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RMN Newsletter is a medium of contact and communication for members of the Retrospective Methods Network (RMN). The RMN is an open network which can include anyone who wishes to share in its focus. It is united by an interest in the problems, approaches, strategies and limitations related to considering some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period. Such comparisons range from investigating historical relationships to the utility of analogical parallels, and from comparisons across centuries to developing working models for the more immediate traditions behind limited sources. RMN Newsletter sets out to provide a venue and emergent discourse space in which individual scholars can discuss and engage in vital cross-disciplinary dialogue, present reports and announcements of their own current activities, and where information about events, projects and institutions is made available.

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Cover image reproduced from Knud Leems, Professor i det Lappiske Sprog, Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper, deres Tungemaal, Levemaade og forrige Afgudsdyrkelse, oplyst ved mange Kaabberstykker: med J.E. Gunneri, Anmærkninger; og E.J. Jessen-s, Afhandling om de Norske Finners og Lappers Hedenske Religion: Canuti Leemii, professoris Lingvae Lapponicce, de Lapponibus Finnarchie, eorumque lingva, vita et religione pristina commentatio, multis tabulis æneis illustrata: una cum J.E. Gunneri, Notis; & E.J. Jessen-s, Tractaru singulari de Finnorum Lapponumqve Norvegic. religione pagana, Kongl. Wäysenhuses Bogtrykkerie of G.G. Salikath, 1767.

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The tale’s landscape setting. It argues that storytelling for storytelling’s sake might have been neglected in current theorising on the conceptualisation and narrative use of landscape. This, as well as the intensity with which landscape is used in Iceland for the construction of narratives, might also affect the use of place-lore for retrospective approaches.

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Editor’s Column

Adaptation is fundamental to evolution. Retrospective methods, by definition, are oriented to look into the past, and studies in this journal commonly discuss historical changes, their motivations and consequences, not to mention alternatives such as disarticulation or extinction. A lesson to be drawn from these discussions is that, when conditions beyond our control change, adaptation may become essential for continuation. The Retrospective Methods Network was flexible in its emergence and has thrived, with multiple shifting centers of activity loosely organized and RMN Newsletter at their nexus. Of course, as a journal, RMN Newsletter requires greater formalization, structure and stability. Unlike the organization of activities of the RMN and its daughter networks, responsibility for the journal does not move from institution to institution and from country to country. It is therefore more vulnerable to changes in circumstances where it is based. As many of our readers have noticed, such changes have occurred, resulting in delays in publication and threatening even to erase the journal from the web. And we have adapted, emerging reborn with a new URL. And the journal has evolved.

What happened? RMN Newsletter is published by Folklore Studies of the University of Helsinki, and the journal’s pages were constructed on that department’s webpages. A few years ago, Folklore Studies was absorbed into the (super-)Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies in the sort of departmental consolidation happening in many universities, and at the end of this year the super-departments within the Faculty of Arts will also be dissolved (although the new divisions will also be called ‘departments’ in English). One would not expect all of this to affect the journal, but web pages associated with the previous department structure were frozen last year, blocking publication. Finding a new home on the University’s site proved a challenging task: the super-departments were on the cusp of being dissolved; the new divisions did not yet have webpages; yet the journal’s website could not be independent in the University of Helsinki’s domain. Finally, this summer, we received a new URL and began to rebuild.

This tumultuous period has not been without activity in the RMN. A multidisciplinary international symposium and workshop for doctoral students, “Mythology, Discourse, and Authority: Retrospective Methods in Cultural Research” (22nd–23rd November 2016, Tartu, Estonia), was organized by the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu, the Estonian Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts (GSCSA), and the Department of Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki. Among the daughter networks of the RMN, the Austmarr Network has been going strong. It has maintained its rhythm of annual meetings: Austmarr VI: “Religion – Language – Practice, with a Workshop on Late Iron Age Mortuary Behaviours” was held at the University of Helsinki (5th–6th December 2016, Helsinki, Finland), and this year Austmarr VII is returning to the University of Tartu, where it was founded, organized on the theme of “Crossing Disciplinary Borders in Viking Age Studies: Problems, Challenges and Solutions” (1st–3rd December 2017, Tartu, Estonia). The long-awaited collection of articles that developed around selected contributions from Austmarr II and Austmarr III, Contacts and Networks in the Baltic Sea Region: Austmarr as a Northern Mare nostrum, 500–1500 A.D., will appear with Amsterdam University Press in 2018. At the initiative of Kendra Willson, the Austmarr Network is organizing a special issue of the present journal, planned to appear in the same year. The Old Norse Folklorists Network has developed a volume of eleven selected articles based on its 2014 symposium that should also appear in the coming months. There is much to look forward to, and talk of plans for new directions that will certainly become of interest to our readership.

The revamping motivated by building RMN Newsletter’s new website has extended to additional changes for the journal itself. Of course, the journal has evolved continuously over the years in relation to the interests and needs of our readership. It was founded at the first meeting of the Retrospective Methods
The delay in *RMN Newsletter*’s publication has resulted in a double-issue, the contents of both issues 12 and 13. From this point onward, we have decided that we will produce only one issue per year. We have also done some reorganizing of sections. “Communications” is retained as the title for the section of peer-reviewed articles, with a nod to the esteemed series Folklore Fellows’ Communications. This is followed by a complementary section of non-peer-reviewed articles, discussions and reports: “Communications, Perspectives and Reports”. These sections are followed by publication announcements and reports on or introductions to ongoing or recently-completed projects, including larger group projects, post-doctoral and PhD projects as well as Master’s thesis projects. We hope that this new organization and publication rhythm will appeal to our readership.

The aim of the journal continues to be to provide an emergent discourse space in which scholars may discuss, debate, and share information, and to make knowledge, discussions and information available to those interested in it. We have restructured the journal and its rhythm, adapting to changing circumstances as part of our on-going evolution, but we continue to offer a distinct venue to our contributors and readership. We organize and maintain *RMN Newsletter* as a discourse space, but that space would be empty were it not peopled by the voices of contributors, allowing dialogue with an ever-widening readership. Over the course of this journal’s modest life, it is you who have driven the journal’s evolution.

Frog

University of Helsinki
Icelandic Folklore, Landscape Theory, and Levity: The Seyðisfjörður Dwarf-Stone

Matthias Egeler, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich / Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin

Abstract: This paper discusses the relationship between a folk tale about the Dvergasteinn [‘Dwarf-Stone’] on the fjord of Seyðisfjörður in eastern Iceland and the details of the tale’s landscape setting. It argues that storytelling for storytelling’s sake might have been neglected in current theorising on the conceptualisation and narrative use of landscape. This, as well as the intensity with which landscape is used in Iceland for the construction of narratives, might also affect the use of place-lore for retrospective approaches.

In her introduction to the recent ‘Art Seminar’ volume on Landscape Theory, Rachel Ziady DeLue argues programatically that “the intellectual and socio-political stakes of landscape theory are high”, and that the importance of understanding our relationship to landscape can hardly be overestimated (DeLue 2008: 11). Seen against the background provided by such an ambitious claim, it comes as little surprise that the issues addressed in the scholarly discourse on landscape tend to be grave and important ones. Denis Cosgrove, for instance, is deeply concerned with matters of ideology: in the mid-1980s, he argued that ‘landscape’ is primarily a “way of seeing”, through which parts of the European population commented on social relations, and emphasises the importance of ‘myth’, ‘memory’, and ‘meaning’ for the relationship between landscape and human beings (Cosgrove 2008: 20–21; Cosgrove in DeLue & Elkins 2008: 88–89; Cosgrove 1984). Myth and memory also play a core role for the approach that was taken by Simon Schama in his classic book on Landscape and Memory, and the seriousness of the topic is underlined by the location in which he begins his story of landscape and remembrance: at the mound at Giby in north-eastern Poland. He tells how this mound made him grasp what really is meant by ‘landscape and memory’ – and that his narrative opens at just this particular place sets a solemn tone indeed, as this mound tells the story of the mass-execution of several hundred men and women (Schama 1996: 23–26). Keith H. Basso in his long-term ethnographic study of the use of places, place names, and place stories among the Western Apache takes a very different approach, but he deals with matters of social importance as well: a central concern of his book is how fundamental ethical and social questions can be addressed by taking recourse to place-lore (Basso 1996). Gillian R. Overing and Marijane Osborn adopt a more literary perspective, engaging with the landscapes of storytelling (1994). While the workings of society and the tragedies of ‘real life’ remain outside of the scope of their work, they still share a sense of acuteness with other landscape writers. Writing about the Landscape of Desire, they express already with their choice of title a deeply-felt urgency for their engagement with the relationship between landscape, story, and meaning in an approach where “place is a shared form of meaning”, providing the space for an intense dialogue with the past (1994: xvi–xvii). More recent, but no less serious, is the approach taken by Robert Macfarlane (2015). In discussing the landscape writing of Barry Lopez and Peter Davidson, for instance, he emphasises the humanistic value of the approaches that these writers take to their respective chosen landscapes – northern ones in both cases – and concludes by emphasising their ethical aspects and their relationship to morality, seen as deeply connected to the power of certain landscapes to “bestow [...] a grace” upon the people inhabiting or travelling through them (Macfarlane 2015: 209–220). Even more intense is the engagement with
place and space frequently found in the study of religions. For Mircea Eliade, whose works have become classics of the discipline in spite of their notoriously crypto-theological tendencies, sacred space was a space in which ‘the sacred’ had revealed itself in an act of theophany, investing the place of this self-revelation with immense significance and turning it into a sacred centre from which everything around it took its meaning and orientation (Eliade 1998: 21–60). If one takes such an approach, virtually nothing can be more significant than place.1 More recently, Jürgen Mohn (2007) abandons Eliade’s quasi-mystic emphasis on ‘the sacred’, but still approaches sacred space as a central source of orientation: place continues to be analysed under a perspective which primarily sees it as a medium of deep existential importance.

**A Tale from the Shores of Seyðisfjörður Fjord**

None of this is wrong: all of human life is set in places and ‘landscapes’, and the interaction between these settings of human life and human life itself is of obvious import. Yet if one leaves the library and, on a bright late summer’s day, takes a stroll along the north coast of the Seyðisfjörður fjord in eastern Iceland, life might easily seem too pleasant to ponder deep thoughts of desire, meaning, ethics, and orientation. There is just too much there to occupy the idle wanderer with much lighter thoughts. Picturesque cast-concrete ruins offer sheltered space to do some not-really-rough camping; the mountains could have been painted by W.G. Collingwood (and some of them, in fact, have been); and the sky and the sea compete with each other to be the most blue (unless a cloud passes and turns the sky shades of grey). Even the saga-traveller and historian of religions will not be disappointed, as the north coast of the Seyðisfjörður fjord was the site of a church of literary fame. About a third of the way along the fjord’s northern shore lies the farmstead Dvergasteinn. Formerly, Dvergasteinn was the site of the local church and the seat of the priest serving it. In the mid-19th century, the great collector of Icelandic folktales, Jón Árnason, included a short story about this place among his ‘church tales’ (*kirkjusögur*). According to this tale, the church had once stood to the west or south of the fjord; this had been so long ago, however, that nobody remembered what the place where it had stood had been called. At that time, there was a big boulder next to the church. People believed that this boulder was inhabited by dwarfs; hence it was called *Dvergasteinn* [‘Dwarf-Stone’]. But as time went by, people came to think that the location of the church was really rather inconvenient, and decided to move it to the northern side of the fjord to the place where it was still standing when Jón recorded his tale. Yet while the parishioners were engaged in erecting the church in its new location, suddenly they were astonished to see a house sailing across the fjord to the very place in which they were building the new church. This house continued on its way until it hit firm ground and lodged itself on the foreshore: this was the big boulder which had been standing next to the church in its old location and that had always been thought to be inhabited by dwarfs, but which of course had not been taken along when the church building was moved. So now people knew that the dwarfs had not liked being far from the church, and had therefore relocated their house-stone. Jón’s account concludes by stating that the vicarage was given the name ‘Dwarf-Stone’ to memorialise the dwarfs’ piety.2

**Place and Story**

Jón Árnason published this little tale in 1864. Since then, the church has been moved (again) and now stands close to the harbour in the town of Seyðisfjörður. Yet while the church is gone, the stone is still where it used to be (Figures 1–3). It is a grey boulder as tall as a man that faces the water of the fjord with a ‘facade’ which strikingly recalls the facade of a house: it has the exact triangular shape of a house’s gables, and is nearly plum- vertical. Furthermore, it also catches the eye because of the unusual erosion patterns which the salty sea water has eaten into the rock: the Dwarf-Stone’s ‘facade’ has dissolved into an almost organic pattern of vertical bowls separated by narrow, cardboard-thin ridges; its whole structure is suggestive more of soap bubbles than of solid stone. What is more – and this may be very important – the Dwarf-Stone seems to be the only isolated
boulder on this stretch of shore; it is the only rock formation of such an unusual house-like shape; and it is the only stone which shows this kind of strange erosion pattern. The last point in particular cannot be emphasised enough. While there is plenty of rock on this shore, none of it looks to be dissolving in a pattern.
that even remotely recalls the quasi-organic cell structure of the Dwarf-Stone (Figure 1).

Similarly suggestive is the location of this boulder (Figure 2). It lies immediately above a stretch of shingle beach; unlike much of the rocky coast of the fjord, this flat beach would make a good spot to pull an open boat ashore. (Seen from the slope above the shore, the shape of the Dwarf-Stone arguably even recalls a boat stored on the beach turned keel-upwards.) The impression of being by a natural ‘harbour’ of sorts is further strengthened by a rocky outcrop that juts out into the fjord just to the east of the Dwarf-Stone, acting as a natural breakwater protecting the shingle beach (which, in fact, is much broader behind this rock outcrop than further along the shore).

The evocative image of the natural harbour is also accentuated by the only visible piece of human interference in this little landscape of rock and water. About halfway along the rock outcrop-breakwater, a groove has been cut into a naturally protruding stump of rock, turning it into a semi-natural bollard (Figure 2). A mooring line is attached to this rock-bollard which leads off into the water towards a buoy bobbing in the fjord a few metres further out (Figures 2 & 3).

This little ensemble shows a striking convergence between the physical topography of the place and the 19th-century folk tale. The conspicuous and flamboyantly unusual erosion pattern seen on the rock is mirrored by the otherworldly character that it attains in the story. Its striking house-shape is reflected by the story element that it serves as the dwarfs’ rock-house. Its location immediately above a natural harbour corresponds to its arrival by floating across the fjord. And, the location of the stone next to the former parsonage correlates with the religious frame within which the action of the tale is set. Thus, there is a one-to-one match between the physical features of the place as it was at the time when the story was recorded (unusual, house-shaped stone; natural harbour; church) and the motifs employed in the tale (stone serving as a house of dwarfs; voyage; the dwarfs’ piety). The story of the Dwarf-Stone is a place story in the strictest sense: it does not only play itself out in a real-world locality, but its whole plot appears to be directly crafted onto the features
of the local landscape. Or rather, it has not been crafted onto the landscape, but out of it. The extreme closeness of the correspondence between the tale of the Dwarf-Stone and its particular landscape setting on the coast of the fjord seems to suggest that, on one level, this tale in its transmitted form has been created specifically from the elements of its location: topographical element by topographical element, the land has been turned into a story.

**Place, Story, and Storytelling Tradition**

On another level, however, it goes without saying that the statement that the land has been turned into a story also needs to be qualified: it is by no means meant to imply that all the elements that are used in the tale to weave the different topographical features together to form a coherent narrative whole were invented from scratch. Rather, the tale seems to draw on a rich corpus of established narrative motifs to turn place into story. For instance, the use of stones as devices to cross bodies of water is attested both in Icelandic saga literature (Boberg 1966, motif-type F531.4.8, with attestations such as the giant rowing a stone in the A-text of *Ǫrvar-Odds saga*: Boer 1888: 120) and in later Scandinavian folklore (e.g. af Klintberg 2010, tale-type M110). Later Scandinavian folklore also presents numerous tales of how a prominent stone by a church was the result of – and is testimony to – a supernatural encounter (af Klintberg 2010, tale-type J1 “Giant throws stone at church”, J8 “Giant throws stone at churchgoers (wedding party)”). The multitude of attestations of such tales that is listed by Bengt af Klintberg for Sweden alone strongly suggests that there was a widespread feeling that prominent stones in the surroundings of church buildings were warranted as objects of a narrative.  

Another long-established motif in the tale of the Dwarf-Stone is the idea that dwarfs live in stones: this motif can be found already in the kennings of Egill Skallagrímsson’s poem *Sonatorrek*, where sea cliffs are called the boat-house doors of a dwarf (st. 3; Bjarni Einarsson 2003: 147). Classic examples of benevolent (if pagan) supernatural beings which inhabit a rock near a farm – at least until they are driven out by a missionary – can be found in *Porvalds þáttr viðförla 1* (ch. 3) and *Kristni saga* (ch. 2; both texts ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson et al. 2003). Even the idea that the supernatural inhabitants of local rock formations can be Christian was not an innovation by the inventor of the Dwarf-Stone tale, but was well established in 19th-century Icelandic folklore. In Jón Árnason’s collection, other examples are provided by the tales of “Borghildur alfcona” (Jón Árnason 1862: 8–9; 1889: 3–5), “Túngustapi” (1862: 31–34; 1889: 16–20), and “Barnsskírinn” (1862: 54–55; 1889: 27–28).

Nonetheless, the specific combination of motifs found in the aetiological tale of the Dwarf-Stone has been spun specifically out of the local topography, using the narrative vocabulary of its time and place of creation, but using it specifically to turn main features of the locality into a coherent plot. Such established motifs as are used in the resulting tale greatly contributed to making the tale narratively plausible to its audience; they ensured that it ‘made sense’ to them, as it related to a well-established tradition of storytelling. Yet while this tradition can account for the motifs used in the tale of the Dwarf-Stone, it cannot account for the particular way in which these motifs are woven together to form the tale’s plot. This plot as such was not developed out of traditional motifs, but out of a specific local landscape. In a manner of speaking, the traditional motifs employed in this narrative development merely were seeds falling on the fertile soil of the parsonage, and the folk tale grew out of the place in the same – if not in an even more intimate – sense as a plant grows out of the soil in which its seeds first take root.  

This makes it as pertinent to the relationship between landscape and story as any tale can possibly be.

