The Wild Host and the Etymology of Sami *Stállu* and Norwegian *Ståle*(*sferda*)

Reflecting Ancient Contact

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Abstract

In this article, I discuss whether there is a connection between the Sami tradition of *Stállu* and the Southern Norwegian tradition of *Ståle* and *Stålesferda*. Stállu is a kind of troll in Sami tradition, but one variant of it, the *Juovlastállu* 'Yule Stállu', is connected to Christmas and greatly overlaps with the *Oskoreia* / *Juleskreia* / *Julereia* tradition of the Wild Hunt, which in the district of Setesdal is called *Stålesferda*, a name indicating that it is led by *Ståle*. This, and the fact that *Stállu* seems to be a loanword because it has an initial consonant cluster, which Sami in principle does not have, is the basis for a suggestion that the character Stállu and much of the tradition connected to him is a loan from an early Scandinavian *Ståle* tradition. I agree that the word is borrowed, but argue that the Scandinavian word that has been suggested as the source is implausible. Instead, I suggest a different etymology for *Stállu* / *Ståle* and argue that the essence of the tradition of the *Juovlastállu* / *Stålesferda* / *Oskoreia* etc. is *the swarming host* – of dead spirits, elves, or other, with their riding or draught animals. Therefore, I suggest an Old Norse **stál* as the source for *Stállu* and *Ståle*. In the Modern Norwegian dialects, this word, *stål*, is common in meanings such as 'a compressed mass of live beings; a crowd, flock, school', which fits very well. Even if the term *Stállu* and other elements in the Sami traditions surrounding it seem borrowed from Scandinavian, the Sami may well have had similar traditions prior to borrowing the term.

Keywords: Stállu, Sami religion, Old Norse religion, Norwegian folkloristics, Sami folkloristics, the Wild Hunt

Introduction: The Stállu Tradition

In this article, I will discuss whether there is a connection between the Sami tradition of *Stállu* and the Southern Norwegian tradition of *Ståle* and *Stålesferda*. This connection was first suggested by Nils Lid (1933:52, cf. 43–70) but in an unsatisfactory way. In the folklore of the Sami in northern Scandinavia, *Stállu* (North Sami; South Sami *Staaloe*, *Staala*) is one of the favourite characters. The name Stállu and the tradition about him is found in most of Sápmi, from Härjedalen in the south to the Kola Peninsula in the northeast, in myriad legends and folk tales. Stállu has human form, but is bigger and stronger than humans, like a troll. He is evil, eats humans,

catches small children and challenges the Sami for duels, especially *noaidi*s (Sami shamans, South Sami *nåejtie*). But he is stupid and clumsy and is often tricked by the noaidi or Ash Lad (Áskovis). Another variant portrays Stállu as a zombie-like demon sent forth by a noaidi to injure or kill his enemies (Qvigstad 1927:489–506, 1928:243–66, 627–60, 1929:413–31, 531–51; Mark 1932:220–31; Lid 1933:48–52, Manker 1960:217ff, Steen 1967, Kjellström 1976:157ff, Fjellström 1985:396ff, Cocq 2005:15ff; references to primary sources are found in these works.) These variants of Stállu are by far the best-known, and most of the research has concentrated on them. In this article, I will refer to these variants as *Troll Stállu*, which is a constructed, analytical term.

In addition to Troll Stállu, there is a tradition about a *Juovlastállu*, 'Yule Stállu'. We know this tradition from Finnmark, Northern Troms and Jukkasjärvi in Northern Sweden, from late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century recordings (Lid 1933:43–48, information from Qvigstad, cf. Qvigstad 1928:712–19, Mark 1932:217–19).[1] "In Finnmark, Júovlastállu was believed to be a sprite who punished those who did prohibited work or made noise during Christmas, or those who had not prepared Christmas in the proper way". Children should not ski during Christmas or be noisy in other ways (this is recorded in many places) – like banging doors or sticks of firewood, racketing with reindeer sleds, reindeer bells or dogs – because then, Stállu might come and get them (also many places) – he might kill them (Kautokeino) or catch them in a sack trap and take them to his place, or he might return them to the place from which he had taken them after a number of days (Utsjoki, Mark 1932:218). Because of this, children used to be silent and dutiful during Christmas, it is said. If people had to fetch firewood during Christmas because they had failed to store enough before the holiday, "they would sometimes get stuck and would not come unstuck until they promised never to do it again. Therefore, they believed that it was Juovlastállu who held them" (Qvigstad in ibid:44–45. Talvik, Alta, Finnmark). People were supposed to pile the wood very neatly and to tidy up thoroughly around the chopping block and the wood stack: "the brushwood and all the chippings should be cleared away and swept together", "the Sami use to tidy and sweep well around the chopping block and between the tent and the chopping block, to make it smooth". This was because Stállu was believed to drive with his farmhand from home to home during the nights around Christmas, especially Christmas Eve, and especially with a *ráidu*, i.e. a line of reindeer pulling a sled, just that Stállu's draught animals were mice, rats and lemmings. If the area around the home was not tidy and clear, the *ráidu* could get stuck. If that happened, it meant bad luck in the coming year, and the person who had not tidied well enough had to go out in the night and help Stállu. Also, a kettle full of water should be left out in the tent or hut, so that Stállu could

have a drink when he came in the night. If he did not find water, he would suck the blood from someone in the household, preferably the middle child. As a help for Stállu, a branch or a tree should also be erected behind the wood stack, for Stállu to tie his *ráidu* to when he was inside. In Talvik near Alta, one should also leave out a tray with meat. From Finnish Utsjoki on the Norwegian border, it is said in connection with such stories that Stállu lived in a large gorge (Lid 1933:43–48; Kjellström 1976:160). Much further south, in Swedish Lule Lappmark, it is noted that the similar Julebukkane (see below; *rähttuna* / *julbockarna*) used rats for draught animals; Grundström 1929:56. The *rähttuna* [modern Lule Sami spelling] were departed souls who came back to their old lands once every year, between Christmas and Epiphany).

