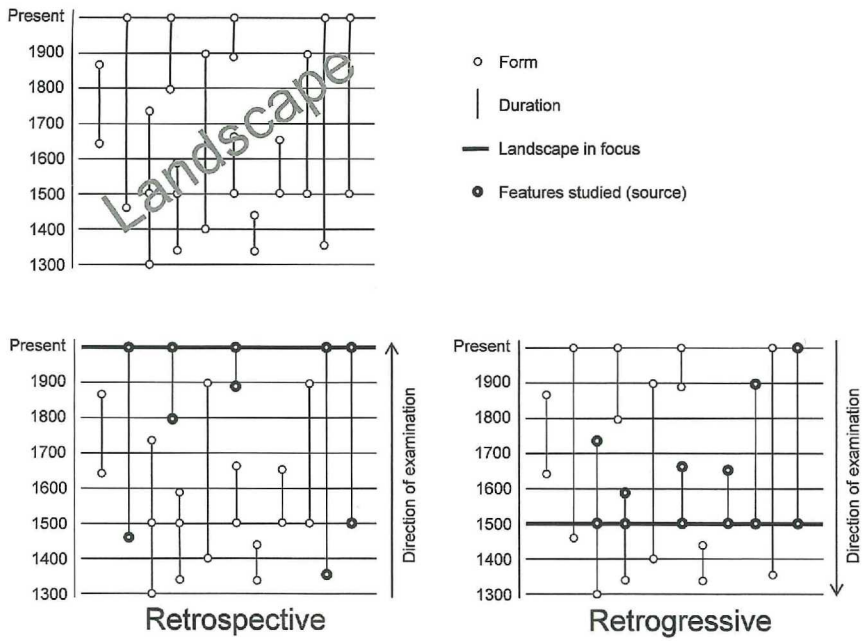

Fig 2. Graph illustrating past and present landscapes between today and 1300 AD, covering the same study area. The researcher may study a certain source or feature in order to reveal landscape change. By beginning with, for example, the fields in historical maps from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and continuing via nineteenth century fiscal accounts and, finally, twentieth century satellite photos, one can see how the size has fluctuated down to the present day. That is called a retrospective approach. The retrogressive method begins by studying a feature within today's landscape and then travels back in time via several sources, for example historical maps, in order to understand past landscapes, such as the fourteenth century settlement pattern, features which are for the most part lacking in contemporary written sources. Partly inspired by an illustration in Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat 1993.

scapes. Baker does not address this problem, but Bloch briefly discusses it when criticising a colleague, Fustel de Coulanges, who once said that there was no open-field system with long furrows in France, because he could not find it in his 'very ancient documents [... but he] never took any special notice of the characteristic pattern of plough-lands visible all over northern and eastern France...' (Bloch 1966: xxvii). My interpretation of his critique, that some physical features of past rural activities were not studied and consequently did not exist in some historian's mind, is that it must have been natural for Bloch to study ancient field traces in today's landscape in order to understand past landscapes. But the time travelling aspect of the retrogressive method is open to objection, because when studying the rural features in today's landscape, we

do not travel back in time due to the fact that, regardless of when the features were built, they are still being studied in today's landscape. I believe that this argument must be questioned. A modern feature from our own time (a road) can serve to illustrate Bloch's view. In principle, there is no major difference between studying a road in today's landscape and on a contemporary map. Both are considered sources and neither source tells us when it was built. But by using an older historical map, we have a *terminus post quem*, that is, we know that the road was built, at the latest, during the years the surveyor spent drawing the map. However, age is not the only important issue in this respect: the shape and geographical location of the road may reveal even more, and within this argument lies a fore-structure of understanding. Research has provided us with a depth of knowledge concerning this and a surveyor of ancient monuments (such as myself) trained by the Swedish National Heritage Board (NHB) can use the shape and geographical location to see the difference between a burial cairn and a clearance cairn and also sometimes roughly date different types of graves, house foundations, positive lynchets and so forth. In principle, this is no different from distinguishing between a road from the depression years of the 1930s with their dead straightness and few sharp turns regardless of the surrounding landscape and a modern road, which has a lissom curvature. In the retrogressive method, it is therefore also possible sometimes to use traces of rural features, viewed in today's landscape, especially in conjunction with historical maps, as a starting point for time travel. In the following case studies, the benefits of the retrogressive method will be shown in greater detail.

2. Case studies

The case studies were selected partly due to the scarcity of historical geographical research concerning medieval[2] landscape change in Norrland and partly because few studies had analysed the historical maps using the retrogressive method in Norrland.

Sources

Sweden has many large scale maps from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Sporrong and Wänström 1990). The geometrical maps of the 1640s are the oldest to be found of both Jämtland and Hälsingland (Tollin and Karsvall

2 In Sweden, the medieval period starts in 1050 AD (when the Viking Age ends) and ends 1500. Here, though, I use the Continental European division into Early, High (1050–1300) and Late (1300–1500) Middle Ages.

2011). In this article, 3,000 Jämtland historical maps (1645–1899) and all the geometrical maps of Hälsingland have been studied.[3] There are no great differences in terms of the landscape features recorded between the seventeenth century maps and later ones, apart from maps growing more detailed, colourful and orthographically correct towards modern times.[4] The Hälsingland maps only cover the northern part of the province. There are four volumes (with more than 320 maps) where the maps have been bound together as pages in a book. The main focus of attention is on the undated volume 3 (probably from the 1640s), which covers the parishes of Gnarp, Bergsjö and Hassela. This volume contains both the map itself and accompanying administrative information in text (fig. 3). The text contains the name of the hamlet and the number of farms; a brief description of the outfields; the farms' numbers; the farmers' names and the amount of tax (in *öresland*); sowing quantities (in seed barrel units); the volume of meadow harvested (in *gillingar*); land owned in other hamlets or on the vast outfield; and the maps on which these lands can be viewed. The maps contain different types of information, depending on the surveyor, for example concerning fences, fields, farm symbols, roads, impediments, meadows and administrative boundaries.

In the following two sections, I will present two cases in order to show the potential of the retrogressive approach. In both cases, I start with the landscape that is depicted in the Hälsingland cadastral maps from the 1600s in order to reconstruct earlier landscapes. The first case study focuses on how the large and long row-shaped hamlet or village was formed. However, initially a brief research overview on settlement patterns and hamlet/village formation is sketched. The other case study concerns the settlement fluctuations between the High Middle Ages and the Late Middle Ages. Hälsingland lacks explicit evidence of desertion, although the cadastral maps may tell another story as it does in Jämtland.

Hamlet/village formation

Both hamlets and villages are nucleations of farms (households) which can take various shapes, such as agglomerated or linear and with or without a green. The hamlet is the smaller, with no less than 3 and no more than 10 or 20 farms, while a village has no less than 10 or 20 farms (Lineau 1972).

3 For a more detailed description, see Antonson 2004.

4 Today, all historical maps are located at the National Archives in Stockholm despite their former location at the National Land Survey of Sweden in Gävle or at the different regional offices. However, they are also digitally accessible via the internet at the National Land Survey of Sweden's homepage.

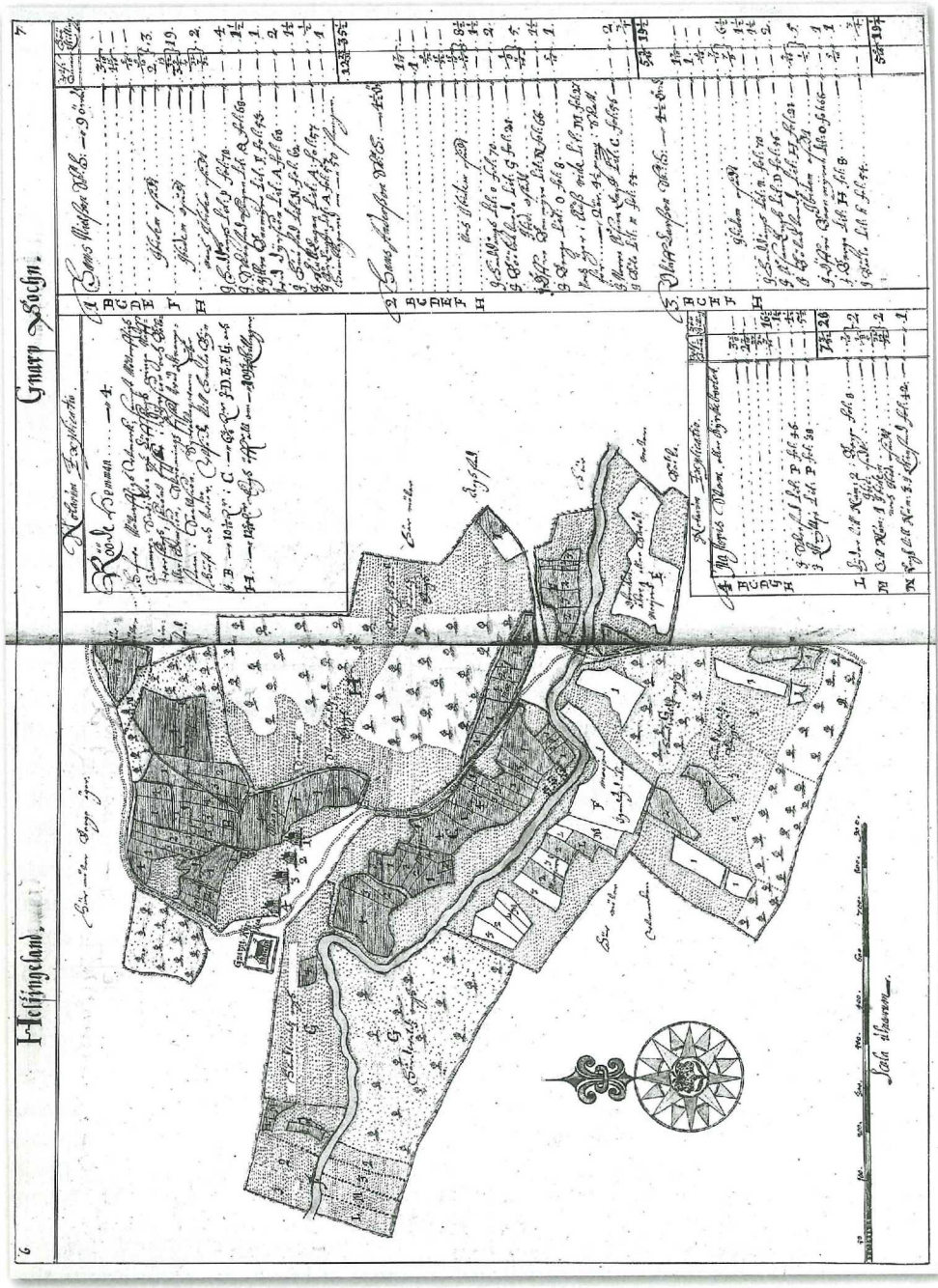

Fig. 3. Röde hamlet in a 1640s geometric map. Note that text information occurs both on and beside the map. Note also the linear agglomeration of house symbols and the occurrence of strips. Map V3:6–7.

Most settlement nucleations in Hälsingland are hamlets. In Western Europe there exists a great body of research concerning settlement patterns (cf. overview in Roberts 1996), but not much concerning their origins. However, some explanations can be found concerning the linear nucleated villages of England, for example, 'by steady growth from a single place; by the agglomeration or growing together of a number of initially separated farmsteads or hamlets; by the abandonment of individual farmsteads and hamlets in favour of larger nucleation; and by deliberate planning of a new settlement' (Jones and Page 2006: 10). The planning could be done by the local community or be imposed by the nobility or by monks.

In Sweden the hamlets have different origins. The best example is the sun-division principle (Göransson 1962) which is a form of land distribution reform with a linear agglomeration of farms where each farm had their arable strips systematically scattered on all the arable fields following a certain system and where the width of each strip was related to the size of the farm. Ulf Sporrong (1971) showed that in Berga hamlet (Närke province) there had been a movement from several single farmsteads into a common hamlet, where each farm was given regulated tofts according to its size. A toft is a patch of land on which the farm buildings of a single farm are located; however, sometimes it refers to a juridical phenomenon, namely a measured patch of land without buildings (these being located elsewhere). Many tofts can lie next to each other. The sun-division principle was of medieval origin and was still in force until the new Civil Code was enacted in 1734. The sun-division was used mainly in south-eastern Sweden, along the east coast, from the province of Kalmar in the south to the southern border of Hälsingland in the north, also covering the plains of Östergötland province and the Mälardalen region (Sporrong 1995). A second formation example is the splitting up of farms into new single farmsteads on new settlement sites within a township with a common name, in Sweden known as a *by* (hamlet/village). Such a division resulted, for instance, in a westerly and an easterly farm within the same township but could also create two separate townships. The process was already in progress during the Early Middle Ages (Ambrosiani 1964). Another example is the relocation of a scattered hamlet to a new site with a denser settlement pattern, e.g. due to rapid shore regression (Roeck Hansen 2002). A fourth example is when a manorial estate in the High Middle Ages replaced direct management with hamlets of tenant-farmers (Berg 2003).