**Place, Story, and Landscape Theory**

Looking back to the approaches to landscape mentioned at the beginning of this essay, it seems remarkable just how little they appear applicable to the Dwarf-Stone. Admittedly, the tale speaks of an old, now long-abandoned site where the parsonage was located once upon a time; thus, there is an element of ‘memory’ here as is so prominent in classical treatments of landscape such as Simon Schama’s (1996). Yet this memory is a memory of a place that
never was – and, what is more, consciously so. As the tale itself says, this former parsonage was located ‘either to the west or to the south of the fjord.’ This is virtually a non-statement: west and south are the two only possible directions in which the church could have been, given that it stood to the north of the fjord in the present when the story was told, and that to the east there is nothing but the North Atlantic. Thus, the maximum openness provided by this localisation ‘to the south or west’ seems like a tongue-in-cheek way of both denying and emphasising that, really, there was no such other location of the church within living memory. This lack of a memory of the church’s previous site even appears in a virtually explicit way when the tale states that nobody remembers what its former location might have been called. Memory is absent; a memory approach, therefore, has little explanatory power.

Even less explanatory power lies in approaching the tale as a narrative referring to questions of morality or as an illustration of social norms. The moral of the story – if there is one at all – seems to be that one should live right next to the parish church. Yet this does not help in understanding the tale, as in the widely dispersed settlement patterns of Iceland, this was not customarily the case and thus is not a plausible, realistic moral message. If anything, the lengths to which the dwarfs went to live next to the church might in such a social context have seemed a bit silly. Neither, furthermore, does the tale create meaning and orientation in the senses postulated by Mircea Eliade or Jürgen Mohn (see above), let alone contribute to the sacralization of the land. If there is any ‘message’, it does not seem to be more than the provision of an example of ‘stranger things have happened’, while offering some sort of explanation for the place name Dvergasteinn.

So, if we are trying to understand the relationship between landscape and storytelling, the case of the Dwarf-Stone might teach us some humility in our quest for deep, serious, and profound meanings: these do not seem to be what this tale is all about. Rather, it seems to be about the simple pleasure of storytelling for its own sake, for nothing more (but also nothing less!) than the fun of it. Artfully and cleverly, it takes all the most eye-catching elements of a micro-landscape and turns them into a tale which combines them to form a working (if utterly fantastic) plot; whoever managed this little feat must have been immensely proud of themselves, and rightly so. Yet there is no indication that there is more to this little feat of landscape storytelling than the feat for its own sake.

Hypothetically speaking, there may have been other versions of this tale in circulation. Some people could also have believed that the Dwarf-Stone was indeed inhabited by supernatural beings rather than merely being the object of an entertaining story. Discourse about the meaning of landscape (and probably any discourse about any meaning) is best conceptualised as an ongoing phenomenon rather than a static one; it is, thus, not unlikely that the Dwarf-Stone was ascribed different meanings by different people at different times. Yet in the form in which it was recorded by Jón Árnason, this particular tale is not only tailored to its local setting in the closest way possible, but it also shows no indication of having been meant as more than a story for storytelling’s sake. Horace in his *Art of Poetry* states that *aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae / aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae* (*Ars poetica* 333–334) [*poets either want to be useful or to delight, / or say the pleasant and the useful things of life at once*]. The teller of tales who invented the story of the Dwarf-Stone seems to have been firmly in the second of these three categories: it is all about delighting in a good yarn. Admittedly, there is also an element here of enchanting the landscape (cf. Macfarlane 2015: 24–26), charging it with associations that transcend the mundane and the everyday. Yet given the overall structure of the tale, this enchantment does not appear to be the intention, but rather one of the tools of the storyteller. Drawing on traditional motifs such as the motif of dwarfs living in stones, the storyteller does to some extent inscribe supernatural connotations into the landscape. However, given the specific relationship between the tale and the landscape it is woven out of, these supernatural motifs were not more than a narrative device used to string together a series of landscape features into a working plot. The aim seems to be the
working plot, not the supernatural. Enchantment comes as a by-product, welcome perhaps, but secondary nonetheless – and is certainly not taken very seriously.

In this way, the Seyðisfjörður tale of the Dwarf-Stone serves as a reminder to put some levity back into landscape theory: in trying to understand the relationship between humans and the landscapes they are inhabiting, we should not forget that underlying the profound there is also the everyday, and that there is a lot that is done in everyday life which is simply done for the joy it gives.

Place, Story, and Retrospective Methodology
All this, however, may also have consequences for the use of Norse narrative material for retrospective reconstructions. In a level of detail that is achievable only very rarely, the folklore of the Dwarf-Stone illustrates the extreme interconnectedness between place-lore and the specific landscape of the place in which it is set. In the case of the Dwarf-Stone, if one wants to understand the degree of this interconnectedness, it is inevitable to consult, in the words of Schama (1996: 24), “the archive of the feet”: no textual analysis that is unaware of the text’s landscape referent would be able to make head or tail of this particular story. Only with recourse to this landscape referent can the tale be understood as a clever and delightful play on real-world topography; without this, it would have seemed quaint at best. This situation constitutes an emphatic warning about the interpretation of place stories whose place referents are lost – and such a warning is very pertinent indeed to the study of Old Norse sources, as so much of this material is (or purports to be) place-lore.

To illustrate this problem, another example linked to the topic of stones can be taken from Landnámabók [the ‘Book of Settlements’], where it is told that certain boulders by the name of Gunnsteinar, which were located somewhere in the valley Flateyjardalr in northern Iceland, had a double function as both boundary markers and as a cult site (ch. S241=H206). It is not known today where exactly these boulders might have been located (Jakob Benediktsson 1968: 273n.6). Jón Hnefill Ádalsteinsson, in his influential Under the Cloak (1999: 29), takes this reference to be a historical one. But in assessing the historicity of a report such as this, one should always wonder: assuming that in the medieval Flateyjardalr there really was a rock formation which was somehow striking enough to attract attention, what reason do we have to believe that it drew the religious attention of the valley’s Viking Age inhabitants, rather than that of a medieval storyteller simply in search of inspiration for a good tale? Not every narrative using religious or mythological motifs also has a deep religious or mythological significance.

Another aspect of the Dwarf-Stone tale that is also of relevance for retrospective approaches is the importance of sheer entertainment. Entertainment for entertainment’s sake was also a major factor for medieval saga writers; this is central to keep in mind when we consider sagas and stories that appear oriented towards entertainment as sources for vernacular religion and mythology. Looking beyond place-lore, one may think about tales such as Bósa saga, porsteins þáttir bæjarmagns, or Snorri’s myth of Thor’s visit to Útgarðaloki.7 The motifs that are used and manipulated in such texts may be conventional and link to widely held (or once-held) beliefs – as is the case with the Dwarf-Stone tale, which uses some very old themes indeed, such as dwarfs living it stones – but such motifs have often been removed from their former (‘original’) contexts and have been recombined in unique, unexpected, and entertaining ways. Thus, such texts may be of interest for studying individual motifs, but may hardly be able to tell us much about coherent plot lines and larger narrative structures of vernacular mythology: in constructing a new tale with an agenda focused on entertainment, the overarching plot lines are the first elements to undergo far-reaching transformations whose results may bear hardly any perceivable resemblance to the vernacular mythology of the Viking Age. The Seyðisfjörður folk tale of the Dwarf-Stone constitutes an emphatic reminder that stories (including place stories) can always just be stories for storytelling’s sake. The delight that this folk tale exhibits in the sheer joy of storytelling reminds us that, if we take narrative texts too seriously as reflections of the period they pretend to talk
about, we may be taking them more seriously than they ever took themselves – even if, in taking such an overly serious approach, we follow a path well-trodden in current landscape writing.

To conclude by returning to the topic of landscape proper, the importance that the lessons drawn from the Dwarf-Stone tale have for saga scholarship is also illustrated by the Pórssteinn ['Stone of Thor'] and the scholarly discussion associated with it. Eyrbyggja saga (ch. 10) and Landnámabók (ch. S85=H73) locate this stone on the assembly site on the Pórsnes peninsula, claiming that human sacrifice was performed on it. Eyrbyggja saga (ch. 10) furthermore adds the detail that the stains left by the blood of the sacrificial victims can still be seen on the stone. Jón Hnefill Ádalsteinsson, again, takes this to be a historically reliable tradition (2005: 500–501; 1999: 150–152, 194). Yet what we are dealing with here rather seems to be a case that is – at least within the frame of medieval saga literature – uniquely similar to the case of the Dwarf-Stone by the Seyðisfjörður. On the home-field of the farm Þingvellir ['Assembly Site'], to this day there lies a prominent boulder – a boulder that already W.G. Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson noted was coloured by inclusions of iron, giving it the look of a boulder spattered with blood (1899: 95–96 with Fig. 82 = Figure 4 above). Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson may have been the first modern writers to suggest that this stone and its colouring “may have been what the saga-man saw” (1899: 95); just as in the case of the Seyðisfjörður folk tale, this detail of Eyrbyggja saga also seems to have been directly developed out of (rather than being inscribed into) the landscape. Yet Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson were by no means the last scholars to note this correlation; rather, this correlation has long since become something of a topos of scholarship (cf. e.g. Böldl 2005: 213; Egeler 2015a: 83–84; Lethbridge, n.d.). What is crucial to note, however, and what is brought to the fore by the case of the Dwarf-Stone, is that this correlation is not a one-off occurrence, as it has been treated in scholarship to date. We are not dealing with an individual case here, but with a pattern: landscape and storytelling stand in a close dialogue with each other, sometimes so close that storytellers simply seem to have taken down their landscape’s dictations in order to create an artistic interweaving between a literary plot and its real-world setting. We see this happening most clearly in the case of the Dwarf-Stone, but that it also appears in Eyrbyggja saga with almost the same clarity indicates that this is a pattern
which has to be fully taken into consideration in any attempt to assess the usefulness of medieval literary sources for retrospective reconstructions — even if, due to the nature of the material, close relationships between story and landscape tend to elude us when we are dealing with medieval texts, whose landscape settings are largely lost.

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Notes
1. For justified criticism of Eliade’s approach, which ultimately is not scientific but mystic and theological, see Gill 1998: 301–304; Smith 1987: 1–23.
4. A point which perhaps should at least be mentioned – even though it cannot be resolved – is the chicken-and-the-egg problem of the parsonage being called ‘Dvergasteinn’ and how this links to the story. The story’s religious element seems to presuppose the existence of a church, and therefore it also presupposes that the parsonage predates the formation of the story as we have it. At the same time, if the story had only been invented after the parsonage had been established, it would be surprising (though perhaps not impossible) that the parsonage should have been renamed with a toponym correlating with the new story. One, though not the only, possible scenario is that the unusual stone on the northern coast of the Seyðisfjörður at an early point attracted a dwarf story, was then used as a reference point for naming the parsonage after it was established at a later point, and was finally used as a core element of a story connecting both. If this sequence of events comes close to the truth, then the awkward relationship between the presuppositions made respectively by the naming of the parsonage (which presupposes the story of the dwarf stone) and by the story (which presupposes the parsonage) seems to be an indication of the growth of a Dvergasteinn story that took place in several steps and perhaps over a long period of time.
5. For an instance of a (Norwegian) supernatural aetiological place story that, at the time of its recording, was considered comical rather than being taken seriously, see Frog 2018.
6. For telling examples see also Tim Robinson on the toponym Corrach on the island of Aran off the Irish west coast (Robinson 2009: 296–297), or his discussion of the different ways in which both scholars and local fishermen have attempted to make sense of the toponym Oileán Dá Bhranóg, borne by a little uninhabited island to the northwest of Aran (Robinson 2008: 151–153; in the present context it may be particularly interesting that the understanding current among the local fishermen – who are the only people to frequent the place – sounds like a joke, and from a scholarly perspective has been dismissed as one).

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17

The Lithuanian Apidémė: A Goddess, a Toponym, and Remembrance
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Abstract: This paper is devoted to the Lithuanian apidémė, attested since the 16th century as the name of a goddess in the Baltic religion, as a term for the site of a former farmstead relocated to a new settlement during the land reform launched in 1547–1557, and later as a widespread toponym. Apidémė has been researched by linguists, historians, and mythologists. An archaeological perspective is applied here for the first time.

Polysemic words in standard language that coincide with theonyms, people’s surnames, or toponyms conceal secrets encoded into their rich history of meanings. On the other hand, they provide researchers with ample opportunities for studying and understanding not just discrete parts of culture, but phenomena as certain links that connect worlds distant in terms of time or, at first glance, unrelated aspects of life. This paper deals with the Lithuanian word apidémė, known from 16th century sources as the name of a goddess in the Baltic religion and later as a widespread toponym. Apidémė was also used as a term for the site of a former farmstead relocated to a new settlement during the Volok Reform, a land reform launched between 1547 and 1557. With the Volok Reform came significant economic and social change but also spiritual religious reverberations: the location of the original farmstead was considered the abode of family hearth deities as well as the souls of ancestors. They could not be left behind without the care of the gods. Data on land ownership and land use reforms in Lithuania collected throughout the 20th century allows one to perceive the phenomenon and to follow its development, even if with certain reservations. During the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, the Soviets demolished or moved Lithuanian settlements. A custom developed in which the locations where these farms once stood were marked with memorial stones, trees, crosses, or small chapels. Today this custom is a notable aspect of Lithuanian culture. Apidémė has been discussed by linguists, historians, and mythologists (Jurginis 1970; Zinkevičius 1981; Greimas 1990: 91–92; Mulevičius 1990). This paper adds, for the first time, an archaeological perspective, which significantly deepens and expands the research on this topic: Viewed in relation to the ethnological data, apidémė emerges as an integral part of contemporary Lithuanian culture, here viewed retrospectively.

Lithuania first attracted the attention of Western European nobility and missionaries in 1099. Two centuries later, Lithuania’s Duke Mindaugas rose to the status of Grand Duke and, by the grace of the Pope, wished to advance to the throne of the king. In 1251, in order to be crowned king, Mindaugas was baptised. Two years later, he achieved his goal of kinghood. Yet his monarchy was short-lived. Later,
it was the Teutonic Order that sought to Christianise Lithuania. The Teutonic Order organised the Baltic Crusades together with the European nobility, yet the Christianisation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was also a lynchpin of the political aspirations and activity of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, the cousins Jagiello (1377–1392) and Vytautas (1392–1430). In 1387, the Vilnius Diocese was founded, followed by the Samogitian Diocese in 1417. The resulting religious changes had an impact on the political, administrative, economic, and cultural life – and lifestyle – of the country. However, ties with the pre-Christian world were most notably severed by the Volok Reform. The Volok Reform period coincided with the spread of the Reformation and a Counter-Reformation wave. The wave’s main representatives in Lithuania – Jesuits – also went to great lengths to remove manifestations of the old religion.

In the implementation of the Volok Reform, all the lands of the Grand Duke (at the time the country’s largest landowner) were newly measured and divided. This was achieved by moving peasant houses from individual farmsteads and free-plan villages to new linear settlements in the form of precise rectangular plots along a single road. Deprived of the last of their freedom, peasants received strips of land (a volok or its part) in three or more land plots in which they were to strictly administer a newly-introduced three-field crop rotation system. The ruler’s example was soon followed by the Catholic Church and the nobility. The establishment and development of folwarks (smaller units of economic administration) in areas remote from the main estates took longer (for more details about the reform, see: Balčiūnas 1938: 30–45; Jurginis 1962: 288–297; Bučas 1988: 57–64; cf. Šešelgis 1996).

**The Historical Context of apidémé**

It is important to emphasise that apidémé emerged in religious writings mainly during the Volok Reform. *Apidémé* is first attested among a group of deity names and sacred places of the old religion found in the first collection of Protestant sermons of 1573. This collection was drafted for Lithuanian Evangelical churches in Prussia and is best known as *The Postilla of Wolfenbüttel*. The attestation appears as follows:

Tikedami ing szemepaczius, Eitwarius, kaukus, appidemes, kelnus, akmenis, medzius gaius (kaip ghe wadinna alkus) Vpes perkunu. (Gelumbeckaitė 2008: Litauische, fol. 85v; here and below, underlining indicates the spelling of *apidémé* in the source text.)

(Pagans) believing in gods of the Earth, spirits of wealth, goblins, *repidemes*, hills, boulders, trees, groves (so-called *alkai*), rivers, and Thunder.

Along with the domestic wealth-multiplying *Aitvaras* and the god of farmlands *Žemépatis*, *Apidémé* is emphatically referred to as an evil spirit: *Welnas ira etwaras, teip besas ira szemepatis, teipag czertas ira Apidème* (Gelumbeckaitė 2008: Litauische, fol. 85v) [*‘Aitvaras is a devil, as well as Žemépatis, and *Apidémé* is also a devil’*]. In Jan Lasicki’s treatise on idolatry *De Diis samagitarum caeterorumque sarmatarum et falsorum Christianorum* (written around 1580 and published in 1615), *Apidémé* is defined as the deity of a ‘changed’, i.e. abandoned, settlement:

*Apidémé* mutati domicilii deum. nato cuuisuis generis, vel coeco vel debili pullo, actutum sedes mutantur.

*Apidémé* is a god of a settlement that has been changed. As soon as some animal gave birth to a blind or lame baby animal, people immediately moved to live elsewhere. (Translation following Greimas1990: 91; see also Lasickis 1969: 20; Ališauskas 2012: 113.)

It is necessary to note that a major source of Lasickis’ knowledge was surveyor Jacob Laskowski, implementer of the Volok Reform in the Grand Dukes’ land holdings in Samogitia.

As a place name, *Apidémé* (опедоми) is first found in a land ownership document dated to 1552, during the Volok Reform. The number of such records increased continuously through the rest of the 16th century and into the first half of the 17th century (see Mulevičius 1990: 93; cf. Спогоргус 1888: 13). Beginning from the Volok Reform period the name *apidémé* or *apydémé* is recorded with numerous variant forms in inventories and documents concerning land purchases and litigation. In this period, it emerges as a term for the sites of
the relocated or vanished farmsteads, as can be illustrated through a few examples: Ниву мою, называемую Апидеме, то есть старое селищо ['My field, called Apidémė, i.e. the former living place'] (Pavandenė, 1599 or 1600); Третюю ниву... называемую Апидемали, где седел Мико́лай Кеде́йкисъ ['The third field, called Apidėmalė, where Mikalojus Gedeikis used to live'] (Pašilė, 1616); Прыкуплю [...] назъваную ниву Апидемю старое седлиско [...] ['I shall buy a field, called Apidėmė, a former place of residence'] (Veliuona, 1627 or 1629; Jablonskis 1941: 2). This evidence indicates a change in use of the word in the mid-16th century and that the land reform is of fundamental significance for the study of the history of apidėmė.