In Kautokeino, a story was told about what once happened when the children made a racket on Christmas Day. Stállu came, in the shape of the moon, down through the smoke vent in the roof of the hut into the indoor woodpile on the rafter, then down onto the bar over fire place, before he lit a fire and cooked the children (Qvigstad 1928:668–77). A similar story is recorded by Johan Turi from Kautokeino / Torne Lappmark: Because of the noise, Stállu came, in the shape of a bird, through the smoke vent down onto the bar above the fireplace. Some of the children hid in the woodpile, but the end was tragic (Lid 1933:47–48). Juovlastállu in the shape of the moon is recorded from Talvik in Alta, too (Qvigstad 1928:715).

From Lyngen / Storfjorden in Troms, a habit is recorded that someone disguised as Stállu would come to the Christmas party trying to poke the girls with a half-burned stick of firewood (to make black marks on their clothes), demanding "tax for the king" – or go from farm to farm doing this. Sometimes he had two or many men accompanying him, called *hoammá*, plur. *hoammát*, "helpers". Sometimes the stick would be phallus-shaped, and the girls would try to tear the clothes off Stállu. Sometimes a crowd would go from farm to farm singing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve. This group consisted of four frontmen called *Daban*, and there was a rear party of three mummed men following them, of which the strongest was called Stállu and the others *hoammát*. The *Daban* singers could be invited in, but more often (it seems), this would happen to the Stállu rear party, who demanded tax for the king and were given drams and bread. If not, they would splash a bucket of water on the girls who were supposed to serve them and poke them with the stick. (Lid 1933:43)[2]

Suggested Backgrounds for the Stállu Traditions

Some believe that the tradition about Troll Stállu has its roots in historical events and derives from encounters with plundering Chuds (from Russia) or tax collectors from Norwegian or Swedish authorities in the Viking Age or

High Middle Ages. Especially three arguments have been put forward for this:

a) According to Sami tradition, the name *Stállu* is derived from *stálli* "steel", and it is said that Stállu wore a *ruovdegákti* 'iron shirt' (Aikio 1907; Helland 1906:274; Lid 1933:52; 61; Manker 1960:217; Steen 1963:15). The supporters of this theory interpret this as chain mail, which the sedentary farmers had, but not the nomadic or semi-nomadic Sami.
b) Aspects of Stállu's behaviour, such as carrying hoards and plundering the Sami and his generally aggressive attitude towards them, fit with tax collectors.
c) A certain type of deserted settlements in the mountains between Northern Sweden and Norway, archaeologically dated to the Viking Age and High Middle Ages and most easily explained from Norwegian architecture, is in Sami tradition associated with Stállu and therefore called "Stállu ruins" (*stallotomter.* Manker 1960).

This theory was launched by Friis in 1871 (:75), based on the first two arguments, but it has strong advocates in recent times in Kjellström (1976) and Wepsäläinen (2011), who has developed the third argument in particular.

Lid (1933:52, cf. 43–70), however, rejects the link to *stálli* as folk etymology and to the iron shirt as a way of fleshing out this folk etymology. Instead, he points to the significant overlap between the Jouvlastállu tradition and the Norwegian tradition of the Wild Host. In Setesdal, Southern Norway, the Wild Host is referred to as *Stålesferda*, 'Ståle's travel', and its leader as *Ståle*. Lid argues that the name *Stállu* and the tradition surrounding it is borrowed from these Norwegian traditions (Lid 1933:61–62).

The Wild Host

To provide a background for the further discussion, I will now give an overview of the traditions that may be related to the Juovlastállu tradition before I compare the Juovlastállu tradition with the Norwegian traditions in more detail.

The Juovlastállu traditions are part of an enormous and heterogeneous complex, found throughout most of North-Western Europe, with related traditions further east and south (Olrik 1901, Brunk 1903, Plischke 1914, Celander 1920, 1943, Lid 1929, 1933, Jones 1930, Endter 1933, Huth 1935, Meisen 1935, Vilkuna 1956, Vries 1962, Eike 1980, Johansson 1991). It is problematic to apply one single term to such a complex, but for the sake of convenience, I use *the Wild Host* here as an analytical, constructed term in cases where it is difficult to apply an ethnic term.

In Norway, the best-known term is *Oskorei*(*d*)*a*. The latter part, *-rei*(*d*)*a,* derives from the Old Norse verb *ríða* 'to ride', reflecting riders and wagon or sled drivers (whereas *Osko-* is obscure). This term is known from Østfold (*Askereia*) through Telemark to Rogaland, while in Setesdal it occurs alongside *Stålesferda* 'Ståle's travel' and *Lussiferda*, 'Saint Lucy's travel' (Skar 1961–63 [1903–16] I:418–22), reflecting St. Lucy's Day following the longest night of the year according to the Julian Calendar. The name Lussiferda is known from the valleys in Eastern Norway, from Agder and from Western Norway. In the latter area, *Juleskreia*, 'the yule host' and *Julereia* (*Jola-*, *Jole-*) 'the Christmas Ride / Riding' are the most common names, but *Våsereia*, *Våsedrifta* and *Mossedrifta* are also known – probably meaning 'the strenuous riding / flock' (most likely from *vås* n. "strenuous travel, toil, hardships", Aasen 1873:908). In Nordland, *Gongferda* and *Gandferda* are common names, whereas *Gåsreia* and *Gassreia* are also found (where *Gås-* and *Gass-* are corruptions of either *vås-* or *gasse-* "an ill-natured sprite", Ross 1971 [1895]:228). The most widespread names are probably *Julesveinane* 'the yule lads', *Julebukkane* 'the yule billy-goats' or *Julegeita* 'the yule goat', found throughout large parts of Norway, at least in the west-facing parts of the country up to Troms. (Helland 1900:418–21; Lid 1929:33–67; Celander 1943, Eike 1980)