In Gnarp parish (northeast Hälsingland) and in large parts of the area studied here, the hamlets or villages are more or less linear according to the geometrical maps of the 1600s. The house symbols merely indicate a fiscal unit also translated as cadastral homestead (fig. 3). The maps do not reveal

the individual buildings of each farm, but we can assume, by analogy with other data, that there were many. The exact location of the tofts or buildings is not known; we have just a broad outline of the location of the individual farmsteads. The linear formation of the settlement sites has yet to be explained, which, by the aid of the retrogressive method, is done in detail in the following.

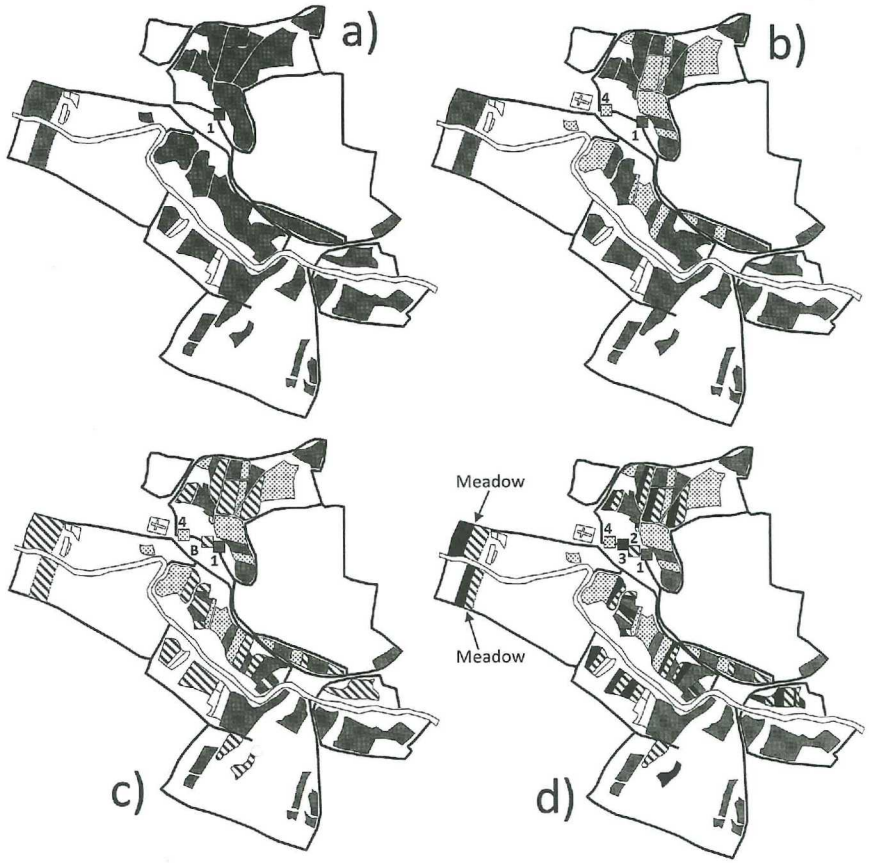

Fig. 4. The hamlet formation of Röde, Gnarp parish. Farm 1 was probably the first farm in Röde hamlet (a). Neither traces nor knowledge of any prehistoric, pre-Christian burial ground exist today, but because the area is heavily populated, it is likely that such traces have been obliterated by housing development or rural activities. A farm division took place during the thirteenth century, when the church was built and the parishes were formed, one of the two parts becoming the vicarage (b). Later, farm 1 was divided again and farm B was established (c). After the agrarian crisis abated around the mid-fifteenth century, farm B was divided into two parts, farms 2 and 3 (d). Redrawn from map V3:6-7.

Röde hamlet in Gnarp is one of the few maps where the individual arable strips were mapped (fig. 4). Röde included four farms, and farm number 4 was the vicarage. Close to the vicarage lies the church. The strip field pattern has been described as 'variable and inconsistent' (Erixon 1960: 128), and concerning the neighbouring hamlet of Berge, Erixon wrote that 'a general division of the arable land into strips was introduced whereby all the farms got their strips intermingled' (*ibid.* 124), a view which will presently be challenged.

As can be seen in the redrawing of the Röde map, the strips belonging to farms 2 and 3 were nearly always located side by side, as were two strips of meadow in the western part. This indicates a previous farm division into two equal parts (fig. 4d). Hereafter the undivided farms numbered 2 and 3 will be called B (fig. 4c). Farm 1 has its strips next to, or are an extension of, those of farm B, which makes it likely that they once formed one farm (fig. 4b). But, this cannot only be studied on the map itself. According to the administrative text of the map, the acreage of farms 2 and 3 had a tax of 4 ½ *öre* each, which adds up to the same as for farm number 1, that is 9 *öre*, indicating a formal division into two equal farms. Which of farm 1 and the vicarage was the first farm in Röde hamlet cannot be fully deduced from the morphology of the map (fig. 4a). Farm B may have been hived off from farm 1 after the vicarage was established, because farm 1 and the vicarage had their strips within the block-shaped fields close to the church. For some parts of Sweden it has been suggested that block-shaped fields are older than 'the sun-divided fields' (Sporrong 1985: 150).

The Röde case is unique because it is far more common for other maps of Hälsingland to show the arable land without the borders of the individual strips, which make it hard to make any morphological analysis. As could be seen above for Röde hamlet, the strips to farms 2 and 3 were always located next to each other and in the administrative text they each had 4 ½ *öre* of arable land. Even without this arable information it has been possible to reconstruct past farm divisions. This was done by using figures from the administrative part of the map concerning both the acreage and the volume of harvested hay for meadow holdings outside of the hamlet. The hay harvest of farms 2 and 3 in Röde was estimated at 2 *gillingar* each in Åsan meadow and 5 *gillingar* each in Bölesboda meadow (table 1), as if they had been split up into two equal parts in the same way as the arable land. Several hamlets show the same ownership and size-pattern as farms 2 and 3 in Röde hamlet. However, their meadows were not always mapped, and when they were, the surveyor did seldom draw the individual strips. Such an ownership pattern is shown in table 1 for three hamlets. Altogether 23 farms have been found to have such an ownership pattern descended from 11 pre-division farms, which

Farm no.	Hamlet	Meadows on the outfields with different names (one for each column)										Volume harvested hay in *gillingar*	Acreage meadow in *öre*
2	Röde	2	2	5		1.5	1		0.75			12.25	4.5
3	Röde	1.5	2	5		1	1		0.75			11.25	4.5
2	Skesta	2			0.5			1.5				4	3.25
3	Skesta	0.5	1.5		0.5			1.5				4	3.25
1	Berga	3	2.5	5	1						2	13.5	5.5
2	Berga	3	2.5	5	1					0.5	2	14	5.75

Table 1. Excerpts from three hamlets in the geometric maps of the 1640s, Gnarp parish, showing the acreage and the volume of harvested hay for meadows outside the infields of the hamlets.

means that each farm was split up into at least two or three parts. Based on this, the hamlets in Gnarp and northern Hälsingland province are the result of a continuous division of farms placed together in long rows.

We know that Hälsingland has been culturally influenced by Norway. The medieval provincial law of Hälsingland contains many Norwegian expressions which are not to be found in the other provincial laws of Sweden (Holmbäck and Wessén 1979). Between Norway and Hälsingland lies Jämtland that until 1645 was a part of Norway, having been claimed by both Norway and Sweden during a series of wars beginning in 1519 which resulted in dual administrations and ways to register settlements. It is thus interesting to see whether the old land partition based on continuous farm divisions is unique to Hälsingland or also occurred in Norway. The oldest maps are not as detailed as the Hälsingland counterparts, that is to say there exist very few maps of large hamlets with a detailed ownership pattern registered. Farm divisions have only been identified in a few younger maps. One such hamlet is Tullingsås (1717) in Ström parish (farms B+C+D and F+G). Another is the Dvärsätt hamlet (1760), Rödön parish (farms G+E and B+D). The habit of farm division continued during the eighteenth century, as for example in the hamlet of Söre, Lit parish, sometimes during the period between 1703 and 1805 (Antonson 1993), despite the Crown prohibitions of 1555, 1590 and 1684, of which the first and last apply also to Hälsingland.

Unfortunately, Norway lacks geometric maps from the seventeenth or early eighteenth century, and so morphological analysis on the basis of field and meadow strips is not feasible. Concerning Norwegian conditions, one opinion is that the land owned during the medieval period comprised of non-physical parts which were not marked on the ground as the individually owned strips

of, for example, Hälsingland (Ågren 2002). Such parts were called *skyld* (English 'rent'). The *skyld*-ownership system was established during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and was a measure of the value of the farmland expressed in, for example, pails of butter (Dørum 2002). Knut Dørum argues, however, that the owners had a possibility of having their *skyld*-parts partitioned out from the rest of the settlements farmland.

The Norwegian province of Bohuslän became Swedish during the seventeenth century and was mapped in the same way as the rest of Sweden. This means that former Norwegian territory is covered by old, detailed geometrical maps. In those maps, Mats Widgren (1997) has shown that all the arable land within a hamlet/village could be individually owned and marked on the ground with strips. This appears to have been the norm in Bohuslän. This means that the traditional view of the *skyld*-ownership system has been overthrown. In the absence of very old maps in Norway, Halvard Bjørkvik used more recent ones and, instead of using strips in fields and meadows, he based his study on the way in which the individual buildings were owned and positioned in the hamlet's farmyard. There were five farms on the 1881 map of the Klaklegg hamlet in the parish of Jølster (Western Norway) which, he maintained, formed a pattern (Bjørkvik 1956) possibly derived from the partitioning of farms. Dørum (1993) found in the cadastres for some Norwegian districts where the farms were partly or solely owned by the farmers, that the number of owners of a farm corresponded to the actual farm-parts, which indicates that the land was not owned in imaginary parts. In line with this, Paul Borgedal (1959) has shown how a *matrikkel*-farm of 24 *månadsmatbol* (= *mmb*, a Norwegian term giving the size of a farm-part) was first split up into three parts (8+8+8 *mmb*), one of which was subsequently divided into two parts or holdings (4+4 mmb). Despite the often confused terminological differences concerning the settlement categories between, for example, Sweden, England and France on the one hand[5] and Norway on the other,

5 The *matrikkel*-farm corresponds to a Swedish farm under a hamlet/village according to Björn Ambrosiani (1974). A farm could be comprised of one or several holdings, that is, family units. Due to the fact that the surveyor, for example in Jämtland, did not consistently record hamlets and villages in the same way, Ambrosiani's analysis may not always be valid for all hamlets or villages of Norway. In Jämtland we find two ways in which the surveyor classified the settlements. In Häggenås parish we find two neighbouring and nearly identical settlement agglomerations. In one, called Norderåsen (a district name), 8 farms were registered in the sixteenth century, but today these are registered as separate hamlets with different names. In the other, 12 farms were registered in the sixteenth century, but today they are registered as farms under the hamlet of Österåsen. The two examples are rather similar regarding both their topography and the manner of their registration in the sixteenth century cadastres. This means that on the ground, and in some cases also in the administrative classifications, Klaklegg *matrikkel*-farm have much in common with a Swedish hamlet.

the Klaklegg *matrikkel*-farm with its secondary and tertiary divisions may be treated as four individual farms within the same hamlet, just as it would be in Sweden. Bjørkvik, Dørum and Borgedal have provided examples that all indicate farm divisions; however, the sources do not reveal all the details as do the Swedish maps of the seventeenth century, that is, whether the land ownership was marked on the ground as strips. That is, however, something we only can assume in analogy with Widgren's study and the examples of Jämtland.

There is circumstantial evidence of farm divisions in Norway indicating cultural exchange with Hälsingland in historical times. From where the farm division habit originates, the sources do not yet reveal. The linear-shaped hamlets of Hälsingland are also to be found in Jämtland, but there also occur agglomerated settlements as is often the case in Norway. The linear-shaped hamlets of Hälsingland and probably also in Jämtland, had more to do with the topography than with a deliberate planning of strip fields at a certain point in time, such as the sun-division principle existing in the provinces south of Hälsingland. The examples from Norway, Jämtland and Hälsingland show that younger sources (maps, cadastres, ownership of buildings) can be used to reveal earlier conditions.

Deserted High Medieval settlements

The next case study also concerns settlements, or rather the absence of settlements in the sources. The Black Death during the fourteenth century came to change the landscape of Europe drastically when people died and land was abandoned (cf. Dyer 1989). In England and Western Europe, for example France and Germany, the written contemporary medieval accounts are much better than in Scandinavia, and it is sometimes possible to reconstruct the population size, for example from contemporary monastic taxation rolls. Instead, in Scandinavia the magnitude of the plague has to be based on settlement desertion from the mid-fourteenth century and one to two centuries on (Antonson 2009).