Apidėmė is only attested as a theonym beginning in the second half of the 16th century, a use that seems to have spread simultaneously as a generic name for the site of a former farmstead and a toponym with a corresponding meaning. In the Lithuanian language, the prefix api- (apy-) frequently means ‘an object possessing just a part of some relevant properties’, e.g. apymaišis ['a not totally full sack'], apylos ['rather clayey soil'], etc. The historian Leonas Mulevičius (1990: 92) argued that apydėmė could thus be a compound of apy- and dėmė ['a spot'] that referred to an indistinct spot which stands out in its environment due to its colour. The linguist Wojciech Smoczyński (2007: 19–20) related apidėmė to a later recorded version apynamė ['the place around a house'] through the first edition of Konstantinas Sirvydas’ dictionary, published around 1620, where apidėmė appeared as apidamė. Smoczyński did not reject the possibility that the root dam- was eventually assimilated by Lithuanians from Sirvydas’ dictionary and converted into nam- (see also Zinkevičius 1981). Examples from the Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language reveal that dėmė ['spot'] was a term used for the mark in the landscape that remained on the site of an abandoned farmstead from its structures, and especially from the house, even in negative statements such as Trobos нё дёмёс neblikо (Salantai; LKŽе, s.в. ‘dėmė’) ['Not a single spot remained from the house']. Therefore, apidėmė is most naturally interpreted as that which is above/on or around/by the place where the house or

Figure 1. In a cultivated field, a black cultural layer of the Daugėlaicių ancient settlement, dating back to the 5th to the 13th centuries, stands out. (Photo by V. Vaitkevičius 2014).
farmstead used to be. The name of the goddess Apidėmė appears to be an epithet that describes the abode of the deity, a location that coincides with a spot of black ground on the site of the former home or a farmstead.

The definition of apidėmė as referring to observable traces of earlier settlement in the landscape coincides with the archaeological data: sites of prehistoric settlements established approximately in the first millennium BC (in some places somewhat earlier, in others somewhat later) can be observed as a black cultural layer stretching through the landscape (Figure 1). Whether the buildings decayed or burned in a fire, regular black spots on the ground frequently indicate their former sites. Based on the data of archaeological excavations, archaeologist Rokas Vengalis (2009: 88–89, 103, 151) demonstrated that the thickest and most intensive cultural layers, rich in finds, formed not on the sites of buildings themselves, but close by, around, or possibly in, the spaces between them. However, the hearth was easy to notice, as the earth was full of coal and soot, while stones in that location were shattered and crumbled from the heat. The black sites of a former farmstead and hearth testify that fire was kindled there – people found warmth and made food. Until the 20th century, the fire in a home was protected from extinction every night. In the morning, it was awakened with gentle words: the home hearth fire was considered sacred and called by the name of the Baltic goddess Gabija or the Catholic St. Agota, or by the joint name of Gabija-Agota (Lovčikas 1994).

It is evident from historical sources that the name Apidėmė used to be given to farmstead sites: compare Russian Старое седлиско ['Old Settlement'], Старое селище ['Old Settlement'], and Старое Апидеме ['Old (former) Apidemė'] (Jablonskis 1941: 2). In the second half of the 16th century, i.e. in the years of the Volok Reform and in those following it, Samogitia abounded in apidėmė. In toponyms, almost exclusively in the names of fields, apidėmė was frequently employed in word combinations (noting that many of these sources were written in Russian) specifying where, what kind of, or whose farmstead used to be there, such as Apidemė паклоснисъ [Ru. ‘Apidemė under/by the Willows’] (Viduklė rural district, 1595–1653), Апидеме старе [Ru. ‘the Old Apidemė’] (Raseiniai rural district, 1599), Апидеме апшитю [Ru. ‘the High Apidemė’] (Josvainiai rural district, 1596), Апидеме сало ['Apidemė of the Salią'] (Raseiniai rural district, 1599) (Спрогис 1888: 13). It is possible that the last of these, Salių apidemė, as well as Rimdeikiški apidemė (Aпидеме римдеикия, Raseiniai rural district, 1596), Valatkiskiai apidemė (Aпидеме волоткикия, Vilkija rural district, 1598), and some others had originally been inhabited by people whose proper names were perpetuated in the toponyms.

To date, Apidemė, Apidemès, Apydemē, Apydēmai and a number of similar names have spread all over Lithuania (LVŽ 2008: 144–146). According to 20th-century data, the names were given to fields, meadows, scrublands, waters (bogs or streams), and occasionally even to individual farmsteads (the apidėmēs were also re-populated after a break). The toponymic data indicates several ways that places called apidėmė were used: they were most frequently used as farmlands, pastures, or hayfields. In Dieveniškės, a town in southern Lithuania, a village cemetery was called apidemė: Prabaščius ažuprašė mus aptvert apidēmēs ['the parson asked us to fence in apidēmes’] (Mikulienienė et al. 2005: 16).

However, the origin of that local phenomenon remains unexplored.

Recent field surveys conducted by the author in Joniškis, Pakruojis, Radviliškis and Šiauliai (districts in northern and central Lithuania) prove that no distinct cultural layers remain in the locations called Apidemė and that any future search for them must be grounded in geophysical or geochemical research methods. However, a high probability of individual archaeological finds (objects or structures) from the 15th to the first half of the 16th century remain, as proven through information on find locations and circumstances surrounding the discovery of stones with narrow-bottomed bowls (cf. Vaitkevičius 2016: 29–31). Before the mid-16th century, these stones were kept in home shrines, most likely in the corners of the house, and were related to an earth deity cult. During the Volok Reform, most of these stones with narrow-bottomed bowls, along with the buildings
themselves and other personal property, were moved to new settlements. Remaining stones from time to time reappeared in arable fields (for details, see Vaitkevičius 2004: 30–31).

The use of apidėmė was, and still is, predetermined by a number of circumstances: the relation of the farmer and the community as a whole to their ancestors, customs, and with the past in general. In the years of the Volok Reform, peasants, resisting the transfer of their farmlands from one place to another, appealed not only to their economic experience, but also to customs related to the respect of parents and to the home; “the ancestors or parents’ farmstead was regarded as a sacred place to be respected and cherished,” wrote historian Juozas Jurginis (1970: 59). Valuable data on the exclusive view of the rural population on apidėmė, i.e. on the sites of former farmsteads and villages, can be gained from sources covering the first half of the 20th century’s large-scale land ownership reform in Lithuania, the first such reform since the Volok Reform. For example, the former Voveriškiai village site could not be given to a particular villager moving to an individual farmstead; each villager wanted to have at least a part of it (LŽV 1935: Voveriškiai, Šiauliai rural district and county). By way of common agreement, the former Janušava village site was not turned into strips of farmland. Instead, the former village site was measured in small plots used by each owner in compliance with their individual needs:

In olden times, there used to be the Janušava village there. The plague killed all its villagers; only two old men survived. They took the deceased away from the village and buried them on the largest Trakai Forest hill of Janušava. The hill became a plague cemetery. The village was empty. As nobody wanted to come and live in it, the houses were burnt down, and the land was given to newcomers. The new settlers set up a new Janušava village half a kilometer away north of, and in parallel to, the old location of the village, leaving the old street as a path of remembrance. The land between the New Janušava and the Biliūnai Village was divided into strips. Even though the same strips could have passed the homesteads of the Old Janušava as their extensions, the people would not include the homesteads into the strips, but divided the land in small plots. (LŽV 1935: Janušava, Kėdainiai county and county.)

**Apidėmė in Contemporary Lithuanian Culture**

In the 19th and the early 20th century, attempts were made in Lithuania to change the division of land from the strips that had prevailed since the 16th century. However, a large-scale land reform was only launched and implemented by the Republic of Lithuania after the restoration of its independence in 1918. Volunteers of the Wars of Independence, as well as villagers with no plots of land (or only small ones) were given estate lands. The reform, of course, also focused on villages: villagers were invited and encouraged to move from the old settlements to individual farmsteads. From farmsteads, farmlands, and meadows for haymaking or grazing, to roads, school locations, forest guard sectors, and commonly used gravel deposits, things were changing. Changes in post-Volok Reform villages in the Polish-occupied Vilnius Region, as well as in other places of Lithuania, took place until the first Soviet occupation of 1940–1941. A second occupation started in the summer of 1944.

*Figure 2. The Ramašauskas family bidding farewell to their native home in the Ročkiai Village (Joniškis District). (Photo of an unknown photographer 1968.)*

By the end of World War II, the owners of numerous farmsteads emigrated to the West, perished in battle against the invaders, or were imprisoned or deported to Siberia. According to different data, however, in the 1950s–1960s there were still some 280,000 to 380,000 farmsteads in Lithuania, or approximately six to seven farmsteads per 100 hectares of farmland that impeded the implementation of the Soviet land reclamation (Muraukas 1970: 53–54; Kavoliutė 2015: 50; cf. Rupas, Vaitekūnas 1980: 60). Deprived of land ownership, people cherished their remaining property – their houses and surrounding plots.
of land (that amounted to 60 ares – i.e. 6,000 square meters).

In 1966, a drama started that was only publicly (and honestly) discussed several decades later: numerous farmstead hosts failed to accept the process of land reclamation. This resulted in the relocation or demolition of houses and farmsteads were converted into farmlands or pastures – the people resisted, insisting on their attitudes and beliefs over policy. While authorities offered compensation for downed fruit trees and demolished buildings, the conflict was not extinguished. A 1978 to 1979 survey of the rural population of seven Lithuanian districts showed that 70% to 80% of survey respondents were unwilling to leave their homes in the reclaimed lands (Grabauskas 1983: 1) (Figures 2 & 3).

Thus, the last resident of Baranaucia in Radviliškis District repeated: “You will only carry me out in a coffin.” He died at home at the age of 97 and was carried out of his home in a coffin by relatives (field research data, January 2013). The owner of the demolished Medginai farmstead in the Joniškis District, Pranas Povilaitis, hanged himself in grief (field research data, January 2015), while a farmstead in Buivydziai (Joniškis District) was defended by its owner, Ms. Maciulytė with enviable persistence. Mačiulytė was commonly referred to as a witch and her neighbours still believe that she was helped by her spells (for details, see Vaitkevičius 2016: 48–49).

Under occupation, farmstead destruction became a tool with which occupiers could disrupt human connection to the land and the past. Occupiers could change the identity of the occupied and eventually overcome the local population’s resistance, whether they were armed or unarmed. During Soviet occupation, owners of surviving farmsteads demonstrated will and patience, referred to influential patrons, or simply bought themselves off.

The similarity between the historical processes of the second half of the 16th century and the second half of the 20th century is obvious: farmers were made to leave their residences, whether farmsteads, houses or orchards. In the 20th century, most of those places turned into arable or fallow lands or pastures of kolkhozes and sovkhozes (collective farms). All this happened in the presence of our parents and grandparents, and frequently with their direct participation. In turn, their lively and eloquent testimonies are still available. The former owners once maintained, and in some cases continue to maintain, a sensitive, strong and, most importantly, spiritual relationship with those places.

In 1990, property — primarily land — expropriated during Soviet occupation was returned to the citizens of newly independent Lithuania. Quite a few took advantage of this opportunity; having regained the land, some Lithuanians revived the sites of their former farmsteads and homes. One can still hear stories of how firmly people took this step, and how they received support and encouragement from their deceased parents, grandparents, and other relatives in their dreams. For example:

Monica, that’s my sister, saw Dad in her dream, who said: “Children, take the land.” Had I failed to take the land, I would have felt like I had committed a crime. (Vaitkevičienė 2013: 62.)

When it became possible to regain the land after the Restoration of Independence, I saw in my dream through my bedroom window: Mother’s face could not be seen, just a skirt of coarse homemade woolen cloth and bare feet soiled with earth (...), soiled with rich fertile earth. And then Vladukas, my brother, arrived and said (...): “We are getting back the land”. Thus, through that window, my Mum with her earth-soiled feet brought me the message that I shall regain the land. (LTR cd 1380.)

It is important to emphasise that family relations with ancestors were formed not
merely through farmland but also through surviving farmstead trees, foundation stones, and sometimes wells or ponds. Where none of those left any trace on the land, memories and ancestral connections were stored in the earth: they can be found in fragments of pots or plates, broken window glass, or broken bricks, for example. (Vaitkevičienė 2013: 64).

Due to changes in lifestyle and other cultural, social, and economic circumstances, most former farmsteads were not revived in the late 20th century. Farmlands or growing forests stretched over these former sites, and a sense of the sacred became associated with these sites. This picture is close to the phenomenon of apidėmė found in historical documents: those were fields turned into farmlands and pastures, and occasional untouched small plots of land in their surroundings (which in the 16th century were under the protection of goddess Apidėmė, and in the 20th century, the Virgin Mary).

Holding family or neighbour reunions, building memorial stones with names of the former residents and rhymed inscriptions, planting trees or groves, or consecrating crosses or small chapels (Figure 4), were means with which the people of contemporary Lithuania entrusted themselves to the protection of the farmstead sites and of those who had lived and died there (or had moved from there), and also specifically to the protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary. Thus, for example, 87-year-old Salomėja Eitavičiūtė-Lubienė from Kūlupėnai (Kėtinga District) believed that Mary lived in a small chapel mounted in a tree on the site of her native farmstead and protected the place:

– How did it come into your mind to mount a chapel in a tree?
– Because it was necessary. How else? No parents and no home place will be left. Nobody and nothing. Nobody will protect the native home. And somebody has to take care of it, somebody has to be there. Mary [has] to protect us. When nobody is [living] there any longer, just the fields are left. But the place that was left has to stay there.

(Field research data of March 2013.)

In comparison, in 1984, the Blažys family put up an inscription on a small chapel in their grand-parents’ farmstead in Pušinava (Radviliškis District): Saturated with blood and tears, land of our parents, be generous (field research data, June 2013). In Palmajė (Ignalina District), on the outskirts of the Paukštė family farmstead, a stone cross stands with an inscription: In Memory of Parents’ Land (field research data, August 2013). The Poškiai family, on the site of their family home, in the fields of the Gulbinai Village (Radviliškis District), planted two birch trees with a memorial stone between them. An inscription on the stone reads:

In the years 1926–1959, Pranciškus and Ona Poškiai lived there, worshipped God, raised children, and got through thick and thin. Lord, reward them in eternity. (Field research data, August 2014.)

Summary and Conclusions
The reference point of the present research is a toponym complex represented in forms such as Apidėmė, Apydėmė, and Apydėmai, all well-known in Lithuania. As evidenced by the historical data, these toponyms began spreading around 1547–1557, when the Volok Reform was launched, and referred to the sites of former farmsteads, relocated to settlements...
measured in Voloks. The application of the name of the goddess *Apidémė*, attested in the first collection of Protestant sermons from the second half of the 16th century and in the treatise on Samogitian gods by Jan Lasicki, meant that the Volk Reform’s changes in land administration and division were not merely of an economic and social character. Rather, one can assume that, as part of their spiritual and—most likely—religious life, human affection for their place of residence intensified and increased. Based on Greimas, the affection for one’s historical *apidémė*, usually a one-and-a-half to two hectare residential area, rested on people’s connection with fire and a fireplace. The site of the relocated, collapsed, or possibly even incinerated farmstead was the abode of the family hearth deities. Importantly, it was also the abode of ancestral souls, souls which could not be left without the protection of the gods.

The name of the goddess *Apidémė* is ultimately an epithet: it in fact describes the abode of the deity which coincides with the spot of black ground on the site of a former home or farmstead. It is difficult to judge either the nature of the goddess or her field of activity. To some extent, *Apidémė* belongs to the spirits acting in a specific home or place. However, we cannot identify her with the deities who determine the destiny of family wealth, happiness, and health: *Apidémė* is a kind of reflection of positive material and immaterial good in the place where life (hence rituals and sacrifices) once took place but was interrupted. *Apidémė* is like a trace of sanctity, still lingering in the earth, water, stones and trees, even though these are no longer tended or augmented by inhabitants.

For the first time, this paper has discussed similarities between the historical *apidémė*, which once received veneration, and memorial sites that emerged during periods of land ownership and use reforms in the 20th century. Sites of farmsteads, demolished, relocated, or else transformed into arable fields, fallow lands, or pastures for collective farms under Soviet occupation, deserve particular attention. Those places and the protection of the souls that lived and died there—or who had moved away—are mainly entrusted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and they are marked with memorial stones, trees, crosses, and small chapels. These folk beliefs and customs are a living and significant part of contemporary Lithuanian culture and of the identity of the Lithuanian people.

Sources


Notes

1. For comparison, Sirvydas translated the Polish *śiedlisko* into the Latin *sedes* ['an abode, a place of residence'] and *area* ['a square, a yard'] (Pakalka 1997: 353).

2. Cf. *apy-danga* ['a cover, a top'] (LKŽe, s.v. ‘apydanga’).

3. Cf. *apy-gardė* ['the place around an enclosure/a cattle shed’], *api-daržė* ['the place around the vegetable garden’], *api-kaimė* ['the environ, parish’] (LKŽe, s.vv. ‘apygardė’, ‘apidaržė’).

4. Given the fact that the statistical indicators hail from the Soviet era, actual figures ought to be higher.

5. For a village resident of the 20th century, *apidémė* would mean a plot of land between two farmsteads, jointly managed by two neighbours or community members (LKŽe). That, of course, does not deny the possibility that in the past those were dwelling places.

Works Cited

LTR cd – Lithuanian folklore manuscript collection of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (the number of the CD in the phonotheque is indicated).
Freyja’s Bedstraw, Mary’s Bedstraw or a Folkloristic Black Hole?

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Abstract: This article reviews the sources behind the alleged tradition that the plant galium verum, commonly known as ‘bedstraw’, was associated with Freyja in pre-Christian times. All references to this link ultimately go back to the same Latin document from ca. 800. Unfortunately, the relevant section of this document is unintelligible without textual emendation and, of the three commonly suggested emendations, ‘bedstraw’ is the least likely.

Having recently looked into some late-recorded folk traditions relating to the Old Norse goddesses Frigg and Freyja, I was attracted by one particular detail, which I have come across several times over the years, namely the idea that especially the plant galium verum, commonly known as bedstraw, Our Lady’s bedstraw and similar – with Scandinavian variants such as Jomfru Marias sentehalm and Jungfru Maria’s singhalm [‘Virgin Mary’s bedstraw’]¹ – was in pre-Christian times associated with Freyja.

References to a link between Freyja, the Virgin Mary and this particular plant are fairly common.² Frustratingly, however, such mentions often circle around a void, with scholars referring to each other rather than to primary sources. The link specifically to Freyja appears not to be all that old, the earliest mention I have been able to locate being a 19th century remark by Hermann Heinrich Ploss (1885: 349–350).³ However, Ploss points to an 8th century Church Council presided over by St. Boniface, who supposedly ensured that it was forbidden to use galium verum for medicinal purposes in connection with childbirth.⁴ Ploss also mentions that the prohibition was due to the plant being associated with Freyja (cf. Näström 1996: 344). This looked to me like an extremely enticing folkloristic carrot at the end of a very long mythical stick. So I pursued it.