In Telemark, the Oskoreia is (Celander 1943, Eike 1980[3]) a host of deceased spirits riding across the sky or along the roads with much racket at night, especially around Christmas and especially during storms. In Telemark, Guro Rysserova and Sigurd Svein are the leaders. Where the Oskoreia halts, they will enter people's houses and drink up the Christmas beer and sometimes even have a Christmas feast. If the Oskoreia stops at a place, this usually forebodes a killing or other death. The Oskoreia can also abduct people and disfigure them or horses and objects, and it can move houses, even take houses with it. The Oskoreia can take with it people from anywhere, but it is especially important to watch out on the roads, because the Oskoreia can follow roads and ride high in the air alike. Horses taken by these spirits are ridden almost to death, and they are found lathered up in the stable in the morning. If people are abducted, they may be thrown down again on the same spot after some time, but most often they are thrown down far away. (Faye 1948 [1844]:65, Skar 1961–63 [1903–16] I:402ff, Christiansen & Liestøl 1931:164–65, Storaker 1938:76–77, Fuglestvedt & Storaker 1943:115–16)

The Western Norwegian Juleskreia, too, wants to enter people's houses and drink up the beer. Sometimes the host has a female leader, and as riding and draught animals, the host may have goats and billy-goats (Helland 1901: 654–55; Lid 1929:55ff; 1933:53–54; Lid 1929:33–67). The Northern Norwegian Gandferda / Gangferda is a noisy host of deceased spirits in the sky that may forebode decease or accidents. It does not try to enter people's

houses during Christmas, however. The variant that in Northern Norway and Trøndelag wants to do this and eat up people's food, is called *Julesveinane*, *Julebukken* or *Julegeita* (Lid 1929:55–56). In Western Norway and Agder, these names are found side by side with others (mentioned above).

Lid (1929, 1933) does not include these variants in the Oskorei / Juleskrei / Julerei etc. traditions; these are separate things according to him. I suspect this is because the Julebukkane are best known from the Halloween-like costumes of modern times, i.e. a host of mummed humans, dressed up as goats or the like, going to people's homes to make a racket, singing Christmas carols, demanding treats – and because of the desire in traditional folkloristics to construct a tidy taxonomy, where blurred lines are explained as a result of corruption in modern times (e.g. Christiansen 1922:24–25; Celander 1943:90, 134–35; 149). There is, however, no basis for the assumption that popular traditions were tidy in earlier times. In the traditions, the Julebukkane and Julesveinane are also to a large extent supernatural beings and can hardly be separated from the variants called Oskoreia, Juleskreia, etc. Sometimes, the supernatural Julebukkane and Julesveinane fly through the air, sometimes they walk around on roads (Lid 1929:55–56; Helland 1901:654–55), just like the human guisers. In some places, it is said that the Julegeita is the same as the Oskoreia (Sirdal, Agder, Eike 1980:265), or that "the Julereia was usually called Julesveinar or Julebukkar" (Sogn, Eike 1980:265) or that the Julebukken and the Julegeita "were part of Oskoreia's company" (Mandal, Lid 1929:52; likewise in Tovdal, East Agder, Eike 1980:265). In addition, another human variant of the Wild Host would appear during Christmas, especially on Boxing Day (26 December), when people in large, noisy and rapidly moving groups would ride or drive in sleds to each other's homes for food and beer (Lid 1933:9–42; Celander 1943:127–29). This is often called *Staffansriding*, 'St. Stephen's riding', because St. Stephen's Day is 26 December, or *annandagsskei*(*d*), 'second day riding'. The tradition of the human Julebukk can also be referred to as "singing Staffan" (Lid 1933:23–24, 44).

Most of the traits mentioned above are found in the majority of variants, regardless of name, and the (sometimes significant) discrepancies between the variants seem largely independent from what names they bear. Different variants can also exist side by side under different names in the same settlements. In such cases, it may seem necessary to classify them as different traditions, but when taking larger areas into account, this turns out to be very difficult (cf. Eike 1980:269–70). As pointed out by Eike (1980:269–70), in the large picture, the same terms refer both to the supernatural beings that visit for food, drinks and noisy fun and to humans who are at the same game, disguised as the Juleskreia etc., or riding horses or sleds like it (also Celander 1943:129, 85).

In Iceland, the hag *Grýla* and her *Jólasveinar* (Jón Árnason 1958–61 [1862–64] I:207–10, III:283–6) correspond to the supernatural Norwegian Julebukkane and Julesveinane and there, too, humans went guising in connection with this tradition (Vilborg Davíðsdóttir 2007, Gunnell 2007:282–93, 298–303, 318–23, 325–26). There are also widespread legends of elves / hidden people (álfar, *huldufólk*) who would force their way into human homes for food, drink and a party on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve (Celander 1943:114–16).

In Scotland and Ireland, the Fairy Host / *Sluagh Sidhe*, forms a close parallel to the West Norwegian traditions about the Wild Host (Celander 1943:168–69 / Christiansen 1938). So does the Finnish tradition of the *Hiidenväki* 'troll people' (Vilkuna 1956. *Hiiden* is genitive of *hiisi*).

In Denmark and Southern Sweden, there are also traditions that have much in common with the Norwegian ones (Celander 1943:139–49). They concern hosts that travel around at Christmas as a soughing or racketing company of people, dogs and black horses passing in the sky, especially during storms. It may forebode death or accidents as well as abduct people, and it can force its way into houses and eat up the food. Widespread in Sweden is the custom of *Staffansridning* (Lid 1933:9–42; Liungman 1946). These traditions, too, differ from the Norwegian traditions. The most common variant in Denmark and Southern Sweden is a single huntsman with dogs chasing hags in the forest. In variants, however, the huntsman leads a hunting party (Celander 1943:141–43). Also, this tradition is not so commonly connected to (the time before) Christmas as to autumn (Celander 1943:159–60). In Sweden, the most common name for this is *Odens jakt* 'Odin's Hunt', in Denmark *Uensjægeren* and the like, normalized *Odinsjægeren* 'the Odin Hunter' (Hyltén-Cavallius 1863–68 I:162, 166; Celander 1920; Olrik 1901).