Hälsingland does not seem to have escaped the Black Death as is evident from a letter of 1395 (Brink 1990; 1995). But Hälsingland may not have been hit as hard as Jämtland, which had a desertion ratio of 52–7 per cent (Brink 1990; 1995; Antonson 2004; 2009). Brink found no deserted farms in Northern Hälsingland, but he did not use historical maps, just diplomas, fiscal

accounts of later times and archaeological evidence. In the following I will demonstrate how a retrogressive study of early modern maps that historians seldom use can give a different picture.

The search for desertion in the maps is based on previous Swedish research, such as

1. archaeological remains or ancient physical rural features (cf. Carlsson 1986);
2. explicit information on desertion in the medieval or post-medieval written sources (cf. Österberg 1977);
3. identifying place-names that indicate ancient settlement, e.g. the appellative *böle* in Jämtland (cf. Salvesen 1979, Antonson 2004);



Fig. 5. Gällsta hamlet, Gnarp parish, in the 1640s. The deserted fields are shaded in grey, the hillock is marked with an asterisk * and between the arrows lie headlines (possible locations of previous fences). Thick line = fence, thin line = strip field, black square = toft. Redrawing of map V3: 50–1.

4. identifying *utjord, urfjäll, utgods,* which normally refer to patches of land in one hamlet/village owned by farmers in another hamlet/village (cf. Bååth 1983; Antonson 2004);
5. morphological differences (maps) in fields and fencing, often areas located away from the present settlement sites (cf. Helmfrid 1962).

Figure 5 shows a 1640s map of Gällsta hamlet in Hälsingland. The remarkable thing about this hamlet is that the surveyor mapped a lot of deserted fields in the north. The area of deserted fields also continues in Skesta hamlet on the other side of the border. However, nothing is said on the map as to when the fields were abandoned. In a later map (1760) from the Regional Archive of Härnösand, the area is called Lysta – a name not in use any more. Names ending with *-sta* usually date from the Early Middle Ages (Brink 1984) or High Middle Ages (Antonson 2004). This name, together with the occurrence of the deserted fields, amounts to strong evidence for a deserted settlement. Analysing the morphology of the map, a small hillock in the middle of the deserted fields may be the site of the former farmyard. It is also possible that headlands surrounding the fields were once the place for the fences, as can be seen on most of the maps from the 1640s.

A similar example can be found in Bergsjö parish. Some 800 metres east of the Trösten hamlet the farmers owned an area of deserted fields and meadows called Skratsland (fig. 6). Names with the element *land* are assumed to be among the oldest in this part of the country (Brink 1984). The far distant location together with the occurrence of small patches of deserted fields scattered

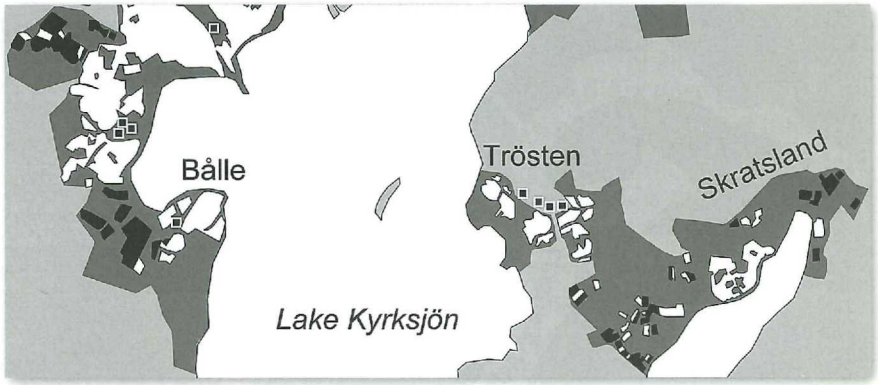

Fig. 6. The infields (dark grey) south of Berge church with fields (white) and deserted fields (black). Skratsland north-east of the Skratsland mere and Bålle west of lake Kyrksjön are probable deserted farmsteads. Near Bålle, two agglomerations of deserted fields can be found in the left part of the map, also indicating deserted farmsteads. This is a re-drawn and rectified collage of the geometric maps from the 1640s.

around the meadow suggests a farm similar to some other farms mapped at the same time, but in this case without any settlement. The National Heritage Board inventory of ancient monuments shows, near the deserted fields, a pre-historic burial ground with mounds and cairns, usually dated to the Early Middle Ages (Swedish Viking Age). The site also includes other ancient monuments, such as house foundations, a sunken track and clearance cairns. Those are features (morphology, name, deserted fields, and ancient monuments) also indicating settlement desertion. Further to the west of Trösten, on the other side of Lake Kyrksjön, a similar pattern occurs, with two large areas of deserted fields south of the hamlet of Högen, and west of the single farmstead Bålle. Bålle does not exist in the cadastres of 1535 or 1542 and can thus be established on previous deserted fields close to the mapping. However, another explanation could be that it did not pay any tax in the early 1500s. These findings indicate between four and five deserted farmsteads.

The next example of probable desertion is the occurrence of *utjord*. Gnarp has two types; single strips as in Byn hamlet (no. 13 belongs to farm no. 2 in

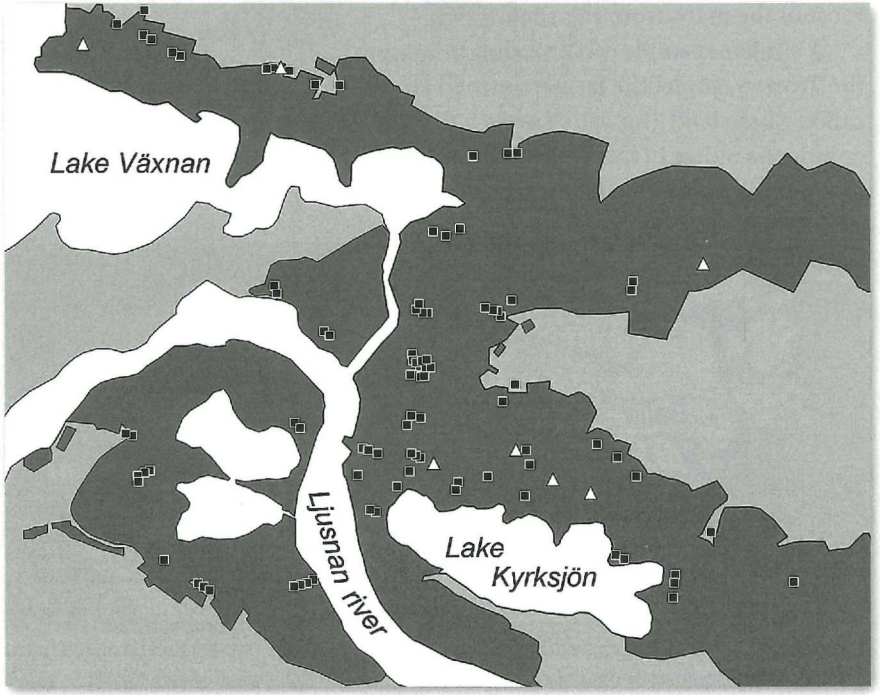

Fig. 7. The infields (dark grey) of the centre of Ljusdal parish, with *bodland* (triangle) and farms (black square) intermixed. This is a re-drawn and rectified collage of the geometric maps from the 1640s.

Bosta hamlet, see fig. 3), and entire fiscal farm units as in Ås hamlet. Another example of probable desertion has to do with a very unique Swedish seasonal settlement category called *bodland*, a form of secondary farm (Bodvall 1959). Stefan Brink (1990) has discussed the possibility of *bodland* serving as a buffer, which did not make the farm economically deserted and therefore the crisis less conspicuous in the sources. What makes the *bodlands* so interesting is that they are sometimes geographically located in the same way as many *utjords*. As can be seen in fig. 7, the *bodlands* had very central locations intermixed with the ordinary farms. According to Brink, *böle* as an indicator of desertion does not occur in Hälsingland (Brink 1990), but, in fact, some of the *bodlands* do have *böle*-names, e.g. Böle and Bölet in Ljusdal parish.

The geometric maps also indicate plenty of far distant meadowlands. Meadows are mostly represented by patches of greenish coloured land inside fences or marked off with a hatched line. However, fairly large meadows occur that do not look like this at all; instead they bear greater resemblance to the infields of the hamlets in the centre of the parish. It looks as if the surveyor had mapped fields, but classified them as meadows, as with the meadows called Bölesboda (fig. 8) and Haddång, and the former name also includes the element *böle*. The areas marked as though they were fields are also divided very regularly, as if the division were planned at a certain point, between several farms belonging to several hamlets. This would probably be the case if a previous farm had been deserted for a very long time. After the crises abated, some of the non-deserted farms laid claim to the land, distributed the land among them and paid the tax instead of risking Crown sequestration of the land for non-payment of tax.

In a 1770 map of a summer pasture called Hållsta in Jämtland, all land is marked as meadows of different types. However, the land plots marked with the number 1 (fig. 9) consisted of dry meadow and differ in colour from the rest of the meadows, but since this map is quite recent, it is also more informative. The surveyor wrote that this part of the meadow was old arable fields. Furthermore, the surveyor wrote, on the right hand side, that the summer farm was a *ödesböle*, a regional term meaning 'deserted farmstead' (Antonson 2004; 2009). This map has much in common with the Hälsingland maps, despite being more than 100 years younger. For instance, meadows at a summer pasture that was previously arable fields, a cartographic technique used in order to distinguish the previous arable fields from the rest of the meadows, and land divided into strips individually owned. The Hållsta map has a lacuna in that the surveyor did not map any clearance cairns, as in the Bölesboda meadow, but these are shown on several other Jämtland maps with previous arable fields that at the time of the mapping had turned into meadows.

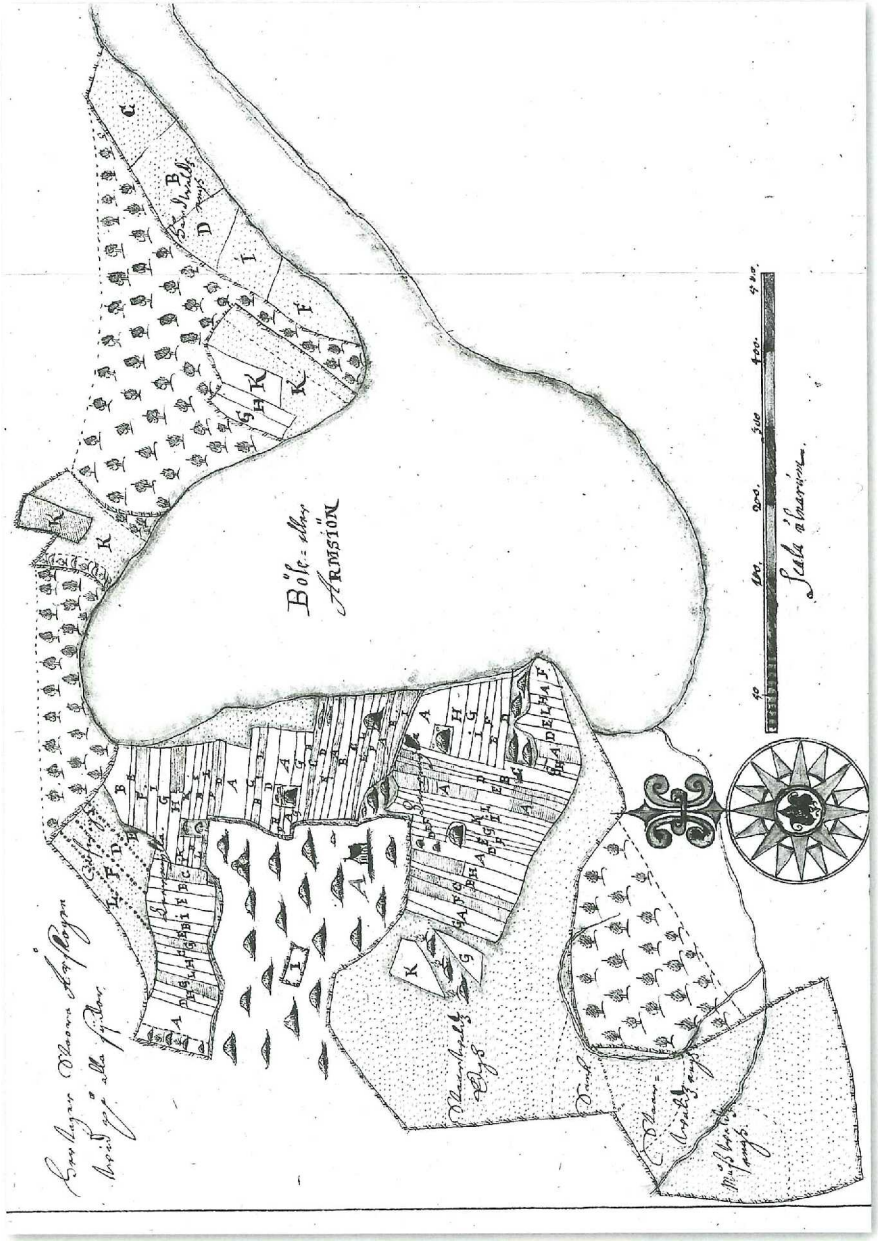

Fig. 8. Bölesboda meadow in Gnarp parish. Note the different ways in which the surveyor drew the meadows west of the lake and furthest east of it. The western ones are drawn in the same way as the arable fields in the central part of the parish and had probably been arable fields previously. Map V3: 21–2.