The primary source in question is a document known as Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum, which is essentially a list of thirty heathen practices that were condemned by the Church at the synod of Listines, held in Estinnes in Hennegau, modern-day Belgium, in perhaps 743 and with St. Boniface as one of the major players (Kalhous 2017: 369). The...
extant manuscript of Indiculus, Codex Palatinus Latinus 577, is a copy from ca. 800. Unfortunately, the document consists only of the headings; that is, it reads practically as a list of contents, but there is no further information about exactly what the practices listed actually entailed.²

And here lies the problem. With no further description we have only these headings to go by. It is heading number 19 on this list that is relevant, and it reads as follows: De pentendo quod boni vocant sanctae Mariae ['About [pentendo] which good people refer to as Saint Mary’s']. The implication of ‘good people’, presumably Christians, invoking Saint Mary must be that other, not-so-good people invoke someone else. The impression is that heading 19 describes a mixed tradition whose non-Christian version involves a heathen deity, but whose Christianized version involves Saint Mary. The extremely frustrating point is that the crucial word, pentendo, in itself appears to be nonsensical and thus poses a range of translation problems. All suggested interpretations rest on some emendation or other of this word. The dominant emendation is to render it as petendo, probably because the manuscript features what appears to be a correction indicating that the first ‘n’ should be deleted; however, it is uncertain whether this ‘n’ is a later insertion (Homann 1965: 108). As far as I am aware, all interpretations depart from this emendation; that is, they all ignore the first ‘n’.

The word pentendo, or its emended form petendo, has by some scholars been interpreted as referring to ‘bedstraw’. Accepting this interpretation, the heading would read: ‘About bedstraw which good people refer to as Saint Mary’s’. This is, however, a highly conjectural interpretation, which rests on a fairly radical emendation of the text, rendering the written pentendo as, instead, petenstro, a supposedly Latinized form of petenstroh which is a variant of betstroh, the German name for the plant galium verum (Homan 1965: 108–109; Dähnhardt 1909: 19). Apart from the required orthographic changes, it is problematic that this would then be the only instance in the document of a vernacular term appearing as anything other than the descriptive of a Latin term. Moreover, the word-order in the sentence as well as the form petendo both suggest that this is a verbal noun describing an action, not an object.⁶

The interpretation ‘bedstraw’ nonetheless has a long history; it seems to stem from a work produced in 1729 by the German linguist and historian Johann Georg von Eckhart (1729: 426–427). He makes the argument that heading 19 probably refers to a plant and goes on to discuss a range of folk practices and vernacular names relating to this particular plant with the loosely similar name. Interestingly, von Eckhart openly says that (the already emended) petendo is difficult to translate; in other words, he clearly presents an interpretation and does not regard his reading as a statement of obvious facts. He even says about himself that: Ego vocem non Latinam, roughly: ‘I am no speaker of Latin’ (von Eckhart 1729: 426). That von Eckhart’s suggested explanation was accepted by his contemporaries is made clear in a subsequent encyclopaedia, which endorses it (Zedler 1740: 217–218), albeit not without noting the translation problem.⁷ Despite this difficulty, ‘bedstraw’ continues to be accepted – apparently unquestioningly – by some modern scholars (e.g. McNeill & Gamer 1990: 420; Freitag 2004: 99).

But what we can at least conclude from this is that the association between the Virgin Mary and galium verum was well-known in Germany and that the plant was known as ‘Mary’s bedstraw’ or some variant(s) thereof already from around 1500 (Dybek 1850: 16). That English tradition knows the name ladies bedstraw for galium verum is documented in the 1600s (Dähnhardt 1909: 18–19).

Other interpretations of pentendo have also been suggested. One is the emendation to petendo, as mentioned above, which yields the translation ‘praying’ (Homann 1965: 109; Saupe 1891: 24). Accepting this interpretation, the heading would read: ‘About praying that good people address to as Saint Mary’. The implication seems to be that some people address similar prayers to someone other than Our Lady, and here Freyja has been suggested (Saupe 1891: 24).⁸ Freyja’s involvement is obviously purely speculative. It rests on the reasonable notion that the Christian figure replaced a heathen figure, while the ritual in question remained the same, but there is nothing in the Indiculus itself that can help us
name that hidden heathen figure. Linguistically, the link between *petendo* and *petere* ['beg, entreat, ask (for)'] (Latin Dictionary Online: s.v. 'peto 3') probably speaks in favour of this relatively uncomplicated interpretation – as does, it would seem, the correction of the manuscript’s *pentendo* to *petendo*. However, understanding this as a reference to prayer produces the conundrum that the prohibition then lists praying to Saint Mary among a whole range of improper non-Christian practises, which would seem a little odd. This reading may nonetheless be rescued if the mention of Saint Mary is regarded as an attempt to avoid having to mention the name of whatever heathen deity is involved. Heading 19 can then be read as a sort of euphemistic description of the ritual in question.

A third interpretation of heading 19 suggests the emendation of *pentendo* to *potando*, from *potare* ['to drink heavily, to drink convivially, to tipple; to swallow'] (Latin Dictionary Online: s.v. 'poto 2, 3'), thus referring to some sort of toast that was drunk in honour of Saint Mary by ‘good people’ and, presumably, in honour of someone else by not-so-good people. In a Norse context, this recalls the ritual drink *Mariu-minni* mentioned in *Guta lag* 24, where it is associated with weddings (Säve 1859: 19). *Guta lag* is thought to be from the early 13th century although manuscripts only survive from ca. 1350 (Peel 2009: xv, xix–xx), which means there is a significant chronological as well as geographical gap between this and the *Indiculus*. Such ritual drinking is referred to in several Old Norse sources, but there is only one instance of such a toast in honour of Freyja. This is found in chapter 12 of *Bósa saga ok Herruaðs*, thought by some to have been written ca. 1350, but surviving only in manuscripts from 1450 and later (Jiriczek 1893: Iv–Ivii). Whether *Bósa saga* can be taken to represent genuine pre-Christian traditions in this respect is very uncertain since some scholars, with good reason, consider it a literary parody (e.g. Vésteinn Ólason 1994: 121). But at least this interpretation yields comparative evidence of drinking customs relating to Saint Mary, and this in some ways makes it less problematic than the other two suggestions (cf. Homann 1965: 110).

Whatever *pentendo* refers to, the implication of heading 19 of the *Indiculus* is that ‘good people’, presumably Christians, associate it with Saint Mary, whereas other people, presumably non-Christians, associate the very same thing or ritual with a corresponding pagan figure. While *petendo* = ‘praying’ poses the least orthographic and linguistic problems, it presents a difficulty that praying to Saint Mary comes to be listed alongside various non-Christian practices. The interpretation *potando* = ‘memorial toast’ is the only one of these three suggestions that is backed up by primary sources describing a potentially similar ritual in the 14th (possibly 13th) century *Mariu-minni*. Finally, *petenstro* = ‘bedstraw’ not only requires greater orthographic emendations, it is also linguistically more speculative while, in addition, the comparative evidence that does exist in folk tradition is quite late (16th century German tradition). I hold this to be the least likely of the three common interpretations. It is not unlikely that certain plants were linked to Freyja in pre-Christian times, nor is it improbable that any such traditions were subsequently transferred to an equivalent Christian figure. But what *Indiculus* provides us with does not amount to evidence in favour of an herbal explanation. Whatever we do, *pentendo* remains enigmatic – and leaves us guessing. Unfortunately, there is no clear answer.

Equally regrettable, I believe we have to conclude from this analysis of the primary source lurking behind the idea of ‘Freyja’s bedstraw’ as the precedent to ‘Our Lady’s bedstraw’ that such a link cannot in any way be proven. The evidence invites us to speculate, conjecture and hypothesize, but – alas – not to confirm.

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Notes
1. Also *thymus serpyllum* has been known as *Our Lady’s bedstraw* (see e.g. Dybek 1850: 15–16; Rosing 1887: 250 s.v. ‘Lady’; I am grateful to Frog for these references). The earliest reference I have found to thyme carrying this name is in the Danish scholar Christiern Pedersen’s *Lægebog* ['Medical Book'] from 1533 (Hauberg 1933: 16, 23, 45, 198). The two plants occupy very similar habitats. Allegedly, Mary used this plant as bedstraw for the newborn Jesus (e.g. Söhns 1920: 40).
2. E.g. Ellis Davidson 1998: 155; Näsström 1995: 212; Näsström 1996: 344; cf. Hyltén-Cavallius (1863: 237–238), who simply suggests that all plants named after Saint Mary were previously associated with Freyja. In popular works and on numerous websites the plant is also sometimes linked to Frigg (e.g. Storl 2017: 183, although to Freyja in Storl 2000: 78; Eilenstein 2017: 70).


4. Various gali um species have been used widely in folk medicine (see e.g. Lonicer 1557: 497 [cap. 326]; Söhns 1920: 38–40; Ploss 1913: 310); they have some antimicrobial and antifungal properties.

5. The document itself does not carry the name by which it is now known.

6. I am grateful to Ture Larsen and Chris Yocum for assistance with the Latin.

7. Zedler (1740: 217) explicitly says that no one knows what it means: “Was aber petendum heissen soll, das weiss man nicht” [“However, it is not known what petendum is supposed to refer to”]. Also many subsequent German scholars note the spurious quality of this interpretation (e.g. Roskoff 1869: 296).

8. Saupe, however, seems to regard Freyja as a combined manifestation of all pagan female deities: “Frigg-Freia (Frowu, Holda)” (1891: 24), not unlike Näsström’s argument in favour of one ‘great goddess’ (1995 passim). I do not adhere to this view, but I can see that if one does, then Freyja would, indeed, be the name for any and all heathen goddesses.


10. For references, see e.g. Sundqvist (2002: 261–266), who suggests that the term mimni is a later, Christian term that replaced the pre-Christian term – and ritual – of full.

11. I assume Bósa saga is the source of the information provided by Wikman (1957: 308) regarding a toast in honour of Freyja at weddings, but Wikman does not specify his sources.

12. That Mary’s bedstraw is associated specifically with the birth of Jesus may in some contexts underlie Mary’s cosmogonic role in Christian tradition; however, it seems to me more likely that vernacular traditions will have picked up on the associations to childbirth and/or motherhood in rather more general ways. If we were to look for an appropriate heathen deity, I would therefore suggest these as the dominant aspects. Considering Freyja as we know her from the extant Norse sources, all of which are 13th century and later, childbirth and motherhood are peripheral aspects of her character; we obviously cannot argue ex silentio that earlier manifestations of her had different foci.

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Goddesses Unknown III: On the Identity of the Old Norse Goddess Hlín

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Abstract: Like previous entries in the Goddesses Unknown series, the present article focuses on heretofore little-studied goddesses in the Germanic corpus, in this case the obscure Old Norse goddess Hlín and her association with the widely attested Germanic goddess Frigg.

The Old Norse corpus provides no information about the fate of goddesses during the destruction, bloodshed, and rebirth that make up the events of Ragnarök. While goddess-names compose the majority of the theonyms of the Germanic corpus (including the North Germanic corpus), female-gendered deities all but disappear from view whenever Ragnarök is mentioned. One exception occurs in stanza 53 of the eddic poem Völuspá, where two apparently separate goddesses, Hlín and Frigg, are mentioned in relation to the event.

The stanza reads as follows (Hlín and Frigg underlined for emphasis):

Þá komr Hlínar harmr annarr fram, 
er Óðinn ferr víð úlf vega, 
enn bani Belia, biarrt, at Surti; 
þá mun Friggjar falla angan. 

(Neckel & Kuhn 1962: 12.)

Then comes Hlín’s second grief, 
when Óðinn fares forth to fight the wolf, 
and Beli’s shining slayer against Surtir. 
Then will Frigg’s beloved fall. 

(Hopkins trans.)

Over the course of four lines, the stanza predicts that Óðinn will fight the monstrous wolf Fenrir and that the god Freyr (the slayer of the jötunn Beli) will fight the fiery entity Surtr. Scholars generally accept that the ‘second grief’ mentioned in the stanza predicts that Óðinn, Frigg’s husband, will die during the encounter. (The implied ‘first grief’ is all but universally read as a reference to the tragic death of Frigg’s son, Baldr, a prominent event in the Old Norse corpus.)

At first glance, one may read this stanza two very different ways:

a. Hlín and Frigg are two names for the same figure.

b. Hlín and Frigg are distinct entities, both somehow connected by a ‘second grief’.

However, the Prose Edda twice explicitly informs readers that Hlín and Frigg refer to two separate entities. The distinction is first made in Gylfaginning, in which Hlín is listed among sixteen goddesses (Hlín and hleina underlined here):

Tölfta Hlín: hon er sett til geazlu yfir þleim mænum er Frigg vill forða við háska nokkvorum. Piaðan af er þat orðatik at sá er forðask hleina. (Faulkes 2005: 30)

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Hlín: Hlín, the wife of Óðinn, is known for her role as a mother to Baldr and her wedding to Óðinn. She is often depicted as a peaceful and serene figure, and is sometimes shown with a bow and arrow, indicating her role as a protector. She is also associated with the myth of the death and rebirth of Baldr, which occurs in the first stanza of the Völuspá. Hlín is often depicted as a symbol of the mothers of the gods, and is often shown with a spear, which is a symbol of protection and strength.

Fríðr: Fríðr, the wife of Odin, is known for her role as a mother to Baldr and her wedding to Odin. She is often depicted as a peaceful and serene figure, and is sometimes shown with a bow and arrow, indicating her role as a protector. She is also associated with the myth of the death and rebirth of Baldr, which occurs in the first stanza of the Völuspá. Fríðr is often depicted as a symbol of the mothers of the gods, and is often shown with a spear, which is a symbol of protection and strength.

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Twelfth, Hlín: she is given the task to protect those that Frigg wants saved from danger. (Hopkins trans.)

The sentence *þiaðan af er þat orðtak at sá er fjördask hleinir* has proven an awkward hurdle for translators, no doubt due to the obscurity of the verb *hleina* (discussed below). For example, Rasmus Anderson cautiously provides the rendering “Hence is the saying that he hlini who is forewarned” (1897 [1879]: 98), Anthony Gilchrist Brodeur produces “[...] thence comes the saying that he who escapes ‘leans’” (1916: 47), Jean Young gives us the very similar “[...] hence the proverb that ‘he who is protected ‘leans’’” (1964: 60), Anthony Faulkes more cautiously produces “From this comes the saying that someone who escapes finds refuge (hleinir)” (1995 [1987]: 30), and Jesse Byock offers “From her name comes the expression that he who escapes finds hleinir [peace and quiet]” (2005: 43).

A distinction between Frigg and Hlín occurs a second time in *Skáldskaparmál*, where Hlín appears in a list among 27 different goddesses (*Ásynjur*), including Frigg (Faulkes 1998: 114–115). These lists (Old Norse *þulur*) may have been added by an unknown author (or authors) after the composition of much of *Skáldskaparmál* (see discussion in, for example, Faulkes 1998: xv–xviii). Beyond these sources, the name *Hlín* appears frequently in skaldic poetry in kennings referring to women (see further Olsen 1996: 270–271) and continues into *rímar* poetry (see Finnur Jónsson 1926–1928: 175 & 245). Like many other Old Norse goddess names, *Hlín* today serves as a female given name in Iceland and, like many other obscure deities from the Germanic corpus, plays no notable role in modern popular culture beyond her veneration in Germanic Neopaganism.

**From Goddesses to Goddess**

Although the corpus distinctly describes Hlín and Frigg as separate entities, English language translators have identified *Hlín* and *Frigg* as one and the same in nearly every published translation of *Völuspá* to date, whether by outright rendering *Hlín* as *Frigg* or by notifying readers that the two theonyms should be read as synonyms in a note or in the work’s index. This practice extends into nearly all scholarly works that mention Hlín.

For example, Finnur Jónsson writes that *Hlín* appears as a name for Frigg in *Völuspá* and yet elsewhere appears as an independent goddess (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 263). John Lindow produces a similar survey of the situation (Lindow 2001: 176–177) and Anthony Faulkes says, “Hlín is thought to have been another name for Frigg, in spite of [the *Prose Edda*]. Her first grief would have been the death of her son Baldr” (Faulkes 2005: 70). According to Rudolf Simek, “presumably Hlín is really only another name for Frigg and Snorri misunderstood her to be a goddess in her own right in his reading of the *Völuspá* stanza” (Simek 2007 [1997]: 153).

In her long-running series of *Poetic Edda* translations, Ursula Dronke makes a similar observation while proposing that the *Völuspá* poet employed the name for more than alliteration:

**Hlínar:** a name for Frigg found only here in poetic texts, but frequent in kennings for ‘woman’. [...] Hlín is presented as a minor goddess who is appointed by Frigg to watch over men she wishes to guard from danger (this relies upon an etymological link between *Hlín* and *hlein* [peaceful refuge]) [...] There is probably a tragic irony implied in the use here of *Hlín* for Frigg, in that she was unable to protect either son or husband. (Dronke 1997: 149, cf. 21.)

Most translators leave the name Hlín unchanged in the stanza but provide some level of commentary. For example, Benjamin Thorpe explains to readers that *Hlín* is “apparently a name of Frigg” (1866: 138), Henry Adams Bellows notes that the theonym is “apparently another name for Frigg” (1923: 22, cf. 569), Lee M. Hollander echoes that *Hlín* here refers to “Óthin’s wife, Frigg” (1990 [1962]: 11, cf. 335), and so does Andy Orchard (2011: 12, 271–272).

However, some translators – particularly recent translators – of the *Poetic Edda* are so certain that *Hlín* is another name for Frigg that they simply render *Hlín* as *Frigg* without so much as a note explaining to readers that their translation conflicts with the *Prose Edda*’s description of the figure. Translators who render *Hlín* as *Frigg* include Olive Bray (1908: 53, but cf. 309), Carolyne Larrington (1999...
Hlín: ‘Protector’, ‘Maple Tree’, ‘Warmth’?
As discussed above, in explaining Hlín’s name and function, the Prose Edda appears to invoke a folk etymology derived from an otherwise unknown and obscure proverb sá er fordask hleinar [‘he who escapes hleinar’] (cf. de Vries 1970: 326–329). Today, most scholars who mention Hlín either accept the Prose Edda’s derivation or at least appear to raise no objections to it. For example, in the glossary of his edition of Gylfaginning, Anthony Faulkes observes that Old Norse hleina appears nowhere else in the Old Norse corpus and, like others before him, provides an (uncertain) semantic value of ‘lie low, take refuge?’ for the hapax legomenon. Faulkes compares the term to Old English hlīnian and hlīnan, precursors to modern English lean (Faulkes 2005: 107), a derivation that, for example, yields the above discussed Prose Edda translations of Anthony Gilchrist Brodeur and Jean Young.