In Northern and Southern Germany, too, the tradition of the huntsman (alone or with a host) is common, often riding through people's houses (Huth 1935). In the north, he is called *Wodenjäger*, *Woenjäger* and the like, where *Woden* is considered to come from the name of the deity, Old Saxon *Woden* = Old Norse Óðinn. Further south and east, the short form *Wod* is used, or he is called *Der wilde Jäger* 'the Wild Huntsman'. As in Southern Scandinavia, he hunts for hags in the forest. Northern France has largely the same tradition, using the name *Chasseur sauvage*, which means the same. In England, there is also a tradition about a wild huntsman who comes to take away the souls of those about to die. In certain parts of Germany, a woman leads the Wild Host, called *Perhta* or *Frau Holle*. In Southern Germany, the Hunt has no leader; there, it is a host of deceased spirits travelling across the sky, especially during storms. This collective crowd is called names like *Die wilde Jagd* 'the Wild Hunt' or *Das wütende Heer / Das Wutesheer*, 'the Raging Army' (Olrik 1901;

Plischke 1914; de Vries 1931, 1962). The element *wüt-* / *wut-* comes from the same root as *Woden*.

This Wilde Jagd or Wütende Heer has a double meaning similar to what we have seen in Scandinavia: it also refers not only to supernatural beings, but also to processions of mummed humans touring the neighbourhood for fun, food and drinks (Eike 1980:269–70).

Where the Wild Host has a leader, this leader is sometimes understood as a legendary hero or king: Sigurd in Norway, Valdemar Atterdag in Denmark, Dietrich of Bern in Germany, King Arthur in England, etc. (Plischke 1914:16, 23, 39, 42).

In Southern Scandinavia as well as in Northern Germany, it was common to give Odin's horse or horses the last sheaf cut in autumn or the last tuft of grass during haying. Odin's dogs or the Wild Huntsman's dogs might be given a slaughtered animal or bread or beer. The offerings were believed to bring a good harvest, luck with the livestock or luck in a more general sense. They were made during haying, harvest or before or during Christmas (de Vries 1931; Celander 1920, 1943:150; Lid 1933:143–49). Similarly, in Norway it was common to leave out food and drinks for the Wild Host when it was expected (i.e. especially before or during Christmas), in the house or outside, for good luck (Lid 1929:33–67). In Southern Scandinavia and on the Continent, however, the Wild Host and the offerings to it are connected to autumn more than to (the time before) Christmas (Celander 1943:159–60).

The Wild Host is often associated with wind, especially in mountainous or Atlantic areas, or the Wild Host simply *is* a gale (de Vries 1931:25; Celander 1943:86, 90, 94, 98, 120, 135; Eike 1980:246, 287–88, 298). In the areas where the Wild Host is connected to autumn, it is more often linked to flocks of migrating birds and the noise they make (Olrik 1901; Celander 1943:147–48, 159, Eike 1980:288). In many traditions, it is clear that the Hunt is a host of nocturnal, deceased spirits (de Vries 1931:25; Celander 1943:76, 148–50). In others, such as the Icelandic tradition, it is elves (Celander 1943:108, 110, 114–18, 134, 137–40, 166–69).

Discussion

Comparison of the traditions

If we now return to the suggested backgrounds to the Stállu traditions, there can be no doubt that Lid was following an important lead when he pointed out the similarities between Juovlastállu and the Norwegian Oskoreia / Juleskreia / Julesveinane / Ståle(sferda) etc. In the following, I will examine the similarities and differences between the Sami and Norwegian traditions in more detail. The information about Juovlastállu presented above can be summed up as follows:

a. There is a Troll Juovlastállu as well as a human disguised as Juovlastállu.

The Troll Juovlastállu:

b. Demands that people stay inside and do not make noise during Christmas and is used by humans to threaten children to observe the norms.
c. Will come with a *ráidu* of mice, rats and lemmings at nights around Christmas.
d. Demands that people ensure they have enough firewood for the whole holiday before Christmas and tidy up around the chopping block so that Stállu's *ráidu* does not get stuck.
e. Will come into the tent or hut for refreshments; therefore, water and meat should be left out to him.
f. Punishes severely those who do not observe the Christmas norms.
g. As punishment, he will in particular catch disobedient children in a sack trap and abduct them, either eating them or returning them to the same place much later.
h. Lives in a large gorge.
i. In one legend, children hide from Stállu in a woodpile.
j. Can assume the shape of the moon or a bird and enter the hut or tent through the smoke vent in the roof.

The human Juovlastállu:

k. Is disguised to resemble Troll Stállu.
l. Goes to Christmas parties.
m. Pokes the girls with a stick, sometimes half-burned or phallic-shaped.
n. Tours the farms around Christmas, demanding beverages and bread as "taxes for the king".
p. Is accompanied by men called *hoammát*.
p. Is accompanied by a singing crowd with a number of frontmen called *Daban*.