To sum up, this case study has yielded four out of five indicators of deserted farmsteads ending up in nine new findings. If all historical maps are used, the number will increase with at least three possible findings. In analogy with previous research, it is likely that many of these farms were abandoned during the late medieval agrarian crisis due to the Black Death in the 1350s and to the many recurrent plagues until about the mid-fifteenth century (Myrdal 2003).

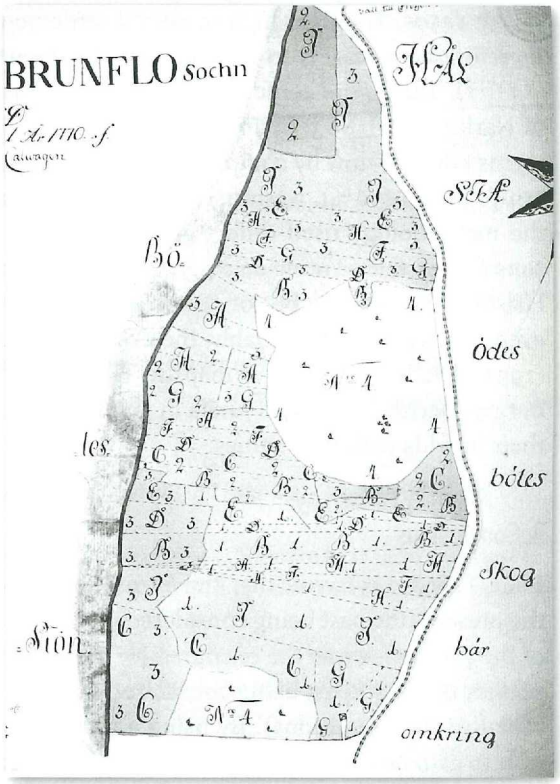

Fig. 9. Hållsta meadow in Lockne parish, Jämtland, 1770. In the lower part of this map the surveyor has given a section of the meadow (marked with number 1) a different colour, writing in the separate legend that this had previously been old arable fields. Map Y7-1:1.

If we consider the nine new findings in Gnarp that were once a single farm, it is possible to calculate the desertion ratio. In the 1535 cadastre, Gnarp had 72 farmers who paid tax (Brink 1994) and in 1542 it had 52 (Vestlund 1933). To what degree the two cadastres, mirror the actual taxpayers and, indirectly, the number of farms we do not yet know, but there is likely to be some sort of correspondence. Eighty-one farms were mapped in the 1640s, and this figure is probably correct. There would not be any reason for the surveyor to not map a farm only because the tax could not be paid. The mapping of the arable valleys is almost complete and no white patches appear when they are merged together. Brink (1995) is of the opinion that there was no major expansion between 1350 and 1500. However, I believe there is likely to have been a growth of population when times improved, and there seems to have been an expansion by nine farms between 1535 and the 1640s. If there was a similar growth between 1450 and 1535, the figure can be reduced by about seven farms, which makes 65 farms

in the 1450s. The total high medieval settlement optimum in Gnarp should therefore be 77 farms (65+9+3). And the desertion rate at least 16 per cent (12÷77). This figure comes close to findings (Sandnes 1981) in the provinces of Närke (11 %), Södermanland (10–12 %) and Bohuslän (approx. 10 %), but seems relatively low by comparison with Jämtland and the provinces of northern Småland (36 %), western Värmland (20 %) and Scania (33 %). However, the methodology used differs greatly, and it is doubtful whether comparisons are feasible (Antonson 2009). With an inventory of all historical maps of Hälsingland, the number of deserted farms identified will probably increase even further, as will, probably, the desertion rate. For example, in Sporrong's (1995) article on historical maps in Hälsingland, two hamlet maps, Vade in Bergsjö parish (1726) and Jursta in Jättendal parish (1722), show meadows on their infields with *böle*-names.

3. Conclusions

Baker (1968: 245) wrote that 'the retrospective approach is thus focussed upon the present (the past being considered in so far as it furthers an understanding of the present), while the retrogressive method is focussed upon the past (the present or recent past being considered in so far as it furthers an understanding of earlier conditions)'. By using a retrogressive method, it has been possible to gain new knowledge concerning old times, knowledge that would have been unobtainable with a rigid approach to the sources, for example admitting only explicit evidence on desertion in medieval sources. The analysis has shown that old maps also show information that other sources do not reveal, including younger maps, for example farm division in the form of strip fields. I would argue that for an historian making research on land issues (such as e.g. settlement, place-names, yields, and ownership) historical maps are a source as important as other written sources. A bonus is the spatial patterns that are otherwise missed. As has been illustrated above, the historical maps have provided us with new information on hamlet formation and desertion of medieval farmsteads. However, I would also argue that in an analysis of landscape change the historical maps ought to be combined with other sources (such as ancient monuments, other ancient field traces and other types of written sources such as medieval letters and sixteenth century cadastres) in order to reveal the secrets of the Middle Ages.

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Reconstruction of culture and ethnicity

Remarks on the methodology of historical-comparative linguistics (on the basis of Western Uralic Languages)

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The article discusses the linguistic methodologies used in the historical reconstruction of past populations, their culture, identities, forms of livelihood, religious beliefs and practices as well as the intergroup networks. The material used for this purpose derives from the author's work on the Finno-Ugrian languages. The article critically discusses some ways in which the linguistic material has been used in connection with archaeological material and stresses the fact that the linguistic map of the past was considerably different from the linguistic map of the present and likely consisted of many language groups that have since disappeared almost without traces. It also contains a first attempt to create a typology of word development or a typology of etymologies that would help the investigator predict how a particular concept is likely to develop in the history of language. The article also contains some new etymological explanations for Finnish religious concepts (*kirkko, jumala*, etc.).

1. Introduction

Historical linguistics has been employed in the reconstruction of different aspects of the life of past linguistic and ethnic groups, including their forms of livelihood, geographical spread and cultural contacts since the time it first emerged as a scientific discipline. There are countless examples of its use in various contexts relating to different languages and language areas as well as different types of cultural contacts where significant new information has been gained by employing it. Alongside archaeology, historical-comparative linguistics can probably be considered the most widely used discipline that reconstructs the cultures of past populations.

Needless to say, however, there are also important limits to the examination of past cultures by means of comparative linguistic methods. These limits and problems regarding interpretation of the linguistic material become even more vital when the results of historical linguistics are employed in an interdisciplinary framework. Quite obviously, many investigations that claim

to unite the results of, for instance, linguistics and archaeology misrepresent much of the material of one or the other, exaggerate the possible correlations and downplay the different nature of the materials and results of the different disciplines (in detail: Saarikivi and Lavento 2012).

This is, for example, often the case when archaeologically defined areas are equated with reconstructed proto-linguistic areas. It is not uncommon to encounter claims that the spread of Indo-European languages to Europe was connected with Corded Ware ceramics, or that the Finno-Ugrian languages spread to their present area in connection with the Comb Ware ceramics. However, it is quite evident that the dynamics of the spread of technologies, raw materials and artifact types on the one hand, and languages on the other, are often entirely different. Therefore, any straightforward correlation between the spread of technological skills and fashions, such as specific types of ceramics, and the spread of languages is always problematic and the true correlations are likely to be context-specific (see section 8 below and Saarikivi and Lavento 2012).

Further, many interpretations of prehistoric material that derive from scientific disciplines other than linguistics tend to be based on assumptions that those linguistic groups that presently reside in a given territory were also there thousands of years ago. To mention just one example, it is not entirely uncommon that, in the literature on Scandinavian archaeological groups or the genetic grouping of northern European peoples, the ethnonym Saami is used to refer to populations belonging to the Bronze Age, the Neolithic period, or even earlier. However, from a linguistic point of view, it makes no sense to speak about Saami languages in Scandinavia (or anywhere else) earlier than approximately 2000 years ago (cf. Aikio 2004; Häkkinen 2009; and below in section 7). This is because those phonematic changes and lexical borrowing processes that shaped Western Uralic languages in such a way that they can be labelled Saami cannot be several millennia old. Although it is not possible to date it precisely, Proto-Saami was likely spoken no earlier than 2000 years ago and probably in a limited area somewhere in inner Finland and Karelia, not in Northern Fennoscandia (in detail: Saarikivi 2007; Saarikivi 2011; Aikio 2012).

Such examples stress the importance of examining which aspects of the life of past populations we are really able to investigate with the help of historical linguistics and which are the most common problems related to the interpretation of the research materials and results. This knowledge can then be employed when asking which aspects of historical linguistics can be implemented together with the methodologies of other scientific disciplines and in what circumstances it is problematic to utilize historical linguistics in interdisciplinary work.

This article provides an overview of the implementation of historical-comparative linguistic methodologies in the reconstruction of prehistory and discusses some central problems related to it. The viewpoint is based on the author's own work on the Finno-Ugrian languages and the prehistory of Finno-Ugrian-speaking peoples.

The article is theoretical in orientation. Its main purpose is to distinguish, discuss and clarify the ways in which linguistic methodologies are employed in the reconstruction of prehistory with the Fennoscandian prehistory as an example. Special emphasis is laid on the interdisciplinary aspects, that is to say the perspectives of cooperation between archaeology, comparative religion, cultural studies and historical-comparative linguistics. The examples derive mainly from the field of Finnic[1] and Saami languages and the reconstruction of the ethnic history of Eastern and Northern Fennoscandia. However, it is implied that much of the discussion also applies in research into other language families and cultural contexts.

Although mainly theoretical, the article also includes some new interpretations of facts related to the prehistory of the Finnic- and Saami-speaking people. Most notably, the question of origin of mythological vocabulary and concepts related to it is treated (see section 7). Also, the grouping of the lexical material according to different types of regularities discernible in their development (section 5) is based on the author's own work on historical lexicology of Finno-Ugrian languages and is published here for the first time.

2. Linguistics in the search of human prehistory: aspects of reconstruction

The discussion that follows is based on the historical-comparative, dialectological, areal and toponymic methodologies of historical linguistics. Alongside these, other methodologies are also employed, most importantly philological methodologies studying old texts that are touched upon in other articles of this volume (cf. Sävborg, Frog, Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir).

Of the aforementioned methodologies, the most important and most widely utilized is the historical-comparative method that has likely been employed, in one way or another, in the study of most of the world's languages (although often not in very detailed manners). It can be argued that also the dialectological, areal and toponymic methodologies are based on its foundation (depending on the definitions of these methodologies). The method itself

1 Finnic refers to a group of Uralic languages closely related to Finnish. According to a traditional view, Finnic comprises of Finnish dialects, Estonian, Karelian, Veps, Votic, Ingrian and Livonian. Cf. also footnote 2.

has been described in various handbooks (cf. Anttila 1989; Fox 1995; Campbell 2004) and therefore only some of its general aspects are commented upon here, most notably those that have implications relating to the reconstruction of the material culture, forms of livelihood, religion and cultural contacts of past populations.

The historical-comparative method can be implemented in the study of various aspects of language history. Traditionally, a central distinction has been made between etymology, the study of the origins of words, and sound history, which is the study of the history of the phoneme system of a language. Further, the method most widely used in locating and dating prehistoric populations is palaeolinguistics (cf. section 7 below). Areal linguistic and dialectological methods are used to trace back the development of items of vocabulary and to identify the historical core and peripheral areas of the spread of a language. Taxonomic methodologies are widely employed to describe the relationship of related languages to each other and to stratify their historical developments. Finally, the toponymic methods are used to reconstruct past language areas beyond the reach of the historical sources.

From the point of view of the reconstruction of prehistoric societies, at least the following aspects of historical-comparative linguistics can be distinguished:

a. establishing the language relatedness and its character, i.e. common origin, contacts or chance resemblance;
b. establishing the regular phonematic and lexical correspondences between languages related by common origin or contacts;
c. explaining the correspondences on the basis of protoforms relevant for understanding the historical development, i.e. reconstructing (units of) relevant protolanguages;
d. in case of common origin: establishing the system and order of the historical changes (e.g., the sound laws and other changes) and the linguistic taxonomy, i.e. the relationship between several languages within one language family;
e. in the case of contact: identification of the layers of borrowings and sequences of language contacts;
f. reconstructing the cultural traits and forms of livelihood of past populations on the basis of (both inherited as well as borrowed) lexicon from different periods;
g. dating the protolanguages and the layers of contacts between them (relatively, on the basis of linguistic material, and absolutely, by connecting linguistic material with philological, archaeological and historical data);

h. reconstructing the past language areas, or the areas of the past speech communities (which may have been mono- or multilingual) and the networks of the language communities under investigation (on the basis of interdisciplinary material).