On the other hand, 19th-century scholars also raised a number of derivational possibilities that have since rarely been the subject of discussion. For example, some have linked Hlín to the rare Old Norse noun hlynr [‘maple tree’]. In a section of his Deutsche Mythologie titled Personifications, Jacob Grimm breaches the topic: “The Name of Hlín the Æsynja is echoed back in AS. hlīn, Cod. Exon. 437, 17, as the name of a tree” (Grimm 1888: 1,573). Elsewhere Grimm ventures a line of development for the figure, comparing Hlín, viewed through the semantics of ‘maple tree’, to a variety of female-gendered tree entities found in the modern folklore record of northwestern Europe:

Forest worship […] could not fail to introduce directly a deification of sacred trees, and most trees are regarded as female; we saw […] how the popular mind even in recent times treated the ‘frau Hasel’ [‘hazel’], frau Elhorn [‘elder’], frau Wacholder [‘juniper’] as living creatures […] Hlín is apparently [named after] our leinbaum, leinahorn, lenne (acer, maple) […] (Grimm 1883: 884.)

Grimm also approaches the question from another angle:
Frigg had even […] a special handmaid, herself a divine being, whom she appointed to the defence (til gætslu) of such foster-sons against all dangers; this personified Tutela was named Hlín, as if the couch, κλίνω, OHG. Hlīna […] on which one leans (root hleina hlán, Gr. κλίνω, Lat. clīno). We find ‘harmr Hlinar,’ […] and there went a proverb ‘sá er forðaz hleinir’, he that is struggling leans for help. Hlín (Goth. Hleins?) shelters and shields, the gothic hláins is a hill [Germ. berg, a hill, is from bergen, to hide], the OHG. hlinaperga. lina₇₉perge = fulcrum, reclinatorium. (Grimm 1883: 874.)

However, Grimm appears to ultimately express frustration when attempting to reconcile the matter:

From hlin to slant, κλίνειν, inclinare, Goth. hleinan, comes the causative hleinahorn to lean, Goth. hlāinjan. Hláins in Gothic is collis, [slanting or] sheltering hill? I do not see how to reconcile with this the sense attributed to hlin of a (sheltering?) tree […] (Grimm 1883: 889.)

A potential connection between the Old Norse theonym Hlín and the Old Norse common noun hlynr [‘elm tree’] may deserve further consideration, particularly in light of a potential connection between the Old Norse theonym Ilmr and the Old Norse common noun almr [‘elm tree’], the cultural implications of the historic deforestation of Iceland, and (as mentioned by Grimm) numerous tree-associated goddess-like figures in North and West Germanic
folklore (also discussed in a previous article in this series: Hopkins 2014: 36–37).

Additionally, the potential of a protective tree goddess brings to mind a mysterious passage in the Prose Edda involving the rowan, in which the tree is referred to as Þórr’s bjǫrg [‘aid, help, salvation, rescue’] (cf. Faulkes 1998: 25). Gabriel Turville-Petre saw in this a potential link to the goddess Sif as reflected in borrowings into Sámi religion surrounding the Sámi thunder god Hovrengaellies [‘Old Man Þórr’] (Hovre- < Old Norse þórr):

[…] the Lappish thunder-god preserves archaic features which have been obscured in the Norse literary records. While Snorri and the Norse poets give Þórr a wife, Sif, the Lapps gave Hora galles [sic] a wife, Ravdna. This, it seems, is no other than the Norwegian raun, Swedish rönn and Icelandic reynir, ‘rowan, mountain ash’. It was said that the red berries of the tree were sacred to Ravdna.

In the myth of Þórr and the giant Geirrǫðr […] Þórr saved himself in a torrent by clinging to a rowan, and thus arose the proverb, ‘the rowan is the salvation of Þórr’ … Probably the wife of Þórr was once conceived in the form of a rowan, to which the god clung. The rowan was a holy tree in many lands, but nowhere more than in Iceland, where it has been revered from the settlement to the present day”. (Turville-Petre 1975 [1964]: 98.)

Another etymological possibility is mentioned by Benjamin Thorpe, a proposed link between Hlín and Old Norse hlýn [‘warmth’]: “Hlírn or Hlyn (from hly, at hlúa, at hlyna, calescere), the mild, refreshing warmth” (Thorpe 1851: 168, cf. 167). I have not yet been able to identify the origin of this proposed etymology with certainty, but it appears to have seen some level of currency in the 19th century, occurring in English clergyman George Frederick Maclear’s history of the Christianization of the English, for example (Maclear 1893: 12).

From a comparative perspective, this derivation seems less well-founded. No similar deity name appears to occur in the corpus, whereas the concept of a tree-associated goddess-like entity features both modern and potentially ancient precedent. The notion of a Germanic protector goddess, as discussed below, appears to have significant foundation as well. That said, phonetic resemblance may have yielded any or all of these associations among Old Norse speakers. The relation between Hlín and hleín (and their respective etymologies) deserve further consideration and discussion beyond the scope of the present piece.

**Hlín and the Early Germanic Mothers**

Although Simek identifies Hlín as a name for Frigg in one entry in his handbook (Simek 2007: 153, as cited above), a second entry in the same work offers an entirely contradictory identification:

[Sága.] Hlín, Sjófn, Snotra, Vár, [and] Vôr […] should probably be seen as female protective goddesses. These goddesses were all responsible for specific areas of the private sphere, and yet clear differences were made between them so that they are in many ways similar to the matrons. (Simek 2007: 274.)

Simek’s entry is correct in that the female-gendered protector deity recalls historic precedent in the Germanic ‘mothers’, who appear depicted with, for example, diapers, vegetation, and fruit in the distant past of the continental Germanic peoples. Regarding iconography surrounding the Germanic ‘mothers’, Simek writes:

Apart from fruit baskets already mentioned on reliefs of the matrons there are sacrificial scenes, with burning of incense and sacrifice bowls filled with fruit; pigs and fish as sacrificial animals are also represented. Other decorations depict fruit, plants and trees. Snakes […] as well as children and nappies are other attributes which indicate not only their general protective function over the family, but also their special function as midwives (a suggestion which is party supported by etymologies of some of the names). (Simek 2007: 206.)

The cult of the Germanic ‘mothers’ appears to continue into the pagan Old English period (extending to the Old English mōdraniht) and into the North Germanic record as the dis-valkyra-norn complex (cf. Simek 2007: 206–207).

The scholarly interpretation of Hlín as another name for Frigg, like so many other interpretations in Old Norse studies, hinges on a scholar’s response to the Prose Edda.
Viewed in the light of the mythic ‘mothers’ of Germanic tradition, Hlín seems at least likely to have been considered an entity distinct from Frigg and also associated with protection. This perspective accords with the statement in the Prose Edda quoted above, in which Hlín is clearly distinct and ‘given the task to protect those that Frigg wants saved from danger’.

**Fulla as an Analogous Case**

Beyond the numerous Germanic ‘mothers’, the textual record offers few glimpses of the deities of the Germanic peoples beyond North Germanic sources. One notable exception is the Old High German Second Merseburg Incantation, a charm for healing an injured horse. This charm is preserved in a 10th-century addition to a 9th-century manuscript. Distant in time and place, the incantation presents several notable correlations with the North Germanic corpus. Although Hlín is not mentioned in this source, it has analogical relevance to the present discussion. This eight-line charm provides the majority of vernacular theonyms in Old High German: it is exceptional as a source, which makes it interesting in what information it can provide and how we would view Germanic mythologies without it.

The historiola (i.e. narrative beginning) of the Second Merseburg Incantation states that the mysterious god Phol and Wuodan were riding to the forest when ‘that Lord’s foal’ sprained its foot, at which point four goddesses are named as pairs of sisters followed by Wuodan again performing verbal magic to heal the horse. Among these goddesses, Frija, cognate with Old Norse Frigg, is mentioned and Volla, cognate with the Old Norse theonym Fulla, is named as her sister. Old Norse Fulla is identified as the servant rather than sister of Frigg in Gylfaginning and in the prose introduction to the eddic poem Grímnismál, both prose sources, but not connected with Frigg (or mentioned in any narrative context) in any other source. Like Hlín, Fulla appears in goddess lists in Gylfaginning and in Skáldskaparmál, and as a component of kennings referring to women. Like Hlín, prose attestations indicate that Fulla is closely associated with Frigg, yet explicitly delineates the two goddesses as independent but associated entities. (cf. Faulkes 2005: 29; 1998: 1,114). Like Hlín, the name Fulla ['full, bountiful'] may be tempting to dismiss as a reading error on the part of a Prose Edda author or as a poetic invention (cf. de Vries 1970: 349). Were it not for the preservation of the cognate theonym Volla in the Second Merseburg Charm, Fulla would remain in a similarly ambiguous position like that of Hlín, easily overlooked, dismissed, or deconstructed.

The case of Fulla is more interesting to consider in relation to that of Hlín because of her association with Frigg. The exceptional Old High German source not only supports viewing Fulla as a distinct entity, but also that she has a historical connection with Frigg. The analogy certainly does not demonstrate a historical relationship between Hlín and Frigg, and certainly not that Hlín had a cognate in Old High German. On the other hand, it demonstrates that Frigg had relationships to other goddesses and that these other goddesses were distinct entities. Frog (2010) observes that the difference between the relationship of Old High German Volla to Frija and that of Fulla to Frigg entails a difference in status as sisters of the former, implying equality on the one hand, and that of servant and master of the latter, implying hierarchy on the other. However these relationships are interpreted historically, Old Norse mythology appears to situate Frigg in a hierarchical relationship to other goddesses in a manner different from what is seen in the extremely limited evidence of Old High German. The alliteration of Frija–Volla and of Frigg–Fulla supports interpreting a historical relationship between these names, increasing the probability of an earlier kinship relation (Frog, p.c.). If Frigg advanced to a hierarchical relation to Fulla in Old Norse mythology, other goddesses like Hlín, whatever their earlier significance, may also have been subordinated. Had more evidence of vernacular mythology been preserved in other Germanic languages, interpretations of Hlín could be more grounded. Nevertheless, the case of Fulla/Volla suggests that the Poetic Edda’s description of Hlín as a servant of Frigg would be consistent with a historically independent goddess evolving in a subordinate role to the wife of Odin parallel to that of Fulla.
**Perspectives**

The numerous Germanic goddesses attested in the early record make the North Germanic record’s multiplicity of goddesses unsurprising. The correlations between the *Prose Edda* and the Second Merseburg Incantation provide something of a cautionary tale: namely, by dismissing information solely found in the *Prose Edda*, one risks violating the foundational maxim *absence of evidence is not evidence of absence*.

There is no reason to doubt that Hlín was an independent entity in Old Norse mythology and no positive evidence to suggest that Hlín was merely a by-name of Frigg. Returning to the passage in *Völuspá*, Hlín’s ‘second sorrow’ implies a ‘first sorrow’. The *Prose Edda* assigns two identifying traits to Hlín: *a*) that she was somehow in the service of Frigg; and *b*) that she protected people, and more particularly those whom Frigg wished protected. Verifying Hlín’s role as a protectress through a proverb might be a construal of Snorri comparable to his many uses of vernacular etymology. On the other hand, if these two features are based in the contemporary mythology, Hlín’s ‘first sorrow’ can be inferred to be her failure to ‘protect’ Baldr, Frigg’s son, from the danger that ended his life, while her ‘second sorrow’ will be the related failure in the case of the death of Odin, Frigg’s husband. When there is no evidence to support reading Hlín as a name for Frigg in *Völuspá*, interpreting her as a protectress subordinate to Frigg as stated in the *Prose Edda* produces the most probable interpretation available on the basis of our limited evidence. If this interpretation is accepted, it provides an additional glimpse of the goddess Hlín and her significance in Old Norse mythology.

There may be another factor at work in informing interpretations of Hlín reviewed above: a tendency among scholars to seek in a multiplicity of goddesses forms, extensions, or ‘hypostases’ of a single goddess, sometimes a so-called ‘Great Goddess’. A diverse range of scholars frequently refer to Great Goddess theory either directly or indirectly when discussing North Germanic goddesses, and a critical review of the evidence or its lack for such interpretations will be explored in the next entry in the “Goddesses Unknown” series.

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**Notes**

1. While Orchard straightforwardly identifies Hlín as Frigg with a simple side note next to the stanza in question (reading simply “Hlín Frigg”), he also provides an endnote discussing the matter: “‘Frigg’s beloved’ is ambiguous: assuming that Hlín (‘Protectress’) is an alternative name for Frigg, she may be mourning either Odin or Frey” (Orchard 2011: 271–272). As Freyr has no particular association with Frigg in the corpus, an interpretation of “Frigg’s Beloved” as Freyr seems unfounded. Orchard (1997: 86) also discusses the topic in his handbook, in which he describes the perceived disparity between *Völuspá* and the *Prose Edda* as a result of “confusion”.

2. Extensions of the Proto-Germanic masculine noun *xluniz* surface as Old Norse *hlynr*, *hlynr*, and Low German *løne* and *låne*, all meaning ‘maple tree’ (cf. Orel 2003: 178). The Old English noun *hlyn* is itself a *hapax legomenon* within the Old English corpus but appears in toponyms (see further e.g. Murphy 2011: 67; Hooke 2010: 255–258).

3. Editorial insertions in this quote are Stallybrass’s.

4. Editorial insertions in this quote are also Stallybrass’s.

5. *Hovrængaelites* is commonly treated as a loan of the combined name and epithet *Pórr karl* [‘old man Pórr’]; elsewhere in this issue, Frog points out that *gaeil* in the South Sámi compound reflects a pre-syncope form cognate with Old Norse *karl* but necessarily borrowed before *Hovræ*.


**Works Cited**


Sámi Religion Formations and Proto-Sámi Language Spread: Reassessing a Fundamental Assumption

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Abstract: Any historical study of Sámi religions links religion to the history of the language. Here, Proto-Sámi language spread is reviewed and the fundamental (and often implicit) assumption that religion spread with Proto-Sámi is challenged. An alternative model that language spread as a medium of communication adopted by different cultures is proposed and tested against the Common Proto-Sámi lexicon.

Research on Sámi religion has increasingly given attention to variation. As Håkan Rydving points out, the 18th-century authors of primary sources already show awareness of variation in Sámi religious vocabulary and practices. Nevertheless, early research tended to view these in isolation against an idea of what might be called ‘pan-Sámi’ religion; only exceptionally did scholars take a more sensitive approach to regional variation (e.g. Holmberg [Harva] 1915: 12; Wiklund 1916: 46). (Rydving 1993: 19–23.) Concentrated attention is now given to differences in specific vocabulary or features of practice, but also to questions of broader religion formations on a regional or linguistic basis (e.g. Pentikäinen 1973; Rydving 1993; 2010). Nevertheless, approaches have developed against the background of a continuity theory of Sámi presence throughout Fennoscandia since the Bronze Age. Local and regional forms of Sámi religion are considered as variations of a pan-Sámi heritage resulting from internal developments and contact-based change. An idea that Sámi only began to break up during or following the Viking Age has validated a projection of a homogeneous category ‘Sámi’
on references in earlier sources to the *Fenni* (Latin), *Phinnoi* (Greek), *Finnas* (Old English) and *Finnar* (Old Norse) – except when these are situated geographically in Finland and are pragmatically interpreted as ‘Finns’.¹ Contact-based change prior to the Viking Age tends to receive little attention outside of archaeology, yet the *Finn-/Fenn-* terms and corresponding *Lapp-* terms centered further east refer to culture type rather than language, which makes their unambiguous correlation with ‘Sámi’ problematic (e.g. Frog & Saarikivi 2014/2015: 81–82). Moreover, Ante Aikio (2012) has shown on the basis of loanword evidence that Proto-Sámi had already broken up into distinct dialects already before ca. AD 500, which is inconsistent with suppositions of homogeneity. The present article introduces a new perspective on this discussion that problematises the hypothesis of a pan-Sámi religion.

Understandings of Sámi language history have been radically revised across recent years, especially through the work of Aikio (e.g. 2006; 2012), showing, on the basis of internal linguistic evidence, that Proto-Sámi spread far more recently and rapidly than has been previously assumed. Earlier models of language history usually correlated features in the archaeological record with culture and language. They would imagine scenarios that would relate the language postulated for the archaeological culture to languages known in the present. These approaches theorized vast language areas that could remain coherent and unchanged, sometimes for thousands of years. However, such models were disconnected from use and variation of language in speech communities and their networks; they have been found incompatible with what we know about how languages spread, vary and change (e.g. Aikio 2006; Saarikivi & Lavento 2012). Current understandings are built with emphasis on empirical evidence within languages themselves and compatibility with knowledge about how language develops and varies over time.

These current understandings are here carried back to the study of Sámi culture. The assumption of a pan-Sámi religion is opened to question by the alternative possibility that Proto-Sámi could also have spread primarily as a medium of communication without a full complex of ‘culture’ and religion.² This hypothesis is tested against evidence of the ‘Common Proto-Sámi’ vocabulary surveyed by Juhani Lehtiranta, revealing a lack of positive evidence for the spread of a complex system of religion and mythology with Proto-Sámi language. (N.B. – reconstructed forms presented here represent Proto-Sámi as distinguished by Aikio, which differ slightly from the forms presented by Lehtiranta.³)

It is not currently possible to demonstrate or disprove that Proto-Sámi language spread unaccompanied by religion. The term *religion formation* is preferred for discussing local and regional religions. This term avoids a binary distinction of religions being either ‘the same’ or ‘other’ and allows elements and structures of religion to be shared across groups, although they may be locally organized with additional specific features into distinctive constellations.

The argument here seeks only to show that this hypothetical model of Proto-Sámi spread can equally if not better account for the evidence, in which case the pan-Sámi religion hypothesis must be tested and argued rather than simply presumed. The implications of this alternative hypothesis for comparative research will then be discussed.

**Locating Proto-Sámi**

The Sámi languages are a branch of the Uralic language family. Following Aikio (2012), Proto-Sámi is here considered to emerge from Pre-Proto-Sámi or Pre-Sámi through the Great Sámi Vowel Shift (below). Internal chronologies of both Sámi and Finnic languages are fairly sophisticated even though the languages were documented relatively late. This is possible because contacts with different branches of Indo-European can be distinguished and their internal chronologies link to an absolute chronology of North Germanic back to roughly the beginning of the present era. The historical geography of these languages can be reconstructed to a certain time depth through toponymic evidence, beyond which this can be roughly triangulated through contact histories with other languages. Although emphasis here is on the spread of Proto-Sámi across Lapland and the Scandinavian Peninsula, it is significant to the present discussion to establish roughly whence it spread. Its position relative to Proto-Finnic must also be considered as relevant to
common Proto-Sámi vocabulary, and taking a stance on the historical relationship between Sámi and Finnic languages in the Uralic family has a bearing on discussions of etymologies.