I will now compare these aspects with Norwegian tradition.

a. This is the same as in the Norwegian traditions. The terms *Julesveinane*, *Julebukken* and *Julegeita* refer to supernatural beings as well as humans imitating the supernatural beings (Eike 1980:261–64).

b. Stay inside, do not make noise, frighten children: Such ideas are very common in connection with the Juleskreia etc. in Norway (Eike 1980:249).

c. *Ráidu* of mice etc. To this, I know no direct analogue, but it is not unusual in Norwegian tradition that the Juleskreia etc. ride on other "impossible" or

odd means of transport: saddles, empty barrels, brooms, bowls, pots, anchors, trammel hooks, poles, sticks, billy-goats, pigs (Lid 1929:56; Celander 1943:92–93).

d. Enough firewood before Christmas and tidy well afterwards: This is common throughout all of Norway, people would do this to avoid trouble with the Julesveinane etc. (Celander 1943:77, 86–87, 98–99; Eike 1980:259). Sources from Masfjorden, Western Norway, also mention that, if people did not tidy well, the Julesveinane could bump into something (Lid 1929:55; Celander 1943:99; Eike 1980:258–59).

e., **n.** Refreshments for Troll Juovlastállu / human Juovlastállu: In Norwegian tradition, it is quite common that people would leave bread or beer near the door for the Stålesferda, Julesveinane, etc. the nights before or during Christmas (Lid 1929:55, 63; Celander 1943:98; Eike 1980:254). This is the variant of the belief in which the Wild Host does not trouble people if they observe the norms. Even more widespread was the belief that the Wild Host would try to force its way into people's homes and eat all the Christmas food, drink all the Christmas beer and do all kinds of damage (Celander 1943:80, 83–85, 97, 123). The friendly, joking human variant of Julebukkane is very common in Norway (above). In Sami, the term corresponding to this form of *julebukk* is *juovlastállu* (Kåven et al. 1995:279). The Norwegian human Julebukkane will in some areas demand a "tax" (*skatt*) or claim to be the bailiff (*fut*. Eike 1980:264).

f., **m.** Troll Stállu punishes severely / human Stállu punishes jokingly, with a stick or similar: The idea that the supernatural Juleskreia etc. will abduct people is very common in Norwegian tradition (Eike 1980:249; Lid 1929: 57, 60). In many places, especially in Northern Norway, the human Julebukkane etc. would jokingly punish people who did not give them what they demanded, or who slept too long on Christmas Day, especially by whipping them with brushwood. Therefore, the human Wild Host was in Northern Norway often called *Juleskåka*, *Juleskjerkja* or *Juleskjekelen*, meaning approximately 'the Christmas Thrashing' (Lid 1929:62, 101–02). However, I know of no Norwegian analogue to the mentioned characteristics of Stállu's stick. But there are examples that the Wild Host, if rejected, break other taboos connected to bodily functions. In Sør-Audnedal, Agder, the Julebukken would come on Christmas Eve and sit on the chimney when Christmas porridge was cooked, and if he did not get his share, he would defecate into the chimney (Lid 1929:60). Taboo notions linked to the Wild Host may have been more common than the material reflects, since it is well-known that taboo subjects are underrepresented in the recorded material (Frykman 1979).

g. Abducting people, especially children, and sometimes returning them:

this motif is very common in Norwegian tradition, although it happens to adults more often than children (Eike 1980:249). Catching disobedient children in a sack trap: to this particular way of abducting people, I know no analogue in the Norwegian tradition about the Juleskreia etc. In Norwegian troll traditions, however, catching children in a sack is well-known.

h. Lives in a gorge: Setesdal's Ståle lives in a cave (Skar 1961–63 [1903–16]:418). In Danish tradition, it is also mentioned that the leader of the Wild Host lives in a cave (Ellekilde 1931:146).

i. Children hide from Stállu in a woodpile: I know no analogue to this in Norwegian tradition. But a common motif is that the Julesveinane etc. seek shelter in the neat pile of Christmas firewood (Lid 1929:52–56, 60–61).

j. Through the air, down through the smoke vent: it is very common in Norwegian tradition that the Juleskreia etc. moves through the air, and it is quite common that it/they enter through the chimney (Lid 1929:52–56, 60–61; Celander 1943:98). The next step in this part of the Juovlastállu tradition is also quite common in Norwegian tradition, when representatives of the Julebukkane etc. descend onto woodpiles on the rafters and then down onto the bar over the fireplace (Lid 1929). This way of entering corresponds to their being sprites flying in the air, Lid points out (ibid:94, footnote 5). The Northern Norwegian Gandferda sounds like a flock of birds (Aasen 1873: 207; Ross 1971 [1895]:225, 989 + p. 13 / 1013; Nicolaissen (1879–87 I:44–45; Heide 2006, ch. 4.12.3.) and, in Sogn, Western Norway, the Juleskreia can be a flock of crows (Hægstad 1912:82). The Southern Scandinavian Odinsjægeren is clearly inspired by flocks of migrating birds (Olrik 1901: 154). According to Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, two moons can be seen when the Oskoreia is around (Bergh 1990:90).

k. Disguised to resemble Troll Stállu: this corresponds to the very widespread Norwegian tradition of human Julebukkar, which was discussed above.

l. Human Stállu goes to Christmas parties: this, too, corresponds to the very common Norwegian tradition about human Julebukkar, Julesveiner etc., as noted above.

o. Accompanied by men called *hoammát*: this is a loanword from Norwegian (Qvigstad 1893:193–94; Lid 1933:44, footnote 1). Late Old Norse *hofmaðr* referred to "a person belonging to an aristocratic man's company" (Fritzner 1883–96 II:32. Literally 'court man'), and Modern Norwegian *hovmann* denotes a "clerical officer, escort" (Aasen 1873: 301). In Trøndelag (Sparbu), one of four supernatural Julesveinar was called *Hømann*, which is the same word (Lid 1929:57), and as Lid points

out (1933:44, footnote 1), the term *hoammát* corresponds to the notion that the Norwegian Julesveinar in many places have the title *embetsmenn* 'office-holders'.

p. Accompanied by a crowd with frontmen known as *Daban*: this is also a loanword, from Norwegian and Swedish *Staffan*, probably through Finnish *Tapani* (Lid 1933:23–24, 44), which is part of the Julebukkar / Julesveinar tradition, as we saw above.