Each of the aforementioned represents different aspects of implementation of the historical-comparative methodologies. The core methodologies are listed first (*a–c*), the methods based on their implementation within linguistic science next (*d–e*) and those methodologies related to the interdisciplinary interpretation of comparativistics at the end (*f–h*).

The different aspects of historical-comparative methodologies thus have different interdisciplinary implications and implementation perspectives in the cross-scientific reconstruction of the past. The core methodologies of historical-comparative studies operate within linguistic science only, but much of the information that is obtainable through these methodologies will only be reached when the linguistic material is interpreted in a broad interdisciplinary context.

3. Implementation of the comparative method: establishing correspondences

The historical-comparative method analyses the origins of words, grammatical affixes and phonemes (the smallest discernible sound units in words) by comparing their appearances in the dialects or languages under investigation. When possible, it also employs philological material from those language forms that have an early attestation.

The linguistic material investigated (i.e. words, affixes, phonemes) may derive from a common ancestor language or be borrowed from one language into another. In the case of linguistic relatedness by a common ancestor, the differences are explained by deriving them from non-varying protoforms that are reconstructed so that the present forms can be derived from them in a phonetically natural way (cf. Heide in the present anthology). In the case of borrowing, the protoforms are also used to explain the phonematic shape of a word, both in the source language (the language in which the word originates) and the target language (the borrowing language). These are typically different since a borrowed element must be adapted to a new host language by a series of phonematic substitutions if the phonematic systems of the languages are not entirely similar (they practically never are).

The collection of such protoforms, both words and grammatical affixes, is called a protolanguage. The protolanguages, to the best of our knowledge, are not entirely identical to the language forms that really existed in the past, but

there are good reasons to believe that they resemble them in many respects. This is evident in, among other things, the fact that several cases of known language splits have been attested in the historical philological sources, for instance, the split of Latin into Romance languages, or the split of Sanskrit into the Indo-European languages of Southeast Asia (Hindi, Bengali, etc.) and the processes of such splits resemble the reconstructed processes of the breakup of protolanguages.

Those protolanguages that are close to us in time are typically reconstructed on the basis of comparison of closely related languages and can often be reconstructed in detail. For instance, nine living Saami languages that are to some extent mutually intelligible even today (South, Ume, Pite, Lule, Northern, Inari, Skolt, Kildin and Ter Saami) and two now extinct, but attested, Saami languages (Akkala, Kemi Saami) derive from a Proto-Saami that would seem to have been an Iron Age protolanguage (an assumption based on its shared vocabulary). Similarly, between seven and eleven Finnic languages (Finnish, Estonian, South Estonian, Votic, Ingrian, Karelian, Veps, Ludic, etc.)[2] derive from Proto-Finnic which was, in all likelihood, spoken during approximately the same period. Such protolanguages can be compared with other protolanguages and thus it is possible to establish old layers of borrowings (in the case of language contact) or large language families and phyla (in the case of relatedness by common ancestor). As is obvious, those distant protolanguages that are reconstructed on the basis of other protolanguages can only be reconstructed on a very general level. For instance, the current reconstruction of Proto-Uralic is based on comparison of Proto-Finnic, Proto-Saami and four or five other protolanguages and therefore cannot be considered very accurate. Proto-Indo-

2 Various problems are involved in the definition of the Finnic languages. For instance, Finnish researchers have traditionally considered Ludic a distinct language, whereas the Russian researchers have classified it as a Karelian dialect. In fact, it represents a number of dialects, some of which resemble Karelian, whereas others are closer to Veps. Estonian and South Estonian, in turn, have long been classified as a single language because their speakers share the same national identity. There are, however, very deep-reaching and old differences between these language forms. Further, *meän kieli* spoken in Tornedalen Valley in Sweden was long considered a variety of Finnish northern dialects, yet language activists, and from 2000 onwards even the Swedish legislation, claim that it is an independent language. The Kven dialects spoken on the arctic coast of Norway represent a somewhat similar case of a new language that is emerging due to state borders and the different language communities these have created. There would also seem to be good grounds to classify the Helsinki working class historical vernacular *stadin slangi* an independent language. This language form represents a very significant amount of borrowings from Swedish and Russian as well as some independent grammatical developments.

European, which was likely spoken more or less during the same period, can be reconstructed in much greater detail due to several old literary languages (Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Old Norse, Gothic, Hittite, Old Church Slavonic, Tokharian, etc.) that can be used for the purposes of reconstruction.

The historical-comparative method establishes a system of correspondences between different sequences of phonemes that are embedded in words of different languages and explains this set of correspondences by projecting it onto the past as a single system. Because the entities that correspond to each other exist on different levels in a language, both on a phonematic, segmental, lexical and semantic level, the historical-comparative method can provide an investigator with a system of correspondences between the phonematic systems, morphemes and lexica of different languages.

This procedure can be exemplified in the following way:

	Language	'Fish'	'Black'	'Friend'	'Feeble'
	Finnish	kala	musta	seura	köyhä
	Karelian	kala	mušta	sepra	köyhä
	Estonian	kala	must	sõber	kehv
→ → →	Proto-Finnic	*kala	*musta	*sepra	*kevhä

Table 1. Correspondences between some Finnic words and their reconstructed protoforms.

The historical-comparative method is based on the assumption of a regularity of linguistic changes – despite the fact that it has always been known that many linguistic items often develop irregularly (see section 5 for details). This means that, according to the general assumption made by the historical-comparative methodology, the same entity is always developed in a similar manner and has either been preserved, has disappeared or changed in a particular way. The historical-comparative method also makes generalizations regarding the development of language in the form of regularities, most notably the sound laws that systematize the regular change of a single sound or a sound cluster. For instance, on the basis of comparison of such word pairs as Finnish *kala* 'fish', *kana* 'hen', *musta* 'black', *ranta* 'shore' and their Estonian counterparts *kala, kana, must* and *rand* a sound law can be stipulated that predicts a loss of final vowel in Estonian after a consonant cluster and the preservation of the final vowel after a single consonant phoneme. This regularity is corroborated by hundreds of similar word pairs. In a similar manner, on the basis of word pairs such as, on the one hand, English *father, fish* and their Germanic counterparts, and, on the other, Latin *pater, pisces,* etc. and their Romance offspring a sound law $p > f$ (i.e. the so called Grimm's law) can be reconstructed as having operated in Proto-Germanic.

Typically, it is also possible to establish the chronological order of sound changes. This is crucial in dating the outer influences such as loanwords (cf. section 5) which can, in most cases, be dated relatively on the basis of the sound shifts they have undergone (Heikkilä 2014).

The historical-comparative method does not imply that a single phoneme corresponds to a single phoneme in the other language, because it can also correlate with a loss of phoneme, or with two or more phonemes if a single phoneme has yielded a phoneme cluster in the language under investigation. Several phonematic developments also depend on context. Thus, a particular phoneme in a specific cluster may have (and often has) developed differently into the same sound in another environment. This means that the units that correspond to each other in the related languages are sequences of phonemes that sometimes consist of one, sometimes of two or more phonemes. On a more general level, words correspond to words. This can be exemplified in the following manner:

Finnish	kala	käsi	kota	jää
Saami	guolli	giehta	goahti	jiekŋa
Hungarian	hal	kéz	ház	jég
Proto-Uralic	*kala	käte	*kota	*jäŋe

Table 2. Finnish, Northern Saami and Hungarian words for 'fish', 'hand', 'tent' and 'ice' and their Proto-Uralic reconstructions.

In the word **kala* 'fish', the Finnish *a* corresponds to a Hungarian single *a,* but in Northern Saami the single vowel has developed into a diphthong *uo.* Thus, the Finnish *a* corresponds to a sequence of vowels. The Finnic second syllable *-a* corresponds to a second syllable *-i* in Northern Saami, but in Hungarian it corresponds to a loss of phoneme. In the Finnish *käsi* 'hand', the historical *t* has developed into *s* when preceding the front vowel *i.* Hence, the Finnic *-si* in *käsi* corresponds to Hungarian *-z* and Northern Saami *-hta-*, but in another context, for instance in the word **kota* 'tent', the Finnish *t* has a correspondence in the consonant segment *-ht-* only in Northern Saami (because the *t* is followed by a back vowel and hence did not develop into *s*). In the word **jäŋe* 'ice', in turn, the Finnish has lost an intervowel laryngal **ŋ* that, in Northern Saami and Hungarian, has developed into either a single consonant (*g* in Hungarian) or a cluster (*-kŋ-* in Northern Saami). Thus, we have a correspondence in a loss, of a single consonant and a consonant cluster.

The comparative method thus combines several different aspects of reconstruction. It reconstructs the history of phonemes, morphology as well as the lexicon. An interdependency can be observed between sound history and ety-

mology, the two most investigated branches of historical linguistics. Whereas sound history is based on the comparison of words and reconstructing sound shifts on the basis of regularities that can be observed in the vocabulary, etymology is based on knowledge about the regular sound correspondences and sound shifts. These disciplines thus provide each other with material (cf. Häkkinen 1983).

In order to establish linguistic relatedness through a common ancestor, it is thus not a question of finding a large amount of words that 'look similar', but a considerable amount of words that correspond to each other in a predictable way. In fact, it is typical for cognate words not to share a single phoneme (cf. word pairs such as the Finnish *pii* ~ Hungarian *fog* from Proto-Uralic **piŋe* 'teeth', or the Finnish *ydin* ~ Hungarian *velő* from the Proto-Uralic **wüδime* 'marrow'). Notwithstanding this state of affairs, there is no reason to raise suspicion regarding their relatedness, because each phoneme sequence of the words has numerous parallels in other words reconstructable in Proto-Uralic.

A set of cognate words with regular phoneme sequences is typically a linguistic fact of the well-arranged research material, but the reconstruction provided to explain these correspondences is an interpretation carried out by a linguist and is therefore often debatable. Frequently it may be replaced by another reconstruction that suits better the ideas regarding the phonematic development of the language under investigation. However, debates regarding, for instance, the reconstruction of details of Proto-Saami and Proto-Uralic should not create suspicion regarding the existence of such protolanguages. It is not uncommon that different linguists use slightly different reconstructions to explain the similarities between cognate words. For instance, the Proto-Uralic word stem for 'fish' has, in most sources, been reconstructed as **kala*, but also the reconstruction **kålå* exists (Janhunen 1981; Sammallahti 1988). In a similar manner, the Finnish *käsi* derives, according to different scholars, either from **käte* or *käti* and the Finnish *jää* either from **jäŋi* or **jäŋe*.

4. Inherited or borrowed?

It is important to note that the question of language relatedness by common ancestor is typically a question of either–or. There seem to be very few cases of proper mixed languages in terms of genetic origin (indeed, many linguists doubt whether such languages exist at all) and where they (probably) exist, they seem to have emerged in very peculiar circumstances (see Thomason and Kaufman 1988). However, while languages typically represent a single genetic line, that is to say they inherit most of their grammatical affixes as well as the basic vocabulary (most notably pronouns, words related to body parts,

denominations of central neutral actions) from their ancestors, they are all mixed to some extent, that is, they contain elements that can be identified as outcomes of a language contact.

Languages may be similar by chance, for instance in cases where similarities represent characteristics that are frequent in many of the world's languages or when they belong to the same typological category. On a historical level, however, those languages that are not related by common ancestor are typically related by mutual contact. Language contact may have taken place long ago, but typically traces of it are recognizable even thousands of years afterwards.

The two types of linguistic relatedness (inheritance and borrowing) are almost always distinguishable. This is because some core elements of grammar and lexicon, for instance inflectional endings and pronominal word stems, are rarely borrowable, but almost always inherited. Borrowing, in turn, mainly affects those parts of the linguistic system that are more on the 'surface' of the language, especially the lexicon related to cultural concepts and the vocabulary related to a particular geographical region (see further section 5 below). A recent study that covers 50 quite different languages around the globe demonstrates that the amount of (identified) borrowed vocabulary varies greatly in the world's languages (from 1,2 % to over 60 %, Tadmor and Haspelmath 2009: 56–7), but also that there are great differences in the borrowable categories. Approximately 40 per cent of the vocabulary related to religion, clothing or buildings was borrowed in the sample languages, but none of the languages had borrowed words for the third person personal pronoun, or for equivalents of the English *up* and *this*. Among the least borrowed concepts were also question words and central kin vocabulary (*ibid.* 67).