It is unclear when the Pre-Sámi language or dialect of Proto-Uralic began to be spoken in rough proximity to the Baltic Sea. Scholarship has long considered that Sámi and Finnic evolved from a common Proto-Finno-Sámic language phase, with their separation as one of the most recent major developments in the Uralic family tree, a view that is still widely current. This question is significant for whether certain vocabulary was borrowed into these languages during a shared language phase or should instead be viewed as either independent loans or mediated from one language into the other. Aikio (2012: 67–70, 75–76) stresses that, if there were such a common language phase, it must have been relatively short since the Sámi and Finnic families exhibit few shared innovations, and these could equally be attributable to areal contacts. In addition, Mordvin exhibits relations to both Finnic and Sámi, but the connectins between these three branches of Uralic do not resolve into a clear stemmatic relation of genetic descent (Saarikivi 2011: 106–110). Mikhail Zhivlov (2014: 116–117) has proposed that either Sámi and Mordvin participated in contact-induced changes that Finnic did not or that they evolved from a common West Uralic dialect independent of Finnic. The westward spread of Uralic languages remains obscure, but Petri Kallio (forthcoming) argues that Early Proto-Finnic expanded during the Bronze Age from a different ecological zone through areas where Proto-Baltic dialects were spoken but were gradually subsumed in a language shift. The loanword vocabulary suggests assimilation of practices and technologies especially in the area of animal husbandry (Larsson 2001: 238–240). Loans from Early Proto-Germanic / Pre-Germanic also begin in the Bronze Age (Kallio 2015b: 29–32). In the Bronze Age, trans-Baltic trade opened from Scandinavia both directly via Gotland to the Gulf of Riga (Vasks 2010: 154–156) and further north via Åland to the coasts of the Gulf of Finland (Siiriäinen 2003: 58–59). Assuming the relevant groups from Scandinavia spoke Pre-Germanic, the loans into Proto-Finnic would be consistent with Proto-Finnic’s spread through Baltic language areas into regions east of the Baltic Sea and engagement with these trade networks.

Proto-Baltic contacts with Pre-Sámi seem to have been mediated through Proto-Finnic (Aikio 2012: 72–73) and seem not to have extended to the domain of animal husbandry, which is a potential indicator that Proto-Sámi arrived in the region independent of Proto-Finnic. Proto-Sámi exhibits contacts with so-called Palaeo-European languages (i.e. neither Indo-European nor Uralic) both in Lapland and in Finland (Aikio 2012: 80–88, 91–92). It is not possible to determine whether other vocabulary of obscure etymology only found in the Sámi language family derives from Pre-Sámi contacts with Palaeo-European languages (cf. Aikio 2004). On the other hand, Kallio (forthcoming) finds that there are so few items in the Proto-Finnic lexicon which lack known etymologies that there is no reason to suspect a Palaeo-European impact, which is an additional indicator that Proto-Finnic was spoken farther south. Pre-Sámi had some contacts with Early Proto-Germanic, although not as extensive as those of Proto-Finnic, suggesting that it was at a greater remove from the presumable trade networks (Aikio 2012: 70–76). Geographically, dialects of Pre-Sámi from which Proto-Sámi emerged seem unlikely to have been established south of the Gulf of Finland or Lake Ladoga, where Proto-Finnic seems to have spread and have been connected with different livelihoods. Proto-Sámi was also likely at a remove from the coastal territories of today’s Finland where forms of animal husbandry and light agriculture were practiced (on which, see Solantie 2005) and which was more directly linked with early trans-Baltic trade (Siiriäinen 2003: 58–59). The best guess is that it was spoken in the southern half of Karelia and/or inland Finland, as illustrated in Map 1 (see also Aikio 2006: esp. 45).

Proto-Sámi emerged through the Great Sámi Vowel Shift, of which Aikio states:

That such a complex and idiosyncratic series of changes in pronunciation was completed with near 100% regularity implies that it took place in a relatively compact and tight-knit speech community. In other words, the
language must have been spoken within a relatively limited geographical area until the Great Saami Vowel shift was completed. (Aikio 2012: 71.)

This suggests that the Proto-Sámi emerged within a particular speech community rather than in an extended network of such communities. In a mobile hunting and fishing culture of the northern ecology, this population was probably in the hundreds rather than the thousands (Saarikivi & Lavento 2012: 212). Loanwords affected by the vowel shift include the loan for ‘iron’: Early Proto-Germanic *raudan- [‘bog ore’ or ‘iron’] → Early Proto-Finnic *rauta [‘iron’] and (or EPF *rauta →)8 Pre-Sámi *rauta [‘iron’] > Proto-Sámi *ruovdē [‘iron’], which is a factor in dating the shift (e.g. Heikkilä 2011: 70). It is also not certain how quickly the vowel shift occurred or how it related to languages or dialects in other speech communities. However, it was only following this sound shift that Proto-Sámi spread through Finland and Karelia, Lapland and most of the Scandinavian Peninsula.

Loanword evidence shows that Proto-Sámi entered into extensive contacts with Proto-Scandinavian of ca. AD 200–500 (many of the loans could not otherwise produce their attested Sámi forms owing to changes in Proto-Scandinavian; others not after about AD 700) (Aikio 2012: 76; on relevant toponyms, see Bergsland 1995 [1991]; Aikio 2012: 77–79). This period of Scandinavian influence correlates with a substrate of loans from a Palaeo-European language or languages that eventually underwent language shifts to Proto-Sámi (Aikio 2012: 80–88). The impression is that, across a few centuries, Proto-Sámi spread in use across a vast geographical area, and presumably also to the east, although this is less well researched (e.g. Saarikivi 2006). Originally Sámi toponymy in Finland exhibits distinct vocabulary that appears derivative of additional Palaeo-European languages paralleling, if not identical to, the languages it encountered in Lapland (Aikio 2012: 90–92). Other Uralic languages were also likely present at least in Finland and Karelia (see e.g. Rahkonen 2013), if only Para-Sámi languages – independent branches of Pre-Sámi – although these cannot be distinguished without living languages for comparison (Sammallahti 2012: 102). Proto-Sámi thus seems to have spread rapidly enough that this vocabulary was only assimilated after the language had spread to other regions rather than first being assimilated and then carried with the language’s spread.

Map 1. General model of the spread of Proto-Sámi from perhaps ca. AD 200 (adapted from Frog & Saarikivi, forthcoming). ‘Palaeo-Laplandic’ and ‘Palaeo-Lakelandic’ are regionally identified groups of Palaeo-European languages distinguished by Aikio (2012). The variety and extent of other West Uralic language presence in these regions is unknown, although at least some Para-Sámi languages are probable. The language situation in some regions is currently even more obscure.

The Scandinavian loanword vocabulary reveals that Proto-Sámi’s rapid spread quickly produced regional dialectal differences (Aikio 2012: 77–78, 93), presumably in large part owing to contacts with local languages. Evidence of Proto-Sámi’s rapid spread contrasts sharply with its emergence within a small speech community. Even if the process of spread was initially quite gradual in local networks, there is nothing to suggest a population explosion with a critical mass of migration in every direction but south. Of course, the language would not spread without the mobility of speakers and some migration is probable. Whatever occurred, Proto-Sámi’s spread was connected with the activities of people speaking it: they were doing things, communicating with other people, and whatever they were doing
made it seem useful or desirable for others to be able to also speak Proto-Sámi. The language seems to have spread specifically or predominantly through mobile hunting and fishing groups whose local languages were gradually eclipsed, potentially much later. An aggressive or authoritative role in some sort of economic network could potentially account for the language of an otherwise small number of speakers to rapidly spread across a large geographical area without mass migrations or a centralizing political structure. Aikio (2012: 105–106, and cf. 79) suggests that the role of the language in the Scandinavian fur trade could have been a factor in Proto-Sámi’s spread in Lapland. However, Scandinavian contacts seem to have been a consequence of language spread rather than its motivation. On the other hand, the increase of the fur trade in the Viking Age may have been a catalyst that led Proto-Sámi to finally eclipse other languages (Frog & Saarikivi 2014/2015: 107n.19). Whatever initiated the process of spread, Proto-Sámi seems to have become de facto enabled as a lingua franca for the majority of what were likely multilingual populations across most of Fennoscandia. If it did not spread through the agency of speakers conducting trade, its role in trade networks would have been a natural outcome.

Aikio (2012: 77) distinguishes three Proto-Sámi dialects reflected in surviving Sámi languages (cf. also Häkkinen 2010: 60):

- Southwest dialect – reflected in South Sámi, Ume Sámi and probably Pite Sámi
- Northwest dialect – reflected in Lule Sámi and North Sámi
- Northeast dialect – reflected in Inari, Kemi, Skolt, Kildin and Ter Sámi

Additional dialects can be assumed in Finland and Karelia that disappeared with the spread of North Finnic languages (cf. Aikio 2012: 88–97; Kuzmin 2014: 285–287), which becomes particularly evident when Proto-Sámi dialects are superimposed on a map of their descendant languages (Map 2).

Later Sámi languages form an interlocking continuum (Map 3). Considering potentially distinctive influences that Proto-Sámi may have received through contacts in different
regions, it is necessary to consider that the interlocking continuum of documented Sámi languages may primarily reflect a millennium of interaction between mobile groups speaking dialects of Proto-Sámi and their emerging languages. This continuum cannot be assumed to reflect a single route of dispersal of a uniform Proto-Sámi that first spread north through Finland and Karelia and then east and west across the Kola and Scandinavian Peninsulas, respectively. Jaakko Häkkinen (2010: 59–60) argues that the northeast and northwest dialects of Proto-Sámi are the result of language spread north through Finland, but that mobility carried the southwest dialect over the bottleneck of the Gulf of Bothnia from the area where the Kyrö culture would later emerge. However, mobile groups appear to have been active farther south than has tended to be acknowledged. Particularly if Proto-Sámi’s spread is connected with trade, it is equally likely that the language was carried via the long-established route past Åland, which was also inhabited by a predominantly hunting and fishing culture until the second half of the 6th century (Ahola et al. 2014b). According to this model, Proto-Sámi did not spread down the Scandinavian Peninsula and gradually break up. Instead, two distinct forms of Proto-Sámi with different backgrounds met there, speakers of the southwest dialect never having directly encountered the cultures inhabiting Lapland further north.

**Religion versus Language**

‘Culture’ can be considered “localized in concrete, publically accessible signs” (Urban 1991: 1), within which language provides only one system of signification. Religion is here considered:

a type of register of practice that has developed through intergenerational transmission, is characterized by mythology, and entails an ideology and worldview. (Frog 2015: 35.)

From this perspective, a register of religion simultaneously provides models for behaviours (Agha 2007) associated with the roles taken by individuals within the community. A religious register provides a framework against which
others can assess performed behaviours (see also Bauman 1984), familiar in the modern West from assessments of whether someone is or is not ‘being a good Christian’.

Mythology is here considered broadly in terms of systems of emotionally invested symbols (rather than narrowly in terms of stories) that provide models for understanding the world and interpreting experience (for discussion, see Frog 2015). These symbols range from gods, stories about them (considered signs insofar as they can operate and be referred to as a meaning-bearing unit), and also symbolic actions and their scripts such as performable signs emblematic of rituals. The crucial point here is that mythic symbols may be mediated verbally, rendered visually through iconography or realized through performative action, but they are not linguistic signs per se. The linguistic signifier of the name of a god may have a complex symbolic image of the god as its signified and these may operate as a coherent sign in linguistic discourse, but the symbolic image can also be visually represented or performed without the linguistic sign – i.e. the god is not the name.

Within culture as social semiotic, religion and language become linked and interact in different ways. Nevertheless, religion can be transmitted across languages, a single language may be spoken by practitioners of different religions, and many mythic symbols or scripts enacted and manipulated in ritual may be largely or wholly independent of language. We tend to discuss ‘religions’ as discrete and homogeneous, a generalization that often offers a pragmatic frame of reference. However, individual mythic symbols and whole networks of them and their structures can be shared across networks of groups within which they may be integrated parts of local religion formations that are otherwise distinct. Attending to the symbols in practice shifts focus away from hegemonic and ideal ‘religions’ and makes it easier to consider how certain practices, symbols or conceptions might spread among groups and without exchange of one ‘religion’ for another (cf. Frog 2017).

Just as broad dialect areas of Proto-Sámi language can be reverse-engineered through formal groupings of surviving Sámi languages, features of religion can similarly be grouped

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Map 4. Grey dashed lines roughly distinguish regions of religious traditions or religion formations based on historically documented evidence proposed by Rydving (1993: 23). Limitations of evidence leave boundaries between regions vague.
into broad tradition regions. Håkan Rydving (1993: 23) proposes four such regions, but had left aside the religion formations on the Kola Peninsula owing to the lack of early written sources. I include this as a fifth region on Map 4. Rydving’s original terms have been adapted to accord with names of the Proto-Sámi dialect regions above. I follow Rydving in addressing the regions through language areas, and in leaving undetermined the region(s) into which Inari and Akkala Sámi group. With these refinements, the religion regions are:

- **Southwest** – South Sámi
- **Central-West** – Ume, Pite and Lule Sámi
- **Northwest** – North Sámi
- **Northeast** – Skolt, Kildin and Ter Sámi
- **Upper Central or Northeast?** – Kemi Sámi

Describing the groupings by language is a pragmatic matter of easy reference. One Sámi language could be spoken across communities with quite different livelihoods and cultural features (Saarikivi & Lavento 2012: 200). Regions of tradition are structured and evolve in relation to a number of factors rather than necessarily being in a one-to-one correlation with language (see also Pentikäinen 1973: 139–145). For example, Rydving (1993: 22n.84) points out that the coastal North Sámi designation of the thunder god aligns speakers with the northeast Sámi religion region. Rydving’s decision to separate Kemi Sámi from Sámi on the Kola Peninsula is one of methodological caution owing to the lack of data on the Sámi cultures of Finland and Karelia. Kemi may have belonged to the tradition area of that part of Karelia and adjacent Finland, as distinct from those farther north (cf. Manker 1938), but there is not enough evidence to determine this one way or the other.

A crucial difference between this division and Aikio’s model in Map 2 is the central west group, which forms a zone between the centers of what would have been the southwest and northwest Proto-Sámi dialects. If southwest and northwest dialects spread independently onto the Scandinavian Peninsula from the east and north, respectively, they would presumably have evolved to at least some degree before coming into contact. In this case, the central-west religion region would have been a zone of their long-term interaction. There, they could have developed hybridized intermediate language forms much as the Livvi language (or dialect) emerged from the interaction of Karelian and Vepsian (i.e. related North Finnic language forms). Rydving’s geographical division is developed according to written sources, yet it “seems to be supported by the geographical distribution of drum types” (1993: 23; see also Manker 1938: 82–108).

The rapid spread of Proto-Sámi extends across a huge geographical area inhabited by multiple cultures. The indigenous languages of those areas were eclipsed. This process does not seem to have been linked to mass migration and population displacement. Consequently, in the wake of the geographical spread of Proto-Sámi and its dialectal differentiation, presumably the vast majority of populations across these regions did not originally speak Proto-Sámi as a domestic language. The language’s spread thus seems most likely linked to communication. When considering the rapidity and geographical scope of the language’s spread, it becomes reasonable to question whether elements of religion were carried with Proto-Sámi from Finland at all.

Of course, even spread predominantly as a medium of communication could not occur without mobility of speakers. It would also entail at least some degree of additional cultural transfer. Part of this could be at the level of symbols and cognitive metaphors encoded in the language, but communication and networking across different groups would itself have led to a “congruence of codes and values” (Barth 1998 [1969]: 16), at least in those areas of practice linked to such communication and networking (Ahola et al. 2014b: 242). Once a common language was established, boundaries would open that might otherwise more greatly inhibit the spread of new practices across different groups. Language shifts could act historically as a catalyst for convergence, supporting forms of shared identity among networks of speech communities in evolving regions of dialects. It is also reasonable to consider which identities were inclined to converge. When Proto-Sámi speakers were arriving from Finland and Karelia onto the Kola and Scandinavian Peninsulas, whatever they were doing or however they were perceived inclined others to learn their language. Would their religious identity have been equally
interesting (or would it even have direct continuity from the speech community in which Proto-Sámi emerged, spreading first through Finland and Karelia)? Or might local cultures first begin using the language, and, during language shifts, develop shared linguistic identities that could facilitate convergence of religious identities with one another?

When considering what transpired in this process, it is noteworthy that Proto-Sámi language spread does not clearly correlate with changes in the archaeological record. In the archaeology of Finland, this problem is ambiguous because Proto-Sámi spread during a period when the evidence of mobile groups has largely disappeared (e.g. Kuusela 2014; see also Aikio 2012). On the Scandinavian Peninsula and through Lapland, there is a long tradition of identifying Sámi language and ethnic culture with evidence of cultures in the material record, tracing their long-term continuities. Internal linguistic evidence presented above indicates a *terminus post quem* of ca. AD 200 for Proto-Sámi language presence in these regions. Several of these continuities of practices in the archaeological record can be traced back earlier (see e.g. Zachrisson et al. 1997: 195–200), and the so-called scree graves (*urgraver*) by as much as a millennium (Svestad 2011: 43 and works there cited). Such continuities in practices need to be viewed as continuities through the process of Proto-Sámi language spread.

It was once common to correlate historical language spread with evidence of mobile goods in the archaeological record like pottery-types, which is now recognized as highly problematic (Saarikivi & Lavento 2012). Although not specifically tied to language, Kristian Kristiansen has formulated a complex ‘axiom’, at the core of which is the claim that:

> because a burial is the institutionalised occasion for the transmission of property and power, and the renewal of social and economic ties [...] a radical change in burial rites [...] signals a similar change in beliefs and institutions. (Kristiansen et al. 2017: 336.)

This axiom situates burial rituals exclusively in relation to empirical societies of the living. In the present context, it is also relevant that funerary rituals are direct engagements with conceptions of the unseen world, its dynamic forces, agents and societies, as well as ideas of how it is accessed from the world of the living and of possibilities for interaction with it. The ritual(s) of a single funeral may involve several such types of interaction through engagements with the embodied deceased member of the community and the establishment of that individual in an appropriate location and situation in the unseen world. The funeral also establishes foundations for the maintenance of relationships between the living community and the deceased and/or a community of ancestors and perhaps additional otherworld agents. Funerals are thus a socially central context for engagement with mythology and religious practices.

Of course, Kristiansen’s axiom cannot be reversed to claim that lack of change in burial rites signals a lack of religious change. Continuities in practices does not necessarily indicate that Sámi spread independent of a complex religious system and broader culture which might be linked to local rituals. Religious appropriations and reinterpretations were not only made by Romans and Christians: Scandinavian settlers in the Viking Age could strategically assimilate the practices of a local burial ground where they settled (e.g. Artelius & Lundqvist 2005). However, there is no reason to presume such appropriation. The simplest explanation of continuities in complex practices related to burial and so forth is that Proto-Sámi’s spread was not significant for local religions. The lack of positive archaeological evidence for the spread of religious change corollary with the probable period of Proto-Sámi’s spread must be kept in mind.