Although there certainly are differences between the Sami and the Norwegian traditions (especially points c., g., i., j.), the overlap is so extensive that they clearly form parts of the same general tradition. If we compare Juovlastállu to Ståle in particular, many similarities are lacking, but the Stålesferda, 'Ståle's travel', nonetheless resembles closely the Oskoreia and Lussiferda from the same area as well as the Western Norwegian Juleskreia, Julereia, etc. (Skar 1961–63 [1903–16] I:418–22). Moreover, the Juovlastállu and Ståle traditions also have unusual traits in common. Regarding the leaders, both Stállu and Ståle are trolls (a. There is a Troll Juovlastállu as well as a human disguised as Juovlastállu. ., Lid 1933:54–55), and as trolls, both are connected to legends about the blinding of trolls and trolls tricked into falling off cliffs (ibid:55). Stállu lives in a gorge, Ståle lives in a cave (h.). Both Stállu and Ståle appear in legends where they have fixed residences and both are reflected in place names in the mountains (Lid 1933: 56). At the same time, the 1200 km between the Juovlastállu and Ståle traditions make it improbable that the one is borrowed from the other in recent times. Because of these circumstances, and the similarity between the terms *Stállu* and *Ståle*, there are very good reasons to believe that these terms and the traditions surrounding them have a common origin, i.e. that both are remnants of a tradition that at some point was distributed through large areas of Scandinavia.

This might at first glance seem implausible because of the enormous distance between the areas where the Juovlastállu and Ståle traditions are recorded. However, Ståle's Setesdal district is culturally the most conservative in all of Norway. For example, Setesdal's dialect has preserved the dative case well over 100 km away from the nearest other dialect to do the same (Sandøy 1987:100). Another example of Setesdal's cultural conservatism is the lesser known meaning of the name *Oskefisen* (*Ask-*), 'the Ash Lad', who is the main character of many folk-tales. In an area stretching continuously from Swedish Finland through Sweden to Trøndelag on Norway's west coast, *oskefisen* (*ask-*) also refers to a sprite living under the fire(place), causing whistling or crackling, or spitting that makes the fire flare up or the ashes blow. This is also attested from one place in Setesdal, at least 250 km away from Trøndelag. This probably represents a "relic island" (Heide 2012:78). The tendency also applies to traditions that in mod-

ern times seem to have a northern distribution in Norway: The *gandfluge,* 'supernatural insect to be sent forth by ritual specialists to do damage', is best known from Trøndelag and Northern Norway, but is attested as far south as Setesdal (Heide 2006:76, 156). Admittedly, these distances come nowhere near the 1200 km between Juovlastállu and Ståle. But there is, in fact, a "stepping stone" in Sunndalen, North-Western Norway. There, a legend is recorded about a man called Ståle: He lives under an overhanging rock in the mountains, is strong like at troll and comes down to the settlements to trouble people and make hullabaloo (Beito 1974:52–53, recorded by A.B Larsen 1883–84). This Ståle assumes an intermediate position between (Juovla)Stállu and the Ståle of the Christmas Stålesferda. Still, however, there are more than 900 km from Sunndalen to the Juovlastállu area. But there are examples of relic islands much farther apart than this. The masculine noun *áni* / *åne* 'fool, oaf' is attested in Iceland and on the Island of Senja, Northern Norway, and nowhere else (Sigfús Blöndal 1920:35; Ross 1971 [1895]:28), both apparently remnants of an Old Norse **áni* (which seems to be reflected in the compounds *ánagangr* m. and *ánóttr* adj. [also found on Senja] in the fourteenth-century Icelandic *Áns saga bogsveigis* (1829:341. See Heide 2018:152). In this case, the distance is c. 1400 km. Reflections of Old Scandinavian *gandr* (m.) in the probably original meaning 'staff, log' are only fond in Iceland and Finland's Ostrobothnia, the extremes of the Scandinavian language area (Heide 2006:122–24), 1600 km apart. The Wild Host traditions clearly are very old, and therefore, it is not problematic to understand the Juovlastállu and Ståle areas as relics of a previously large, continuous area.

The great overlap between the Juovlastállu traditions and Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish traditions about the Wild Host counts against the Stállu traditions deriving from historical encounters between the Sami and non-Sami aggressors, because the traditions of the Wild Host appearing around Christmas clearly are not historical.

The apparent ancientness of the Wild Hunt traditions also implies that the earlier attestation of Troll Stállu – before 1780 as opposed to the 1890s (Lindahl & Öhrling 1780:431; Lid 1933:43–48) – should not be regarded as decisive to our understanding of the origin of the Stállu tradition.

The Etymology

What could a common origin for (Juovla)stállu and Ståle be? I agree with Lid that a derivation from Sami *stálli* 'steel' is not plausible, and I would like to add a few reasons for this. Firstly, this etymology only considers *Stállu* and does not account for the combined *Stállu* / *Ståle* tradition. Secondly, the link between *Stállu* understood as derived from *stálli* and his *ruovdegákti* 'iron shirt' is problematic because steel and iron are not the same. In Medieval times, as in later times, the term steel, Old Norse *stál*,

was reserved for temperable iron (containing more than 0,3% carbon), which was intended for sharp edges (Granlund 1972:377). This was a costly, scant product and would not be used for chain mail. Thus, Stállu's alleged wearing of chain mail could hardly explain his name Stállu, even though it resembles (Sami) *stálli* 'steel' (a term borrowed from Scandinavian). On the other hand, the iron shirt can easily be explained as part of a folk etymological explanation for the name *Stállu*.