One needs to note that borrowing is not limited to words, but includes grammatical structures and cultural concepts expressed in language (e.g. metaphors). In many cases of language contact, lexical borrowing is accompanied by borrowing of the principles of word formation and shared metaphoric images represented in the words. Thus, for instance, French *chemin de* fer 'railway' corresponds to German *Eisenbahn* and Swedish *järnväg*, but what is borrowed is not the word itself but the principle of its formation. However, more complex grammatical structures can only rarely be straightforwardly copied from one language to another. More often it is the case that, in bi- or multilingual communities, structures employed in one language turn into models of expression in the other, but as the linguistic systems under contact are dissimilar (for instance, one language employs gender or aspect oppositions that are absent in the other), the outcome of the contact in the target language differs markedly from the structures of the source language (cf. Sarhimaa 1999).

In some cases, a group of geographically adjacent languages share a common system of structures, but without it being possible to name a source language of many of the common features. Such linguistic areas are called *Sprachbunds* and the mechanism of their emergence can, in many instances, be considered a shared drift caused by multilingual communication (cf. Lindstedt 2000). All in all, the mechanisms of language change, particularly in relation to grammatical structures, are commonly a complicate mix of internal and contact-induced development (cf. Thomason 2001). In many cases, the results of language contact are highly context-specific. This also means that the historical-comparative methodology identifies the language contact much better in the case of lexicon than in the case of either phonological or grammatical system. This state of affairs is due to the fact that the change of such organic entities is always a much more complicated phenomenon than the adoption of a part of the system from one framework to another.

It is important to note that, although the languages may be similar by chance, the kind of similarity that languages related through a common ancestor or contacts represent, cannot have come into being by chance. The probability that thousands of phoneme sequences in, for example, one hundred core vocabulary words in two languages correspond to each other in a predictable way is very low indeed.[3] In fact, the number of words that go back to protolanguages is typically much higher than this. For instance, Finnic and Saami groups of Uralic languages both have approximately 1600 shared word stems (for Saami, cf. Lehtiranta 1989; for Finnic, no published calculations exist to the author's knowledge), whereas their common protolanguage, Proto-Uralic, has more than 200 of them.[4] Although this may seem a small number, such an amount of words already includes thousands of different phoneme sequences, each of which has developed in a predictable way in a number of language branches and dozens of languages. It also appears to be the case that, despite the relatively low absolute number of Proto-Uralic etymologies, approximately half or more of the words occurring in almost any text type in modern Finnish has an Uralic etymology. This is due to the fact that the core vocabulary of a language consists of the most frequently used words and that it also functions as a basis for new derivations (cf. section 5).

3 Angela Marcantonio 2002 on the contrary claims that the resemblances in the Uralic word stock are not statistically significant – for criticism of this, see Saarikivi 2004.

4 Janhunen 1981 had approximately 150 regular word stems, but several new cases with similar phonematic correspondences have been identified since then, cf. Aikio 2002, 2006. It is highly likely that the number of Proto-Uralic word stems that can be reconstructed with a reasonable degree of certainty exceeds 300 or even 400.

The regularity of the phoneme sequences in related languages also demonstrates why the claims of new historical links of languages by a common ancestor (e.g., that the Finno-Ugrian languages would be related to Basque [Morvan 1996], or that the Finno-Ugrian languages would be related to Sumerian [Parpola 2007]) can, almost without exception, be proven false. These new 'discoveries' are, in fact, most often based on *similarities* between the words and grammar of the compared languages and not on *regularities* between them. In fact, most of the world's language families have certainly been discovered already decades ago and it is unlikely that future research will prove many new cases of language relatedness by common ancestor.[5]

5. Limits of regularity: towards a typology of etymologies

There are various views on the question of how far the principle of regular change may be stretched in the analysis of linguistic material. It has long been acknowledged that there are several forces that affect the regular development of a language and that sometimes make the process unpredictable.

Most importantly, analogy can alter the shape of the words or the paradigms of inflection on the basis of a model from another context. Thus, the English *help* once had the preterite *holp* and the past participle *holpen* (corresponding to German *hilfen–half–geholfen*), but these forms have since disappeared and the word now conjugates in a manner similar to a regular verb. Such a simplification of the verbal paradigm has occurred on the basis of analogy of the other verb types. Similarly, Finnish *lahti* 'bay' is inflected in a similar manner to *lehti* 'leaf', although it derives from an earlier **lakte* whereas *lehti* derives from **lešte* and the words should, in principle, belong to different inflectional types. The reason for their similar inflection is the different sequences of regular sound shifts that occurred in the nominative (**lakte* > *laksi*) and oblique cases (**lakte* > *lahte*) of the word that yielded a nominative stem *laksi* and an oblique stem *lahte-*. As these forms were phonematically far from each other and were no longer understood to belong to the same paradigm, a new nominative type was created according to another stem type. (Cf. Lehtinen 2007)

A particular type of analogy is at work in folk etymology. In this case, a word is associated with another concept it resembles phonematically. For instance, from Proto-Finnic **siselikko* 'viviparous lizard' (> Literary Finnish

5 A possible exception might, however, be the Ket–Na-Dene hypothesis recently put forth by Edward Varga (2008) that has been positively received by many specialists in comparativistics and which would, if proven correct, be the first case of a proven linguistic connection between the Old and New World.

sisilisko) the forms *sisarlisko* (cf. *sisar* 'sister') and *sikalikko* (cf. *sika* 'swine') have been developed (SSA III: 188), probably to cope with the phonematically unusual form of the word stem. Needless to say, such a development is not regular although it may be explained if the required historical information regarding the contamination of the two words in the dialectal material or in written documents is provided.

Moreover, when a word develops grammatical functions it is typically irregularly shortened or otherwise developed in a peculiar way. Thus, the literary Finnish postposition *kanssa* 'with' derives from an earlier word form *kansa-ssa* ('people' + locative case suffix) 'in folk; in people', but it has irregularly shortened to its present form. In colloquial Finnish, especially the Helsinki vernacular as well as in the Estonian literary language, this postposition has turned into a comitative case suffix *-nkaa* (Estonian *-ga*) used to express similar meanings as the English preposition *with*.

Furthermore, words often develop irregularly if they contain phonematic sequences that are understood to represent some onomatopoetic (sound imitative) or descriptive characteristics. For instance, the English *glow, glitter, glare* and *gleam* contain a phonesteme *gl-* that is associated with light or vision. Such sound-symbolic phoneme sequences or phonestemes are language specific. For instance, English *bark*, Russian *lait'* and Finnish *haukku-* all imitate the sound of a dog's barking, but they do not have a single phoneme in common. A word that is considered sound-symbolic in one language can thus be perceived as neutral from the point of view of the speakers of another language, or become neutral if it is borrowed from one language into another. Notwithstanding all of the aforementioned, it has been noted early on in the etymological literature that if a word becomes associated with such a sound-symbolic group, either onomatopoetic or descriptive, its phonematic development may take a course different to that of a regular word (cf. in detail Jarva 2003; Kulonen 2010).

It is thus a kind of paradox of etymological research that, although it is assumed that words develop mainly according to regular sound changes, it is also stressed over and over that each word has its own history. The semantic shifts that have taken place in each single word and the polysemic relations in which the word participates always represent unique characteristics. Often, but by no means always, this is also the case with the development of the phonematic shape of the word.

To describe the regularity and irregularity of the development of different kinds of words, the following rather tentative typology of etymological developments can be suggested:[6]

1. *Words easily borrowable in horizontal networks* (*Wörter und Sachen*). To this group belong cultural concepts related to artifacts, technologies, raw materials, trade, fashion or religion. In the history of linguistic science, such borrowings have been referred to as *Wörter und Sachen* ('words and things'). This denomination is due to the characteristic features of these words to be borrowed together with the cultural concept they denote. Such words move along great distances in the networks of trade and cultural domination. They are often cultural borrowings from regionally dominant languages and are shared by a number of languages spoken in the same cultural area (cf. the lexicon related to Christian concepts, metals, technologies, fashions and trade goods shared by the major European languages). From the point of view of cultural reconstruction, it is important to note that words that belong to this class typically have material counterparts in archaeological records. Therefore, many archaeologically definable cultural areas would seem to relate more to cultural areas that have shared vocabulary (and often also other linguistic traits in a language union or *Sprachbund*) than to language areas.

Most of the studies of borrowings in the world's languages fall within this group of words. Thus, for instance, Finnish literary *rauta* 'iron', *miekka* 'sword', *kuningas* 'king', *purje* 'sail', *laiva* 'ship', *nauta* 'cow; livestock', and so on, are all borrowings from Germanic and *risti* 'cross', *pappi* 'priest', *raamattu* 'bible; writing' from Slavic. Such layers of borrowings typically coincide with a particular type of cultural change that introduced new technologies, raw materials and religious habits and, with all certainty, was also reflected in the archaeological record.

2. *Words easily borrowable in vertical networks* (substrate words). To this group belong local concepts related to flora and fauna, ways of utilizing the local resources as well as place-names. These kinds of words typically represent the heritage of those languages that were spoken in the region previously. They are borrowable from one language into another if a new language enters the region, but usually do not move across long distances in human networks because they point to concepts that are not of importance in trade or political

6 This is first published here.

domination.[7] These words tend to be borrowings from so-called substrate languages, that is, languages that have been spoken in the area earlier, but that have disappeared in the course of a language shift within their speech community. Often, they have been borrowed several times from one language into another. For instance, the denominations for arctic fox, walrus and fjord can be considered Saami borrowings into Finnic (Fi. *naali* ~ SaN *njálla* 'arctic fox', Fi. *mursu* ~ SaN *moarši* 'walrus', Fi. *vuono* ~ SaN *vuotna* 'fjord'), but in the Saami languages they are of unknown origin. The most likely hypothesis is that such words originate from extinct languages of Northern Fennoscandia whose speakers assimilated into Finno-Ugrian speaking peoples during the process in which the modern Saami languages emerged (cf. in detail Aikio 2004).

While previous generations of scholars have often considered the linguistic substrate an unlikely explanation for features of modern languages, such hypotheses have, in recent decades, become more popular (cf. the case of Proto-Germanic substrate, Kroonen 2012). In any case, the kind of borrowing discernible from Finnic to Russian (cf. Myznikov 2004), to give just one example, pertains to very different semantic fields than borrowing from Russian to Finnish. Whereas in the latter, borrowings related to Christian customs, different professions, dishes, textile work, and so forth, are dominant (Fi. *pappi* 'priest', *risti* 'cross', *palttina* 'weave', *velho* 'sorcerer', *läävä* 'stable'), the former include a number of fish names, names for Northern plant species and vocabulary related to slash-and-burn-agriculture and fishing (Russian *kambala* 'flounder', *tajmen* 'trout', *xonga* [dial.] 'snag', *forma* [dial.] 'Epilobium', *kanabra* [dial.] 'Calluna'). While the latter, as a rule, have a fairly wide spread in the Finnic dialects, the former typically represent spot-like distributions in Russian dialects and occur in many different phonematic shapes.

3. *Affective words*. To this group belong words related to vague or affective concepts such as 'drunkenness', 'crazy', etc. (expressive vocabulary). These words typically represent considerable variation within one word stem and also have multiple synonyms. This is due to their affective semantics, which makes them subject to constant alternation in speech. Often, they also contain some phonestemes (i.e., phoneme chains that are understood to relate to a noise or action) and develop sound-symbolism, or become associated with already existing

7 However, in some cases particular substrate words have turned into words spreading in horizontal networks, if the objects that they refer to are objects of trade. For instance, the international denominations of trade goods such as *coffee, copper* or *bronze* are most likely originally substrate toponyms of the island of Cyprus and the town of Brindisi (in Italy), respectively.

sound-symbolic phonestemes of onomatopoetic or descriptive vocabulary. The words belonging to this group thus become a kind of subject of creative speech and wordplay. New words are constantly borrowed to express these types of meanings. For instance, in early twentieth century Helsinki working class vernacular *stadin slangi* (cf. footnote 1), approximately 350 words are attested that denote a 'young girl', whereas there is only one word for 'fish' (Paunonen 2006). In this respect, it is interesting to note that also Proto-Finnic had significant variation in the denominations for young woman (cf. the Finnish dialectal *neitsi, neiti, neitsyt, neito, neitti,* 'young woman' that do not correspond to each other in any regular way, etc.) and practically no variation regarding the word denoting 'fish' (the word stem **kala* would seem to have entirely regular correspondences in most of the present Uralic languages).

Needless to say, the words belonging to this category may be fairly short-lived. In Finnic languages, most of the vocabulary related to states of mind and feelings also belongs to this category, for instance the denominations for love and affection, which, despite their central character in the human life, seem to be of relatively recent origin in present Finnic languages (cf. Finnish *rakas-* 'love' and its counterparts in the closely related languages, Estonian *armasta-*, Karelian *suvaicce* [Fi. *armas* 'beloved', *suvaita* 'tolerate']).