On the other hand, continuities in the archaeological record that seem to correlate with Proto-Sámi dialect and tradition regions suggest language spread became coordinated with existing regional networks (presumably not geographically fixed). Interaction within those networks would incline groups towards convergence in registers of social behaviour and communication as well as in intersubjective frames of reference. Later archaeological evidence of significant changes in settlement sites beginning from ca. 700 AD are an indicator of significant changes in societies spreading through regions of Lapland (Halinen 2016). These changes reflect the
spread of aspects of culture through networks where Proto-Sámi was already spoken, at least to some degree. The spread of these changes through the networks suggests convergences in social (and to some degree probably also religious) organization in relation to the landscape. Rather than presuming that Proto-Sámi’s spread was accompanied by abrupt local language shifts, local language shifts may have been precipitated by the spread of other aspects of culture. Changes in settlement types suggest the spread of societal frameworks becoming shared across groups, reinforcing collective identity and possibly an ascendance of inter-group communication over in-group communication. The processes remain uncertain, but warrant reflection.

Manifesting degrees of correlation between language areas and tradition areas is a natural historical outcome, even if the boundaries of these may never fully coincide at any given time. Evidence of changes during the centuries following initial Proto-Sámi language spread may have had levelling effects on earlier linguistic and cultural diversity.

Common Proto-Sámi Vocabulary
Even if religion and language can be transmitted separately, continuity in links between them can be expected where they are transmitted together. One indicator that Proto-Sámi language spread with a common form of Proto-Sámi religion would thus be evidence of a Common Proto-Sámi religious vocabulary. To test this, a list of religious vocabulary was developed on the basis of the fourteen words indexed under religion and beliefs in Juhani Lehtiranta’s (2001) lexicon of Common Proto-Sámi vocabulary. This set was expanded with some additional vocabulary in that volume, and a few others relevant for discussion. However, this survey does not presume to exhaust potential vocabulary that could be relevant to such discussion.

Religious vocabulary is not exceptionally stable. Uri Tadmor’s (2009) research illustrates that vocabulary related to religion and beliefs can be among the most salient for borrowings. Vocabulary linked to religion and beliefs can thus be expected to both receive and lose words over time. However, not all such vocabulary is exchanged with equal ease. The ability of such terms to be mobilized across languages should be considered in relation to several factors, including: the word’s frequency and range of uses in the lexicon; the centrality of the concept or symbol identified by the word in discourse or beliefs; and the degree to which a borrowing is complementary to existing general vocabulary (e.g. one more word for ‘monster’), identifies practice-specific concepts for which existing vocabulary was lacking (e.g. a term for a particular ritual, religious paraphernalia or action like making the sign of the cross), or competes with existing terms to greater or lesser degrees that are eventually displaced (e.g. base vocabulary and proper names). If religion spread with Proto-Sámi language, some distinctive evidence can be expected at least in central areas of the lexicon of mythology and ritual.

Lehtiranta’s lexicon strikingly reveals that the southwest, northwest and northeast dialects formed a fairly coherent language network. The shared vocabulary indicates that loans which entered the language after Proto-Sámi had spread geographically were communicated through long-distance networks from the southern extension on the Scandinavian Peninsula across the Kola Peninsula in the east. Such loans are not limited to new concepts and phenomena and extend to core vocabulary. Lehtiranta (2001: 162–163) indexes ca. 100 lexical items for the human body. In round terms, ca. 5% are identified as of Scandinavian origin, ca. 10% appear to be Proto-Finnic loans, less than 50% are otherwise linked to an Uralic heritage through cognates, and more than 35% are of uncertain etymology. The number of uncertain etymologies may be somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless, a potentially substantial number of loans penetrated the core vocabulary of the language and spread through the Proto-Sámi dialects. Loans of such vocabulary easily occur in the context of language shifts and can also more easily take place in contexts where an asymmetrical relation is perceived by speakers of the respective languages. Such situations may account for this loan-word vocabulary locally or regionally, but the innovations are more striking for being shared through a geographically dispersed area. They therefore underscore the role of the language in contact networks. They simultaneously indicate that
the vocabulary was in dynamic negotiation across those networks, at least until it stabilized.

The potential for vocabulary to spread through the Proto-Sámi language networks opens methodological difficulties. Geographical factors and the history of Proto-Finnic’s roles in networks of interaction in the North make it seem most likely that loans of potentially core religious vocabulary from Late Proto-Finnic into Proto-Sámi occurred before Proto-Sámi spread significantly. The likelihood then would seem to decrease in inverse proportion to the geographical spread without corroborating evidence of some impact passing through relevant areas. Proto-Finnic’s potential for influences then increases again toward the Viking Age (Ahola & Frog 2014). On the other hand, indications that Proto-Sámi was open to lexical innovation even in core vocabulary make it less certain what language words might be taken from or how far they might spread.

Discussions of loans from Proto-Finnic and words with other Uralic cognates are conditional on understandings of other Uralic languages’ relationships to Proto-Sámi. Loanwords from Scandinavian and Palaeo-European languages can be more clearly identified as spreading through a Proto-Sámi dialect continuum. Para-Sámi languages – i.e. language that evolved independently from Pre-Sámi – and probably other Uralic languages were encountered in Proto-Sámi’s spread,17 and these also present potential sources for loans. Proto-Finnic underwent distinctive sound changes which should make it possible to differentiate whether a loan is Proto-Finnic in many cases, although in others they remain ambiguous (or the phonology has simply been considered irregular). Some of the vocabulary identified as borrowed from Proto-Finnic could thus reflect non-Finnic languages of which the speakers also underwent a language shift, as could some vocabulary identified with cognates in other Uralic languages. In terms of individual etymologies, this issue is generally impossible to resolve empirically. It has become customary to acknowledge that vocabulary may have been mediated by a chain of dialects and languages, but the possibility that loans may derive from these undocumented languages remains outside of discussion. Methodologically, this tendency creates the issue that Proto-Finnic may be over-represented as a source of loans. Interpretation of a loan as Proto-Finnic also implies certain relations between groups of speakers. However, if the loan actually derives from another Uralic language, it may have a very different social-historical background, such as the language shifts of a mobile hunting culture. It is necessary to acknowledge a degree of uncertainty with some words of Uralic etymology, and the general lack of discussion of whether Proto-Sámi borrowed from extinct Uralic languages as it did from Finnic, Scandinavian and Palaeo-European languages.

Another issue is that Lehtiranta’s ‘common’ Proto-Sámi vocabulary is based only on Sámi languages that survived. It thus remains conjectural for Sámi languages which were spoken in most of Finland and Karelia and perhaps farther east. This is not problematic for vocabulary inherited from Pre-Sámi. However, it remains unclear whether or to what extent loanword vocabulary that spread through Proto-Sámi speech networks of the Scandinavian and Kola Peninsulas also penetrated south through Finland and Karelia to become ‘common’ there as well. It warrants noting that areal linguistics suggests that variation in Proto-Sámi language forms would most likely have been greater closer to the area from which it spread (Frog & Saarikivi 2014/2015: 69–70; for varying forms and distinctive features of Sámi loans in Southern Finland’s placenames, see e.g. Aikio 2007b: 172, 190). The great differences in ecology, climate and associated livelihoods between, for example, Lapland and the Lakeland region of southern Finland raise questions about whether these speakers of Proto-Sámi would have maintained meaningful networks across all of these regions, and whether all vocabulary spreading through networks of Lapland should be expected to have also spread to the south.

Another issue of reconstructing ‘common’ Proto-Sámi concerns initial consonants and consonant clusters of loanword vocabulary that do not reconstruct consistently for the Proto-Sámi dialects on which reconstruction is based. Lehtiranta follows the principle that, if the initial consonant or consonant cluster cannot be reconstructed for all of these branches of Proto-Sámi, it cannot be reconstructed as the Common Proto-Sámi form. This approach
aligns reconstructions with the researcher’s expectations for an ideal Proto-Sámi, valorizing the forms closer to Pre-Sámi. I feel that these reconstructions are misleading and marginalize features considered ‘foreign’ to the ideal Proto-Sámi. The majority of Sámi languages seem never to have lost or reduced the relevant consonants. My perspective is that the question concerns the periodization of developments in loanword vocabulary and its nativization to Proto-Sámi phonology. This question is directly relevant to the background of some of the examples discussed below.

It is a well-known historical feature of Uralic languages that they reduce word-initial consonant clusters in loanwords. Languages descended from the Northeast Proto-Sámi dialect exhibit reduced initial consonant clusters, but this is not necessarily the case for Northwest and Southwest Proto-Sámi dialects. Northeast Proto-Sámi yields a reconstruction of *tālō ['giant in tales'] where Northwest and Southwest dialects yield *stālō, retaining the Proto-Scandinavian consonant cluster through modern times (example (4) below). Lehtiranta (2001: 132; §1222) thus reconstructs the Common Proto-Sámi form as *tālō, presumably because the consonant cluster cannot be unambiguously reconstructed as the ‘common’ Proto-Sámi form. However, reduction to initial /h/ is artificial for other dialects of Proto-Sámi. The form that spread through the Proto-Sámi dialect continuum appears to have been *stālō. When this is not an isolated case, I consider it improbable that such vocabulary, much of which likely entered Northeast Proto-Sámi from the adjacent dialect, had its consonant cluster more or less immediately reduced as a function of its spread. Instead, I treat *stālō as the Common Proto-Sámi form that spread, and the reduction *stālō > *tālō as a dialectal development. In other words, the reduction of this and initial consonant clusters in other Common Proto-Sámi vocabulary are treated as most likely to have occurred after the words had spread through the dialect area rather than being a function of entering the dialect per se. What may have happened to such vocabulary spreading into Proto-Sámi dialects to the south in Finland and Karelia remains unclear, but they do not fall within the reconstruction of Common Proto-Sámi.

Similarly, initial /h/ was absent from Pre-Sámi, so words reconstructed with an initial /h/ in Proto-Sámi dialects are identified as loans (Korhonen 1981: 134; Aikio 2009: 17). Languages descended from the Northeast dialect of Proto-Sámi show that initial /h/ was elided in loanwords whereas initial /h/ was maintained to the present day in other Sámi languages. Lehtiranta (2001: 16) reconstructs a ‘common’ Proto-Sámi *āvtē (§68) ['grave, hole'] where the reconstruction for Northwest and Southwest Proto-Sámi would be *hāvtē, reflecting the initial consonant of the Proto-Finnic source language (example (7) below). Reconstruction with an elided consonant is problematic, particularly when it most likely entered Proto-Sámi through contacts in the southern half of Finland. If the word was borrowed early and spread with Proto-Sámi, then the form that spread was presumably *hāvtē; if it entered later and spread through the dialect continuum north into Lapland and thence onto the peninsulas, *hāvtē is still the reconstructed form, otherwise Northwest and Southwest Proto-Sámi would have had *āvtē.

The question of initial consonants and consonant clusters is also of interest as linguistic evidence relevant to the history of Proto-Sámi’s spread. Something different was happening with onsets of words in different Proto-Sámi dialects or their descendant languages. Nativization subordinates and conforms features of other languages to a vernacular system. Especially where features unconventional for the vernacular are not meaningful or are not customary for speakers, these are adapted to something more familiar. Proto-Sámi seems to have spread among and coexisted with other languages. Features that were unconventional for Pre-Sámi could be both meaningful and familiar to speakers in multilingual environments. This does not mean that nativization could not occur in Proto-Sámi. However, it makes the elision of initial /h/ or reduction of an initial consonant cluster less likely to be immediate and more likely to be related to a broader language ecology in which Proto-Sámi participated.

On the Scandinavian Peninsula, Proto-Sámi’s situation in local language ecologies seems to have resulted in ‘foreign’ onsets becoming nativized as established in Sámi language
rather than nativizing the vocabulary to conform to Proto-Sámi’s inherited phonology. If Proto-Sámi spread among speakers of languages for whom such onsets were familiar, this development in Southwest and Northwest Proto-Sámi is not at all surprising, although not all consonant clusters became acceptable (cf. \( /dl/ > /lt/ \) in example (3)). In contrast, the language ecology on the Kola Peninsula seems to have differed in ways that aligned with inherited Proto-Sámi phonology rather than tolerated by it. This is likely related to a less significant presence of Proto-Scandinavian (not to mention Proto-Finnic) on the Kola Peninsula. What that situation was remains unclear. The variety and quantity of vocabulary that spread through Proto-Sámi dialects and the probability of Proto-Sámi’s significance for reciprocal communication in extended contact networks makes it seem doubtful that there were significant differences in onset consonants in the Northeast dialect, at least in its early stages. Consequently, the differences in Northeast Proto-Sámi seem not only to be developments, but may be developments connected with the phonology of groups undergoing language shifts. Considered in relation to dialects on the Scandinavian Peninsula, what happens in Northeast Proto-Sámi makes it seem likely that the relevant features such as consonant clusters (consistent with Uralic languages, but not exclusive to them) were not nativized to more prominent languages in the local ecology. Of course, possible differences in local language ideologies were potentially also a factor, while archaeological evidence is quite limited and might, for example, point to later contacts impacting local populations. The history of differences between Proto-Sámi dialects remains obscure, but there are differences that seem to point to differences in the language ecologies where Proto-Sámi spread.

**Proto-Scandinavian Loans**

Common Proto-Sámi vocabulary includes a striking number of Proto-Scandinavian loans, of which six will be presented here. The first of these belongs to cosmology (modern forms are given in North Sámi):

1. *mánu* (§647) (mánnu) *‘moon’*

The moon was linked to a variety of traditions. Some of these attribute supernatural agency to it and may indicate deification; others may reflect conceptions of the moon as a source of dynamic force that can affect the world while its potential for agency is ambiguous (Karsten 1955: 33–35; Lundmark 1982: 57–80; Kulonen et al. 2005: 224–225). The word *mánu* is a transparent Proto-Scandinavian loan (~ ON *mání* [‘moon’]). It must have been carried through the dialect continuum of Proto-Sámi after the language had spread. It is not clear that any conceptions of the moon as a mythic agent spread with the Scandinavian loan. Sámi connections of the moon with reindeer (e.g. Lundmark 1982: 63; Kulonen et al. 2005: 224–225) are probably not of Scandinavian origin because reindeer remain completely outside of known Scandinavian mythology. The word *mánu* should be considered to have a separate history from any concept of the moon in cosmology or as a supernatural agent that may have spread with Proto-Sámi language.

Another Proto-Scandinavian loan that connects with cosmological conceptions is:

2. *sávja* (§1115) (sáiva, sávja) *‘freshwater lake; earth spirit of legends’*

The term *sávja* is cognate with Old Norse *sær* [‘lake’] and receives a great deal of attention in discussions of Sámi religion, while the diversity of concepts linked to the term have made it an illustrative example of variation (Wicklund 1916). According to the survey of Klaas Ruppel (Kulonen et al. 2005: 375–376), this term was most likely borrowed in the sense of ‘fresh water’. In North Sámi and languages descended from Northeast Proto-Sámi, *sáiva* refers to fresh water or lakes, and especially lakes without inlet or outlet. The northeastern group also exhibits a semantic field of ‘south’ (or ‘southwest’). In Lule Sámi, it is associated with sacred or supernatural sites. In South Sámi it is used to refer to subterranean supernatural beings. (Kulonen et al. 2005: 375–376; see also Wicklund 1916.) Lakes with no outlet were connected with the concept of so-called ‘double-bottomed lakes’. They were linked to ideas that fish could move between lakes. Such lakes could also be conceived as points of access to an otherworld inhabited by the dead or supernatural beings (Wicklund 1916: 61–66; Kulonen et al. 2005: 374–375; see also Manker...
1950: 108–118). According to Ruppel, the conception of sáiva as a gate to the other-world is mainly found in western Finnmark (Kulonen et al. 2005: 376). Identification of a lake without outlet as an access point to the otherworld is paralleled in Finno-Karelian traditions (Siikala 2002a: 263, 343, and cf. 128). However, the significance of this parallel is unclear. Finno-Karelian traditions spread through areas where Sámi and probably other languages were spoken, creating the possibility of reciprocal influence (Frog 2013: 87–89).

If all of these meanings share a common etymology, *sāvjë became connected with the supernatural or mythic world quite close to the word’s spread and spread in conjunction with it. There is no reason to believe that a phenomenon of cosmology or religion spread with Proto-Sámi language and then a Proto-Scandinavian word was borrowed and spread through Proto-Sámi dialects to designate it. It is also not clear that *sāvjë was borrowed to designate a local mythological or cosmological phenomenon that then spread through Proto-Sámi with the word. Basically, *sāvjë is a loanword that must have spread through Proto-Sámi dialects, but it seems to be attached to the otherworld or points of access to it in different ways, and it is not clear that it was used in such a way in Northeastern dialects.

The proposal that the northeastern use of sáiva for the cardinal direction ‘south’ is because this was the direction of a celestial realm of the dead (Kulonen et al. 2005: 375) requires transferring the word from a lower to an upper world and then referring to a cardinal direction with the word for the upper world. Scandinavian and Finnic cosmologies identify the realm of the dead as down and north rather than up and south (e.g. Lid 1949; Siikala 2002a; Heide 2014). This same model is reconstructed for Proto-Uralic (Napolskikh 1992). If sáiva meaning ‘south’ developed as a cosmological reference, its model presumably derives from a very different culture. However, this word may just be a homonym of unknown but independent etymology.

Accepting the Proto-Scandinavian origin of the word, *sāvjë seems to have been assimilated with the meaning ‘fresh water, lake’, with its semantics extended, for reasons unknown, to places of supernatural access to the otherworld. Nevertheless, the word seems to have become attached to different things in each area. Rather than being consistently identified with the same thing as the word spread and then evolved in different directions locally, this variation may, at least to some degree, reflect variation in what the term became linked to in local religion formations as it spread.