Lid argues (1933:55 / 63) that the common starting point for Stállu and Ståle is a wooden or stuffed, male-like figure or idol, connected to the harvest costumes mentioned above and also partly to Christmas, such as the Danish *Stodderen*, *Høstmanden*, *Staffensmanden*, the Swedish *Stådaren* and *Knutgubben* and the Norwegian *Gudmund*, *Fakse* – or a human imitation of such a figure, which Lid argues that the human Juovlastállu is (Lid 1933:61–63, 1929:158–69; Nielsen 1979). On this basis, Lid explains *Stállu* and *Ståle* from a modern Norwegian masculine *stål* (m.), "old, stiff man", and the verb *ståle,* "walk stiffly and totteringly" (Ross 1971 [1895]:755), which is derived from the noun. The original Ståle/Stállu would then be a figure or idol of the mentioned kind understood as an old man (Lid 1933:61, 63. Similarly Birkeli 1938:202f). To this, Celander (1943:137, footnote) objects that Lid's essential meaning "old man" is "not very enlightening" ("föga upplysande"). I agree. This meaning does not seem to grasp the essence of the tradition of the Stålesferda / Oskoreia / Juleskreia / Juovlastállu. Lid appears closer to the gist of the complex when he says that the essence of Oskoreia / Juleskreia is "the wild host [*skreid*] that 'rides from farm to farm'" ("rid um hus". Lid 1933:42). This seems to be reflected in most of the names: *Juleskreia*, *Våsedrifta*, *Julesveinane*, *Jólasveinar*, *Das wütende Heer* (a host), *Oskoreia*, *Julereia*, *Lussiferda*, *Stålesferda*, *Gandferda*, *Odens jakt*, *Odinjægeren*, *Wodenjäger*, *Die wilde Jagd* (riding, traveling, a riding hunting party). I cannot present a complete list here, but most of the remaining names seem to refer to having or assuming the shape of goats and billy-goats – *Julegeita*, *Julebukken*, *Julebukkane*, *Julegeita*. As far as I can see, none of the names refer to such a figure or idol as Lid has in mind. Another problem is that Lid places the common origin of *Stállu* and *Ståle* in Proto-Germanic times, whereas nothing indicates that the masculine *stål*, from which Lid derives *Stállu* and *Ståle*, is very old. It is confined to two small areas in north-western Norway, quite close to each other ([Ross 1971 [1895]:755; Torp 1919:709).

There is, however, another Norwegian *stål*, a neuter noun, that may fit better. The neuter *stål* means (*Norsk Ordbok* 1966–16 11:67):

A. "a densely packed layer of hay, (unthreshed) grain or the like in a barn; a pile",
B. a room or barn for *stål* in the meaning just noted, and
C. "a compressed mass of live beings; a crowd, flock, school", as in

fiskestål “a school of fish”, *sildestål* “a school of herring” and *skreistål* “a school of Arctic cod”.

Meaning B. a room or barn for stål in the meaning just noted, and . is, apparently, derived from A. “a densely packed layer of hay, (unthreshed) grain or the like in a barn; a pile”, . Meaning A. seems to be ancient, as it is found all over Norway, with an *i*-mutated variant, *stæle* (same meaning. Torp 1919:709; *Norsk Ordbok* 1966–16 10:1629), Swedish *ställe,* “the bottom layer of standing sheaves in a barn”, in principle older than the fifth-century *i*-mutation (Schalin 2017), and with cognates in other Germanic languages. Southern German *Stadel* is “a hay or grain barn”, English dialect *staddle* “the base of a stack”; Swedish dialect also has the form *stägel,* “the bottom layer of standing sheaves in a barn”, = Danish *stejle* (Torp 1919:709; Grimm & Grimm 1854–1961 17:417; Upton et al. 1994:390; *Ordbok över svenska språket* 1898–32:13958; Rietz 1862–67:692; *Ordbog over det danske sprog* 1918–56 21:1119). The original meaning clearly is ‘(something) standing’, namely the standing sheaves in the bottom layer of a stack or the like, as Torp points out. He reconstructs the Proto-Scandinavian form of the neuter *stål* as **staþla*, a derivation from the root in Old Norse *standa,* ‘to stand’, which had the supine form *staðit* (Torp 1919:709, cf. Pokorny 1959:1007).

If we assume that meaning C. of the neuter *stål* also existed in Proto-Scandinavian times, it is a good candidate for explaining *Stállu* and *Ståle*. The plural of neuter **staþla* would be **staþlu* (cf. **barnu*, plural of **barna* ‘a child’, Prokosch 1939:241), and the loss of the þ would be analogous to the development in Old Norse **nāþlu* (a feminine) > *nállu* ‘a needle’ (North Sami form). The retaining of the *-u* would be the same as in, for example, (North Sami) *ráidu* (above), from Proto-Scandinavian **raidu*, and *skálžu* ‘seashell’, from **skalju* (Aikio 2006:14; Theil 2012:64–68; Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007:976–77, both fem. sg.).

Meaning C. of the neuter *stål* comes very close to *skrei*(*d*) and *drift* in *Juleskreia* and *Våsedrifta* etc.; *Skreia* also appears as a simplex name of the Wild Host (Celander 1943:87). A *drift* is a drove of livestock, and a *skrei* is “a crowd, pack of people, animals or birds” moving forward – or “an avalanche” (*Norsk Ordbok* 1966–16:115, 10:115). In most variants of the tradition, the Wild Host is described as a teeming pack of supernatural beings and animals. For example, the Northern Norwegian *Gandferda* / *Gongferda* is referred to as “a swarm of dead” (Celander 1943:90–91), and the Juleskreia in Sogn is said to “travel with a loud rumble as if from a large drove of cattle” (ibid:78). Thus, it would make very good sense if (*Juovla*)*Stállu* and *Ståle*(*sferda*) derive from a word that meant something like ‘a compressed mass of live beings; a crowd, flock, school’.