4. *Basic vocabulary*. To this group belong words denoting basic features of human life such as motions, denominations for body parts and widely occurring natural features. Thus, this group is identical with the stereotypical inherited vocabulary that derives from protolanguages in a phonematically regular way.

Because it has been the central assumption of historical linguistics that the development of lexicon is regular, not much attention has been paid to the semantic characteristics of vocabulary that is reconstructable in protolanguages on the basis of regular sound correspondences. It would seem to be the case that much of such vocabulary consists of neutral denominations for both natural and cultural concepts (for instance, Proto-Uralic **tuule* 'wind', **elä-* 'live' [v.], **nime* 'name', **vete* 'water', *mene-* 'go', **kive* 'stone', **kala* 'fish', etc.) It is, however, interesting to note that very few denominations for feelings and no denominations for game or big animals (moose, deer, bear, wolf) are reconstructable to Proto-Uralic, although these must have been of great importance and also frequent in speech. However, the denominations for many small animals and insects (**ńomala* 'hare', **sijele* 'hedgehog', **šiŋere* 'mouse', **mekše* 'bee', **koje* 'moth', ?**śicile* 'viviparous lizard', **täje* 'louse' etc.), which must have been of relatively little significance, can be reconstructed. Such a state of affairs may be the result of a word taboo, worshiping of game or simply a reflection

of the fact that those aspects of human life which represent particular interests for people tend to be subject to a more rapid change in language (and thus often turn into affective words, cf. group 3 above) than vocabulary related to 'banal' concepts (that is more likely to develop entirely regularly).

5. *Metaphoric vocabulary*. Words belonging to this group often develop grammatical functions in particular (morpho)syntactic structures and turn into grammatical words and affixes. Often, the same group of words also develops abstract meanings and functions as the base of the derivations expressing abstract concepts. Typically, words that belong to this group also belong to the fourth group (that of basic words that are inherited from the early protolanguages), but have meanings that can easily develop into metaphors (for instance, they can be understood to represent an end or a beginning or another clearly discernible part of an entity) and thus turn into grammatical elements (for instance, postpositions and case endings). In Uralic languages, for instance the words **päŋe* 'head' (~ Fi. *pää*), **wonca* 'forehead' (~ Fi. *otsa*), **käte* 'hand' (~ Fi. *käsi*), **juure* 'root' (~ Fi. *juuri*) and **tüŋe* 'stem' (~ Fi. *tyvi*) have turned into grammatical elements (both postpositions as well as case suffixes) in many languages (cf. Finnish *pöydän päällä* 'on the table', lit. originally 'on the head of the table' from the word *pää* 'head'). Not surprisingly, the same word stem also functions as the base of derivations pointing to abstract concepts (cf. Finnish *päättää* 'decide', *päättyä* 'end; stop', *päätellä* 'reckon', etc. all of which derive from *pää* 'head').

It needs to be noted that while many of the words with metaphoric characteristics and wide spectra of meanings are reconstructable in historically remote protolanguages, this is not always the case. For instance, in Finnish the Baltic borrowing *varsi* 'stalk' has developed multiple abstract functions and occurs in postpositions (*varrella* 'by') and derivations (*varsinainen* 'actual; fundamental').

6. Taxonomies of languages

One of the basic results of the historical-comparative method is the taxonomy of a language family. Typically, a large language family consists of different levels of reconstruction. For instance, the Saami languages spoken in Northern Fennoscandia are fairly closely related to each other and, in some cases, even mutually intelligible. Their common ancestor, Proto-Saami, can be reconstructed in detail and some 1600 word stems are traceable back to this level of reconstruction (Lehtiranta 1989). The common ancestor of Finnish, Estonian, Karelian and other Finnic languages, Proto-Finnic, is reconstructable to approximately the same extent.

However, the protolanguage of the whole Finno-Ugrian family, Proto-Uralic, is a reconstruction based on reconstructions. It is a result of implementation of the historical-comparative method on the protolanguages that can be reconstructed on the basis of the living languages. It is thus also understandable that our knowledge of Proto-Uralic is much more speculative than our knowledge regarding Proto-Saami or Proto-Finnic. Thus, the Uralic language family has, in the historical perspective, a three-level structure:

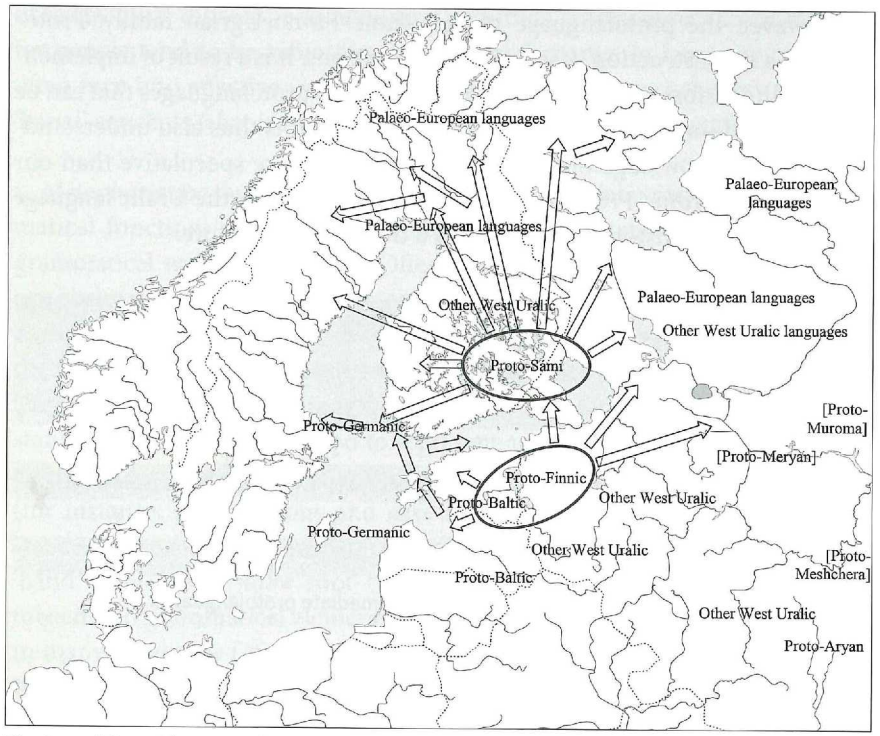
Northern Saami, Southern Saami, etc., Inari Saami, Skolt Saami, etc.	Finnish, Karelian, Estonian, Veps, etc.	Erzya, Mokša	
↓	↓	↓	↓
Proto-Saami	Proto-Finnic	Proto-Mordvinian	Other protolanguages
↓	↓	↓	↓
Proto-Uralic			

Table 3. Reconstruction of Proto-Uralic through intermediate protolanguages.

Such a three-layer taxonomy for Uralic languages represents a kind of a minimal structure of the Uralic language family. Typically, the exact taxonomy of most of the language families is a somewhat open question. This may be due to incomplete study, but also to the fact that both the phonematic and the lexical levels are relevant for the taxonomy, albeit in different manners, and the investigator may stress different criteria for taxonomy in different cases.

The phonematic changes that take place in one or the other branch of a language family are irreplaceable and thus make it possible, in an ideal situation, to provide a gradual development process from the protolanguage to the modern languages. The vocabulary, in turn, can typically be adopted across the already existing dialect boundaries and it is thus easily borrowed from an already established branch of a family tree into another. The result of such a process may be a group of dialects that are mutually intelligible and perceived by their speakers as a single language although they historically represent branches that have developed independently from early on. Many of the European national languages, in fact, represent this type of dialect continua based on historically distinct language forms, for instance Finnish (which is based on distinct eastern and western dialects) and Estonian (on distinct northern and southern dialects).[8]

8 On the development of Finnic through mutual contacts, cf. Sammallahti 1977.



Finnic and Saami linguistic homelands. Saarikivi and Frog 2014.

The linguistic taxonomy is vital into the reconstruction of past populations. For instance, there is much more material that can be employed in the investigation of location and in the dating of such intermediate protolanguages as Proto-Finnic and Proto-Saami than there is in old protolanguages such as Proto-Uralic. However, much of what has been written regarding the origins of the Finnic-speaking peoples, for instance, is speculation regarding the linguistic homeland of the Uralic-speaking peoples. Thus, a far-reaching attempt to reconstruct the earliest phases of a language family has largely overshadowed the much more promising perspectives of locating and dating those intermediate protolanguages closest to us in time (and to use this information for locating and dating those more remote protolanguages that are reconstructed on the basis of them).

7. A protolanguage as a source on past culture

Since a protolanguage consists of a reconstructable set of words and meanings (even if some aspects of the reconstructions themselves may often be debatable), it is also possible to reconstruct a set of cultural concepts that have been employed by those people who spoke the protolanguage. It has been noted early on that the presence or absence of words related to certain concepts can give an approximate picture of the culture of the speech community of the protolanguage. This kind of palaeolinguistic information can further be implemented in locating and dating protolanguages.

For instance, there are notable differences in the lexicon that is reconstructable in Proto-Saami and Proto-Finnic that were, in all likelihood, spoken approximately simultaneously, but in different regions. Proto-Finnic represents a rich lexicon related to agricultural and pastoral activities (**lehmä* 'cow', **porsas* 'swine', **os(t)ra* 'barley' [~ Fi. *ohra*], **rukis* 'rye' [~ Fi. *ruis*], **atra* 'plough' [~ Fi. *aura*], **hepoi* 'horse'), sea faring (**purjeh* 'sail', **lajwa* 'ship'), metallurgy and weaponry (**meekka* 'sword', **ravta* 'iron'), organized society (**vero* 'tax', **kuninkas* 'king', **litna* [~ Fi. *linna*] 'fortress', **raamattu* 'writing') and even Christianity (**risti* 'cross', **pakana* 'pagan'). Most of the vocabulary that represents such meaning domains is, not surprisingly, borrowings from Germanic, Baltic and Slavic languages; the main sources of influences borrowed into Finnic. Proto-Saami, in turn, also has vocabulary pointing to metals and hierarchically organized society, but no vocabulary relating to agriculture or cattle breeding. On the contrary, there is a rich vocabulary related to wild reindeer hunting and also vocabulary pointing to more northernly circumstances than those in which Proto-Finnic was spoken.

In Proto-Uralic there is no lexicon related to agriculture, nor cattle breeding. There are words for 'tent' or 'dwelling' (**kota*), 'bow' (**joŋse*), 'arrow' (ńële), 'fence' (**oca*), 'fishing dam' (**paδa*) and 'seine net' (?**kale*) that point to a mainly nomadic (or semi-sedentary) hunter-fisher population. The Proto-Uralic speakers likely also practiced some gathering, as is discernible in the denominations for egg (**muna*), mushrooms (**senä*) and berries (**marja* 'berry', **mura* 'cloudberry', **pola* 'lingonberry') and also in the word for 'nest box' (**oŋte*) pointing to a habit of gathering the eggs of waterfowls. A single denomination for metal (**wäskä*) has a wide distribution in the Uralic languages, pointing to the dispersal of Proto-Uralic approximately at the dawn of metallurgy. The vocabulary related to social organization is rich in kin and marriage-related terms (**mińä*, 'daughter-in-law', *appe* 'father-in-law', *käliw* 'sister-in-law', **väŋew* 'son-in-law'). There is also a word denoting a group of people, originally probably a hunting band (**kunta*), and a single 'professional' denomination for shaman or sorcerer (**nojta*). Concepts related to world-view and religion include different words for separate types of souls (**lewlä* 'spirit', **icce-* '(shadow) soul', **šeŋke* 'living soul, spirit'). Even some pieces of cosmological thinking can be reconstructed, for example, in that the word stem

ilmä points both to the 'sky' and 'god' (as well as the 'Sky God', cf. *Ilmarinen*, smith and hammerer of the skies in Finnic mythology, cf. below) (Häkkinen 2001: 179–86).

It can be noted that both in the Finnic as well as the Saami languages several layers of Indo-European borrowings can be discerned that represent language contacts during different periods (Koivulehto 1999a; as for the chronology of Finnic sound changes, cf. Kallio 2007). The linguists are well aware that these borrowings can, on phonematic criteria, be classified according to their source language. Such phonematic taxonomies of borrowings can be very complex and often a single word could, in principle, be borrowed from many different sources. Typically, the problems related to the identification of the exact source of an individual word do not mean that one should suspect the existence of different layers of loan vocabulary. Rather, each layer is usually reconstructed on the basis of several words representing a phonematic shape characteristic for a particular loan stratum. In principle, it would be possible to reconstruct the order of sound shifts in several contacting languages on the basis of borrowings from different reconstructable language forms (cf. Heikkilä 2014).

The vocabulary offers rich material for cultural reconstruction, notwithstanding the fact that, due to problems related to the locating and dating of the protolanguages, it is often not possible to know in detail where and when the culture forms reflected in protolanguages existed. For instance, in Finnic languages there would seem to be at least four different layers of lexicon related to religious concepts that derive from different periods and different sources. Such an observation makes it possible to reconstruct sequences of different mythological world-views of a Finnic and a pre-Finnic language community to some extent. A hypothesis that concepts of particular kind are related to a specific type of mythological world-view can then also be implemented in the search for new etymologies for Finnic vocabulary.

The vocabulary related to Christianity in Finnic clearly represents the newest layer of borrowings, not only from the point of view of its semantics, but also on the basis of its phonematic shape. According to the standard sources, words that belong to this vocabulary layer include words such as *risti* 'cross' (< Sl. *krestъ* 'id.'), *pappi* 'priest' (< Sl. *popъ* 'id.'), *pakana* 'pagan' (< Sl. *poganъ*) *raamattu* 'writing; bible' (Kalima 1952).[9] Prior to that, it would seem that at least a part of

9 The idea that the Christian vocabulary is overwhelmingly of Slavic origin now makes it possible to propose a new Slavic etymology also for the Finnish *kirkko* 'church'. This word has two distinct forms in Finnic, **kirikko* and **kirkko*. It would be entirely possible that these words would derive from Slavic **kir(ъ)kō* (that is reflected in Modern Russian *cerkovь* 'church'). The reason why such a borrowing has hitherto not been identified is the fact that only fairly recently has the phonematic analysis of the Novgorod birch bark letters revealed the fact that the so-called second palatalization (**k* > *c*) had not occurred in Novgorod Slavic, the most likely source language of the early layers of Slavic vocabulary in Finnic (cf. Zaliznjak 2004: 41–5). It has previously been considered a Scandinavian borrowing (SSA I: 370), but Old Norse **kyrkia* would more likely yield a Finnic **kirkkio* or the like. Also, a Low German etymology has been suggested for this word (Bentlin 2008) and this would be, in principle, a possible explanation for the tri-syllabic forms of the word. However, taking into account that the word in Finnic has two distinct forms it would seem a more likely explanation (at least to the author of this article) that the word originates from Slavic.

the Finnic-speaking people worshiped pre-Christian deities mentioned in the sources of the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries (by, for instance, Agricola 1987 and Ganander 1995), the denominations for which, in most cases, had Germanic origin (cf. *Turisas* 'god of war' [*hapax legomena* by Agricola] < **þurisa-z* → *þurs* 'giant' (see in detail Frog 2013); *äkräs* 'god of fertility' < **agra-z* 'field'[10]). Even earlier, the pre-Finnic speakers would have employed a system of concepts related to celestial mythology, some parts of which were borrowed from the speakers of Indo-European stem-languages (cf. Fi. *taivas*, a Baltic borrowing [SSA III: 256–7], *perkele* 'satan' ~ Lithuanian *perkunas* 'thunder god', *jumala* < Aryan).[11] In the historical core of the Finno-Ugrian mythology we then find a system of shamanistic beliefs, mythology related to water-fowls and the North Star, and so forth. This layer of mythological concepts only employs Finno-Ugrian vocabulary.

Sometimes palaeolinguistic material may prove crucial in locating the area where a protolanguage has been spoken. In such cases, there is often a good match between the linguistic and archaeological material. For instance, it has been proposed that the Indo-European protolanguage would have been spoken in the present-day Ukrainian steppe, in the area of archaeological complexes labeled as Srednij Stog and Pit Grave culture (cf. Mallory 1989; Carpelan and Parpola 2001; Anthony 2007). The argument is based on the fact

10 The lexicon of these deities have not been investigated in modern etymological research. Therefore, their etymologies are first published here in short form. More extensive argumentation and discussion will hopefully be provided in a future publication.

11 The Finnic **jumala* and its Saami counterpart (Northern Saami *ipmil*) has a peculiar *la*-suffix that does not occur in other Finno-Ugrian languages; in light of the early association of the supreme god with the celestial phenomena, and the fact that many Finno-Ugrian people use the epithet 'upper' to refer to the sky god (cf. Mordvinian *nis'ke-pas*, Khanty *Torem-Ilim*, etc.), it can be assumed that Fi. *-la* represents the older *ylä*. Jumala would thus have been a compound *juma-ylä*, upper god, in a similar manner to the domination of the sky god by the Mordvinians and the Khanty.

that Proto-Indo-European had words for 'horse', 'cart', 'wheel' and 'axis', pointing to a wagon-culture, and the fact that the aforementioned archaeological areas make up the region where the oldest archaeological finds of such character have been made. Although the location of the Uralic linguistic homeland cannot be established with similar accuracy, there are good grounds to locate Proto-Uralic somewhere in inland Eurasia, more precisely the southern parts of its taiga zone. The words for 'sea' and everything related to it are absent. However, Proto-Uralic has words for 'bee' (**mekše*), 'hedgehog' (**sijele*), 'fox' (**repä*), 'mouse' (**šiŋere*), 'oak' (**toma*) and 'bird cherry' (**δ'oma*) (Häkkinen 2001: 179–80). Also words for 'Siberian pine', 'maple', 'crack willow' and 'rowan' have a fairly wide distribution in the Uralic languages, although they are not indisputably reconstructable in Proto-Uralic.

Even more evidence is available from the field of early contacts between the Uralic and Indo-European languages. Since there are some borrowings that have been adopted from very archaic Indo-European language forms into western Proto-Uralic (or Proto-Finno-Ugrian), the areas in which Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Uralic were spoken may have been adjacent (cf. Koivulehto 1991). Thus, if there is a possibility of locating the area in which Proto-Indo-European was spoken, then this also has implications for the location of Proto-Uralic. This has been the starting point for Carpelan and Parpola who have reconstructed a whole sequence of archaeological cultures from Srednij Stog and Yamnaya to modern times and claim to be able to connect these with different intermediate protolanguages of the Uralic family (Carpelan and Parpola 2001). Although many details of such an attempt may be disputable (see below), this methodology certainly deserves attention.

8. Language spread as a problem for the reconstruction of prehistory

Although the comparative method, when implemented together with the identification of layers of borrowings and the areal linguistic methodologies, produces fairly good possibilities for locating and even dating protolanguages, there are also significant problems related to such an enterprise, especially when it comes to the combination of language history with archaeological materials.

This is because we often have little information on the sociolinguistic circumstances of the past. Even though the palaeolinguistic reasoning provides a possibility for reconstructing the culture of the protolanguage speakers to some extent and although the layers of outer influences can be identified, it is often still not possible to reconstruct the social networks in which the language under investigation was spoken. The language communities may

have been widely bilingual or multilingual. The loanwords may have spread by means of constant contact with another language community living in the vicinity or by occasional contacts and a few key persons over long distances. The language may have spread by migrations, but also by language shifts (that have occurred on social grounds no longer reconstructable).

In the early prehistoric periods, language communities were substantially smaller than are present language communities. In the vicinity of any given community there may have been other communities speaking closely related languages that have disappeared through assimilation into other language communities. As a result of such assimilation, we may now have only some 'irregularly developed' words in present vernaculars that, in fact, represent ancient borrowings from extinct languages. There may also have been language communities speaking unrelated languages that have disappeared and now survive only in a few substrate borrowings in the living languages (cf. section 9 below).

One needs to be aware of the fact that most of historical linguistics is about the 'internal' history of language, that is the evolution of the phonematic shape of the language and the changes in its meanings and functions. When combining such information with the archaeological material, one should be able to reconstruct the 'external' history of language, that is the history of communities where the languages under investigation were spoken. Such an enterprise is problematic because language and material culture (and also ethnicity) correlate with each other differently in different contexts.

In the scholarly literature, a number of cases have been described where several very distinct linguistic groups share a fairly uniform material culture.[12] Even in such cases, the archaeological material may contain ethnic markers that may also represent language groups (ornaments, details of dress, etc.), but these are often hard to identify unless the researcher has the relevant ethnographic information that helps him in the interpretation of such finds. Further, one has to bear in mind that also the relationship between language and ethnicity is not a stable one and that an ability to speak a particular language may indicate entirely different roles in the identity formation of different groups. In the steppe zone of Eurasia, it would seem to be the case that language was not the main factor that supported the ethnicity, since multilingual groups often joined together for shared enterprises (Nichols 1998). This is reflected in the fact that the raids led by the Mongols mainly spread Turkic languages, or that the mobility related to Turkic-speaking Bolghars and Avars brought the Hungarian language to Europe. Also, Early Russia would seem to

12 E.g. the Torres Strait coast of Papua New Guinea, see Terrell 2001.

	Location	Community	Network
ARCHAEOLOGY	site	cluster of sites ecological area	material technology type
LINGUISTICS	toponym cluster of toponyms	speech community	borrowing cultural vocabulary

Table 5. Correlation of the archaeological and linguistic materials (Lavento and Saarikivi 2012).

have been a loose network of Slavic, Scandinavian, Finnic and Baltic peoples who shared trade interests (Lind 2007). The multilingual characteristics of European medieval towns have also been referred to in scholarly literature. Needless to say, in the archaeological material related to such communities it might not be possible to identify linguistic groups.

Much of the archaeologically based discussion on language and ethnicity has considered ceramics. It has been seen as a local tradition that could be associated with the continuity of language (Carpelan 1999: 249). On the other hand, the ethnographic record has proven that in some multiethnic contexts, ceramic types and languages do not correlate in any straightforward way (Gosselain 2009). It seems to be the case that the dynamics of the spread both of such features of material culture as ceramics and such features of mental culture as language are very complicated phenomena that may take place in very different manners depending on context.

One needs to be aware, however, that since much of the archaeological material is related to technologies, artifacts, raw materials and religion, it is often much more likely to correlate with the kind of linguistic heritage that spreads in large cultural networks over long distances (cf. cultural concepts in section 5 above) than with the language areas. The language areas, in turn, may in some cases be fairly invisible in the archaeological material (see Lavento and Saarikivi 2012). Obviously, the details are very complicated and context-sensitive and there is little room for generalizations when discussing the connections of language, material culture and ethnicity.

9. Reconstruction of language areas

As is apparent from the above, languages often spread not by migration, but by language shifts. Although this is not always the case, it has been noted that language areas tend to be fairly unstable and that they move across culturally significant borders (Janhunen 1998: 200).

For instance, in the case of the Finnic and Saami languages, very notable changes in language areas have occurred during the historical era (from

approximately the fourteenth century onwards). In most of present-day Finland, especially its central parts covered with taiga, Saami languages have been spoken up until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is an obvious conclusion based on toponymic evidence (Aikio 2007), dialectal borrowings (Aikio 2009) as well as oral history. The Finnic language forms (that evolved into Finnish) spread to most of present-day Finland only from the fourteenth century onwards. Prior to this period, they have been spoken in the south-western part of the country as well as the southern inland. In this connection, it is symptomatic that traces have been identified in the vocabulary of the present-day Saami languages that point to a relatively new layer of borrowings from extinct substrate languages that have taken place in Northern Fenno-scandia (since the words belonging to this layer point to characteristics of this region, Aikio 2004). This would mean that the Saami language area shifted from central Finland to Northern Fennoscandia during the Iron Age (*ibid.*).

Even in the case of the Finnic languages, similar areal relocations seem to have taken place. The languages have been spoken in many regions that have become either Baltic- or Slavic-speaking after the Middle Ages. For instance, most of present-day Latvia and large areas of Northern Russia had a Finnic-speaking population at some point during the Middle Ages (whereas the central and northern parts of present-day Finland and Karelia did not). In the case of Northern Russia, this is clear from the toponymic evidence (Saarikivi 2006; Matveev 2001, 2004) as well as the dialectal vocabulary with substrate characteristics (Myznikov 2004). In a similar manner to the old Saami habitat in Finland, we have here a substantial oral history pointing to a pre-Russian population.

The toponymic evidence, where relevant material is available, thus turns out to be the most reliable source regarding the reconstruction of past language areas. If a particular area has a layer of toponyms from an identifiable substrate language, it can be considered a fact that the language has been spoken in that region. In addition to that, the toponyms may sometimes provide information that can prove crucial in interpreting some archaeological findings (cf. Lavento and Saarikivi 2012). If carefully employed, the toponymic models can also be used in pointing out the directions of population spread within one language area (cf. Kiviniemi 1977; Vahtola 1980). However, it needs to be stressed that stray toponymic etymologies do not provide reliable evidence of past populations. In order to provide a plausible argument regarding past spread of languages, hundreds of toponyms from a substrate language in the same area would be required and these should belong to reliably attested structural and lexical types (cf. Saarikivi 2007).

In addition to toponyms, the analysis of present dialectal variation is important in establishing the core and expansion areas within a dialect continuum that may consist of one language or several languages (however 'language' is defined). It is a basic assumption of dialectology that the areas with most linguistic variation are those where the language has been spoken for a long time, i.e. the core areas of the language spread, whereas those with uniform dialects often represent areas of relatively recent linguistic heritage.

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