If this is indeed the origin of *Stállu* and *Ståle*, it implies that the terms originally referred to a host and that the individuals *Stállu* and *Ståle* secondarily

emerged as leaders of the host and the term then transferred to them. This is a common way of understanding the relationship between *Das wütende Heer* and the god *Woden* (e.g. Plischke 1914:81; de Vries 1931:30ff). There are also many examples that a leader has secondarily been added to the host. Some examples from Norway: *Trond* (a common man's name), *Horgekongen* 'the king of the *horg* mountain' (from where the host came in some cases), *Gudmund* (a common man's name), *Guddursbassen* (probably a corrupt form of Gudmund + *basse* a big, strong man'), *Jul-Anders* ('Christmas Anders'), *Lussi* (because of St. Lucia's Day), etc. (Celander 1943:96; Eike 1980:265, 269; Christiansen 1922). Other examples are mentioned above.

It is, however, uncertain, even improbable, that meaning C. of the neuter *stål* developed as early as in Proto-Scandinavian times. The development in itself is a common one, found in e.g. Old Norse *múgi* 'a crowd; a heap, stack', where the latter meaning is the original one (Torp 1919:463). Another example is English *heap*, which in Scandinavian – the Old Norse form is *hópr* – means 'a host, flock' (Hellquist 1948:242). Also, terms like *stack* can be used informally in this sense (as internet searches demonstrate). An interesting example of this tendency is found in the Norwegian Wild Host tradition. In one account from Western Norway, the Juleskreia is described as containing "ei heil såta med folk", 'a whole stack of people' (Hafslo, Eike 1980:244). A *såte* comes very close to a *stål*. However, the 'host, flock' meaning of *stål* is confined to Western Norway, and this may be seen as an indication that it is not as old as Proto-Scandinavian times. On the other hand, this does not in itself exclude the possibility that it really is.

It may be better, however, to understand *Stállu* as a loan from a later Scandinavian form, an Old Norse *stál*, which in all probability existed in all meanings listed under A.–C. above, even though it is not attested – with the *-u* added in Sami. In Sami, nouns are supposed to end in a vowel, so if a borrowed word does not, a vowel is added. In neuters, it is usually *-i* (e.g. the mentioned *stálli* 'steel', probably from Old Norse *stál*) or *-a* that is added, but it can also be *-u* (Qvigstad 1893:51).

Questions may be raised regarding the explanation of Stállu and Ståle that I put forward here because the Stállu / Ståle traditions are not recorded in Old Norse texts. However, there is reason to believe that only a fraction of the narratives and traditions that existed were recorded. Moreover, the description of Óðinn and his following (see especially *Eddukvæði I. Goðakvæði* 2014, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* 1931) have much in common with the traditions about the Wild Host from post-Medieval times, as has been pointed out especially by Celander (1943:140–75, especially 161–63). Óðinn is the leader of a host of deceased people (the *einherjar*), he or his riders (the *valkyrjur*) fetch them when they are to die, he and the gods are connected to Christmas through his name *Jólnir* and the designation *jóln* (the gods); in one story, he steals the Christmas food, he is the ecstatic god (cf. *wütende*), he often appears in dis-

guise and he is called the masked one, *Grímnir*; furthermore, a prominent member of his group, Þórr, chases hags and rides in a chariot pulled across the sky by billy-goats (not mentioned by Celander 1943:162–64) – just to mention the main aspects. There is a correspondence between nearly every aspect of Óðinn and his group and the tradition of the Oskoreia etc., as Celander points out (ibid:163). Many of the essential aspects of the Wild Host traditions can also be deduced in the earliest known versions of Óðinn. The day name Wednesday / óðinsdagr, which is a calque of the Latin *dies Mercurii* 'day of Mercury', originating in the Roman / Germanic border area along the Rhine in the early centuries AD, tells us that the Óðinn of this time was identified with Mercurius. Among other things, Mercury was a god of commerce, communication, and travel and he was a psychopomp (guiding souls to the realm of the dead; Phillips 2006). When we take into account that over-land trade at this time implied large, noisy caravans of draught and pack animals and their drivers, the similarity with the Wild Host is considerable. Admittedly, the name Óðinn is not found in the Norwegian Wild Host tradition, but this seems to reflect a medieval circumstance: the god's name belongs to the tradition of the Wild Host in those parts of Europe where there are pre-Christian place names formed from the name, not in those regions where such place-names are not found (Celander 1943:163).

Ideas similar to those lurking behind the term *Stállu* / *Ståle* may well have existed in Sami culture prior to borrowing the name/term. *Weekends* and *second-hand shops* existed in Norway before these terms were taken into Norwegian in the late twentieth century, to partly replace *helg* and *brukthandel*. Regarding the traditions discussed in this article, similar traditions are found across much of the world (Plischke 1914:27–28; Celander 1943:172), so there is no reason to believe that they were not found among the Sami before the introduction of the term *Stállu*. This may be compared to how the term *Halloween* and the Halloween costume has been introduced in Norway during recent decades. As shown above, similar costumes were common in Norway long before the introduction of the modern Halloween, although Halloween occurs nearly two months earlier (like the old South Scandinavian and German traditions mentioned above) and Halloween has added some traits to Norwegian tradition (for example jack-o'-lanterns).

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[1] I translate all quotations from Scandinavian languages without notification and add the original wording only when this seems to matter.

[2] Today, *juovlastállu* in North Sámi also means 'Santa Claus' (Kåven et al. 2000:249). This is clearly a very late development, parallel to what has happened to the Icelandic *jólasveinar* (Widding 1976:343).

[3] The most thorough presentation of the Oskoreia itself and the other Norwegian and Icelandic variants is Celander 1943, then Eike 1980. Regarding these variants, see also Lid 1933:52ff, Bø 1987:81ff, Opedal 1930:105–06, Opedal 1934:122, Aasen 1923:70–71, Helland 1900: 418ff, 1901:653ff. More sources are listed in Bø 1987:170 and Sivertsen 2000:316–17.