Two Common Proto-Sámi terms borrowed from Proto-Scandinavian refer to supernatural agents that human beings encounter in stories:

(3) *rāvke (§1028) (ràvga) ‘water spirit’
(4) *stālo (§1222) (stāllu) ‘giant in tales’

The term *rāvke was connected especially with victims of drowning who returned bodily after death. It corresponds to Old Norse draugr, which was the term for the animated dead. The Old Norse word was not specific to drowning victims, and could be used for restless and aggressively haunting dead or those residing peacefully in a burial mound (which they could defend when being robbed). The Sámi word and concept seems likely to have been adapted into the Kven language (i.e. the Finno-Karelian language form spoken in Finnmork) as merirauka [‘sea wraith’]. (Kulonen et al. 2005: 293.) The loanword’s spread was likely linked to an associated concept in legends (a legend is here considered a short story about a specific encounter that is developed on a traditional plot or motif and engages contestable beliefs about the supernatural or history). The term *stālo generates Sámi terms for a mythic being that corresponds to a ‘troll’, ‘ogre’ or ‘devil’ of legends and tales. The majority of stories about stāllu seem to be of Scandinavian or European types, though there are a number of elements that seem to have a separate pedigree that connects them with traditions of other Northern Eurasian hunting and fishing cultures. The word clearly became prominent in the vocabulary concerning monsters and supernatural ‘others’. Its range of use indicates it became a ‘tradition dominant’ – i.e. its prominence in the tradition led to more and more narrative material to become attached to it, so that *stālo and its derivatives replaced other terms or identities, while new stories were probably also generated around it as an evolving identity.
The initial consonant cluster leaves it unambiguous that this is a loan and suggests a Proto-Scandinavian model. It seems to belong to a word family of instrumental nouns ultimately derived from the verb ‘to stand’, which produced *stál [‘rick-post on which hay is stacked; pole on the prow of a ship’] and its derivative Old Norse *stáli ~ Norwegian *ståle [‘big, strong man’]. The question of the etymology arises because the latter terms look like they belong to a metaphorical paradigm of referring to tall/large powerful men with words for ‘pole’, ‘post’ or ‘beam’, a type of appellative that seems to have been generative. In this case, Old Norse *ståli would be a weak masculine formed from neuter *stål by adding the inflectional ending *-i. Nils Lid (1933: 43–77) proposes a connection to a Norwegian dialectal use of *ståle to refer to a supernatural being associated with Yuletide, making a number of interesting, although potentially anachronistic, comparisons. Nevertheless, Lid (1933: 61–62) argues that *ståle and *ståli derive from Proto-Scandinavian *stålō, the form anticipated as the model for Proto-Sámi *stålō (cf. ON máni < PSc *máne̮). In this case, the Old Norse epithet *ståli may have carried particular connotations perhaps more comparable to uses of *purs [‘ogre’] as an epithet. Such connotations would extend from being physically big to perhaps mean, clumsy and/or stupid.

The background of the word is unclear, but a Scandinavian etymology seems likely. The fact that Proto-Sámi *stålō suggests a Proto-Scandinavian noun *stålō lends credence to Lid’s argument. If Lid is correct, the Norwegian dialectal *ståle would have continuity from a Proto-Scandinavian *stålō, which, in some uses, would presumably have referred to an anthropomorphic supernatural agent. Alternately, these could be independently produced masculine forms derived from a neuter word for ‘pole’ in different eras. In this case, use for a supernatural agent would be a development in Proto-Sámi comparable to that of *sávye, introducing supernatural connotations to the loanword. Of course, this etymology for Proto-Sámi *stålō could be incorrect, but it seems probable, with the central question being whether a Proto-Scandinavian term meaning something like ‘big guy’ was adapted as a term for a supernatural agent or it was already identified with such an agent in the source language.

*stålō undoubtedly replaced other terms on local and regional bases when it spread. It presumably became identified with stories in those local traditions, which would seem to be the source of features connecting *stålō with traditions of other Northern Eurasian and even North American cultures. The term can also be assumed to have spread through the dialect networks in conjunction with stories, which could account for at least part of the narrative traditions that seem likely to have filtered through Scandinavian contacts. Nevertheless, Erkki Itkonen’s (1976: 12–25) comparative survey of archaic features of *stålō and stories related to it does not give the impression of a uniting underlying tradition that spread with Proto-Sámi language. Rather than potentially archaic features strongly linking *stålō traditions to an Uralic heritage, the stories connect Sámi traditions to Northern Eurasian hunting cultures and to hunting cultures of the Northern Hemisphere more generally.

This list of Scandinavian loans can be expanded with two terms that are more difficult to assess:

(5) *likkō (§587) (lihkku)
   ‘luck’

(6) *piren̄ (§939) (bierdna)
   ‘bear’

Although *likkō (~ ON lukka [‘luck’]) could be connected to a supernatural concept, this is unclear, as is whether the term spread with the concept or only as a pragmatic unit of the lexicon. Similarly, *piren̄ (~ ON bjørn [‘bear’]) looks like a naming-avoidance term (cf. Edsman 1994: 93–101). In that case, *piren̄ would be a potential indicator of naming taboos and thus beliefs about bears found among other Uralic groups (Honko et al. 1993: 120–121; Pentikäinen 2007: 93–100). However, the mythic status of the bear and bear ceremonialism have remarkably deep historical roots in Northern Eurasia: the groups that underwent language shifts quite probably had beliefs about bears and practiced forms of bear ceremonialism independently of Uralic contacts. On the other hand, it is the only Common Proto-Sámi word for ‘bear’ listed by Lehtiranta.
In spite of the range of impacts of Scandinavian influence on Proto-Sámi language, the loanwords do not seem to correlate directly with significant impacts on religion. There is no clear indication that the loan *mänō* was linked with beliefs about the moon, and the Proto-Scandinavian model for *säije* seems to have been a simple secular word. *Rävke* was clearly adopted in connection with conceptions of the supernatural and quite probably *stälō* was as well, but the contacts that produced these loans appear centrally associated with narration rather than ritual and cosmology. Of course, the Scandinavian loans spread through Proto-Sámi rather than in conjunction with it. Scandinavian impacts may have been much more significant on a local or regional basis but there is no evidence of sweeping religious change connected with them. When *rävke* and *stälō* potentially spread in connection with narrative discourse such as legends and tales, it warrants considering whether *säije* may have also spread through the same or similar conduits, but differed in that it referred to places or things in the landscape rather than only to supernatural agents without corresponding empirical counterparts.

**Proto-Finnic Loans after the Vowel Shift**

Vocabulary borrowed from Proto-Finnic can be distinguished according to whether it was borrowed before or after the Great Sámi Vowel Shift. Two Proto-Finnic loans listed as related to religion and beliefs by Lehtiranta have closely related semantics:

(7) *hävtē* (*§68*) (hävdi)
   ‘grave, hole’

(8) *kälme* (*§353*) (gälbmi)
   ‘grave’

Both loans are linked to the materiality of practices related to death. Proto-Sámi *häuser* ['grave, hole'] corresponds to the common Finnic term for ‘grave’ as a physical hole in the ground in which one is buried (~ Fi. hauta ['grave, hollow, hole']). Proto-Sámi *kälme* corresponds to the more dynamic concept of forces and (physical) locations associated with death and its supernatural connotations (~ Fi. kalma ['place of the dead, force of death']). Whereas terms for supernatural beings like *rävke* and *stälō* may simply accumulate in a language, these terms suggest either the replacement of existing terminology or the assimilation of the terms with new concepts and/or practices surrounding the dead that may have eventually displaced alternatives. These are the only terms identified by Lehtiranta as Common Proto-Sámi vocabulary related to locations of death.27

Three additional loans from Late Proto-Finnic can be mentioned:

(9) *heanja* (*§235*) (heagga)
   ‘breath; spirit’

(10) *vaimo* (*§1345*) (váibmu)
   ‘marrow; heart’

(11) *tävte* (*§1238*) (dávda)
   ‘illness, malady’

*Heanja* is a loan from Late Proto-Finnic (~ Fi. henki ['breath; spirit']); *vaimo* has cognates in Finnic and Mordvin languages: it is a soul-word linked to feeling and impulse, which in (North) Finnic became the word for ‘wife’ (~ Fi. vaimo). Although *vaimo* is commonly treated as an independent inheritance from Uralic (e.g. SSA III, s.v. ‘vaimo’), the first vowel does not exhibit the effects of the vowel shift and it must be considered a loan (Saarikivi 2009: 130), presumably from Proto-Finnic. Again, the two terms seem to be connected with a single semantic domain, although their significance remains somewhat ambiguous owing to both terms’ potential for semantic fluidity.

Vernacular models of illness generally fall within the purview of what would be considered the supernatural today. Proto-Sámi *tävte* potentially belongs to the same group (~ Fi. tauti ['illness, malady']), even if the significance of this loan remains ambiguous in the extreme. Taken together with *heanja* and *vaimo*, the three words suggest Proto-Finnic influence on vernacular physiology relevant to understanding bodily experiences, which presumably extend to the physiology of death.

Fi. henki and its cognates derive from Proto-Uralic (cf. SSA I, s.v. ‘henki’), while the etymology of hauta is traced to Proto-Germanic *saupa*- with its probable semantic fields of ‘pit, hole; well, spring’ (SSA I, s.v. ‘hauta”; LägLoS I, s.v. ‘hauta”). The Proto-Sámi loans have a *terminus post quem* of the changes /š/ > /h/, which was among the last changes marking the transition from Middle to Late Proto-Finnic (Kallio 2007: 237). This
transition is currently considered to be at roughly the same time as the transition to Proto-Scandinavian (ca. AD 200; see e.g. Schalin 2014: 405, Table 1), even if the chronologies of Finnic and North Germanic languages should not be considered to coincide exactly.28 According to this chronology, the loans would not have been earlier than the 3rd century AD.

The loanwords of the semantic fields of this vocabulary can also be contrasted with those of Scandinavian origin. The shared semantic domain of *hāvtē and *kālmē seems more likely to reflect Proto-Finnic influence connected with death and burial rather than the two loans being independent. The corresponding shared semantic domain of *heaŋke and *vājmō is also noteworthy, although they do not correspondingly both connect to a common area of practices (which for *hāvtē and *kālmē extend to the construction of the landscape).

As vocabulary connected with the semantic sphere of ‘souls’, however, it is possible that these loans became established in connection with religious concepts such as what happens to an individual’s identity at death, or related to the power, agency and supernatural activity of a ritual specialist like a shaman. When one of a shaman’s primary roles in a community is the maintenance of health, *tāvte would also presumably connect with these roles. *Tāvte could complement existing vocabulary no less than accumulating words for ‘monster’. Although core vocabulary seems like it would be more resilient to innovation, the Proto-Sámi vocabulary for the physical body leaves it open to question whether words for imaginal aspects of the body – ‘souls’ – may also have spread through dispersed language networks.

The spread of *mānō shows that even words for prominent cosmological features could spread through those networks. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that *hāvtē and *kālmē would have spread independently of both one another and also of related concepts or practices. A possibility that seems still less likely when the words group with terms for ‘souls’ and ‘illness’ rather than with a more varied range of words connected with religion and belief.

The clustering observed in these Finnic borrowings is more striking when considered in relation to the history of Finnic languages, which seems unlikely to have had extensive geographical reach in the Proto-Scandinavian period. This situation may have changed with the transformation to trade networks in the second half of the 6th century (see Tvauri 2014: 44–47 and works there cited). However, changes in patterns of borrowing into Proto-Sámi by that time (Aikio 2012) may be an indicator that its vocabulary had become more stable (see also Frog & Saarikivi 2014/2015: 107). The Proto-Finnic vocabulary borrowed into Proto-Sámi seems to exhibit a fairly tight semantic clustering in vocabulary that seems less open to free renewal. When this is considered in relation to the contact history with Proto-Finnic, it seems most likely that both loanword vocabulary related to burial and to vernacular physiology entered Proto-Sámi at an earlier stage and were carried with the language rather than entering later and spreading pervasively through Proto-Sámi dialects.29

According to this hypothesis, the terminus post quem of *hāvtē and *heaŋke makes the most likely scenario that the borrowings occurred during or immediately prior to the first stages of Proto-Sámi’s expansion and were carried with it. The window for the loans is thus fairly limited. If this chronology is correct, it increases the probability that *heaŋke was borrowed in the same processes that produced loans related to places of the dead, and perhaps also of *vājmō. What these processes may have been is a mystery, but they collectively suggest a significant Proto-Finnic impact on at least an area of religious life of speakers of Proto-Sámi at roughly the time it began to spread. The terminus post quem of such vocabulary also adds to the indicators of the rapidity of Proto-Sámi’s spread.30

**Proto-Finnic Loans into Pre-Sámi**

The third term that Lehtiranta identifies as a Finnic loanword connected with religion and beliefs was borrowed already into Pre-Sámi:

(12) *pearkele* (§914) (beargalat)

‘evil spirit, devil’

The noun *pearkele* [‘devil’] is semantically similar to the Scandinavian loans above but differs in that the Finnic term (~ Fi. perkele [‘devil’]) is prominent in legends and mythology of the source language as an adversary of the thunder-god and later of the Christian God. The Finnic term is itself considered an early
Baltic loan of the name of the thunder god (~ Lit. Perkūnas) (SSA II, s.v. ‘perkele’). Borrowing the name of a positive god from another group and presenting it as the adversary of one’s own sky-god is a strategy of mythic discourse that is recurrently found in Uralic mythologies (Ajkhenvald et al. 1989: 157). However, this strategy was quite remote from the term’s spread with Proto-Sámi, where it seems to have been a common noun without a connection to distinct belief traditions.31

Another term for ‘luck’ can also be added here, although it is etymologically problematic:

(13) *vuorpē (§1463) (vuorbi)  
‘lot, luck’

Proto-Sámi *vuorpē, equivalent to Fi. arpa [‘lot, luck’], appears to go back to Pre-Sámi. The word has customarily been viewed as belonging to a common Finno-Sámic language period and would have been carried with Proto-Sámi spread. The Sámi and Finnic terms are phonologically and semantically equivalent. They are commonly considered a loan from Proto-Germanic, although the Germanic term concerns especially material ‘shares’ of inheritance rather than abstract or supernatural ‘luck’.32 If the Germanic origin is accepted, the semantic equivalence of the Sámi and Finnic terms could be explained by the loan being mediated to Pre-Sámi via Proto-Finnic. If both terms are treated as independent borrowings from Proto-Germanic, the implication would be that the word’s meaning in the source language was closer to these loans than to its later Germanic cognates. In either case, this word could reflect understandings of the supernatural transmitted in conjunction with Proto-Sámi language. In this case, however, it becomes impossible to determine whether such understandings would have merely been encoded in the vocabulary or would reflect a broader conceptual system.

(West) Uralic Vocabulary

Five of the terms linked to religion and belief by Lehtiranta are identified as having cognates in Finnic and other Uralic languages without being identified as loans of one sort or another. Three of these are clearly connected with shamanism (problems of defining ‘shamanism’ and comparison of Sámi shamanism with Central and Northern Eurasian or ‘classic’ shamanism will be left aside until the review of Common Proto-Sámi vocabulary is completed):

(14) *noajtē (§739) (noaidi)  
‘shaman, sorcerer’
(15) *koamtē (§473) (goavdi)  
‘shaman drum; cover’
(16) *keavrē (§398) (geavri)  
‘hoop, ring, shaman drum’

Proto-Sámi *noajtē is considered to have cognates in Finnic (e.g. Fi. noita [‘witch, sorcerer, shaman’]) and Mansi languages (Southern / Tavdin näjt, Eastern / Konda näjt, Western / Pelym näjt-kum, Northern / Soswa näjt [‘shaman’]); Mikhail Zhivlov (2014: 137) has recently identified a potential cognate in Ezra Mordvin: nud’ie- [‘to tell fortunes’]. The word is generally believed to derive from Proto-Uralic *nojta, referring to a shaman who uses a drum and ecstatic trance techniques (Haavio 1967: 313–314; Rédei et al. 1986–1988: 307–308; UEW #602 FU ‘nojta’). The vowel in the Mansi terms is slightly irregular and could thus be of independent origin (Janhunen 1986: 109–110).33 Terms for ritual specialist roles can exhibit long-term historical stability, but they identify social roles linked to frameworks of practices and potentially with religious identities. As a consequence, they are salient for borrowing in contacts related to religious change and confrontation (see also Tadmor 2009). In his review of vocabulary connected with shamanism in Uralic languages, Juha Janhunen (1986: 113) found that terms for ‘shaman’ are only reconstructable to proto-languages within a few branches of the Proto-Uralic family; he considers it improbable, albeit not impossible, that a Proto-Uralic term for ‘shaman’ would be preserved.

In Sámi languages, the word noaidi’s semantic field included different types of ritual specialists. At least in later material, the shaman who used a drum and went into trance-states was considered the most powerful type of noaidi. The term noaidi, however, seems to have referred generally to the social role of someone who ritually engages with supernatural beings and powers rather than to a particular technology for doing so; and its use was more recently expanded to include a European meaning of ‘witch’ (see Rydving 1987). The mobile hunting cultures that underwent shifts to Proto-Sámi can be assumed to have had
established ritual practices and specialists. The semantic flexibility of later noaidi and its cognates suggests any comparable specialist would be referred to as a *noajtē in Proto-Sámi. The term therefore cannot be considered an indicator that a ritual specialist institution of shamanism spread with Proto-Sámi.

Lehtiranta identifies two terms with ‘shaman drum’, but both appear to have had other primary semantics. Proto-Sámi *koamte is a term for a covering that has cognates in several West Uralic languages (~ Fi. kansi [‘cover, lid’], Mordvin kunda [‘id.’], Mari komošš [‘id.’], Komi šin-kud [‘eye-lid’]; UEW #1330, PF ‘koma’). The meaning ‘drum’ appears to be a metonymic derivative of reference to the drum’s skin. Finno-Karelian languages used kannus, a potential derivative of this term, for ‘shaman drum’ (SKES I, s.v. ‘kannus 2’; Haavio 1967: 297–302), which could have evolved through Sámi contacts. The term *keavre only exhibits cognates in North Finnic (~ Fi. käyrä [‘a curve, bend’]) and its use for ‘drum’ seems likely a corresponding metonymic derivative of the drum’s frame.34 The drum is an emblematic feature of classic shamanism (notably absent from Finno-Karelian practices, which underwent a transformation of religious technologies: see Frog 2013). However, the words could have been transferred to local material culture much as *noajtē might have been to an indigenous shaman. The metonyms could also be calques of other vernaculars. They cannot be considered indicators that either a material culture or technology of shamanism spread with Proto-Sámi.

Lehtiranta lists one term describing a performance behaviour that have been might be connected with ritual or religious practice:

(17) *vuolē (§1433) (vuolla)
‘song; to invoke, exorcise, curse’

Proto-Sámi *vuolē has cognates in North Finnic (~ Fi. vala [‘oath, vow’]) and probably Mordvin (~ val [‘word’]) (SSA III, s.v. ‘vala’). It was inherited from Pre-Sámi, potentially as a term for some (or any?) form of ritual verbal art with supernatural effects. However, it is unclear whether or in what way its semantics may have been affected during the spread and evolution of Proto-Sámi. The cognates suggest that *vuolē was perceived as a type of speech behaviour, and the North Finnic cognates support the possibility of some sort of ritual or supernatural connotation already in Pre-Sámi, but it is difficult to unravel the background of Proto-Sámi words for vocal performance.

The Common Proto-Sámi word for ‘sun’ also belongs to an earlier stratum of vocabulary:

(18) *peajvē (§905) (beaivi)
‘day, sun’

The term *peajvē is unambiguously related to the corresponding Finnic term (~ Fi. päivä [‘day, sun’]); comparisons with possible cognates in Komi and Khanty are ambiguous (SSA II: s.v. ‘päivä’; UEW #715 FU ‘päjwä’, and cf. #714 ‘päjä’). The sun was a central cosmological symbol that was ascribed agency in folklore and also linked to ritual (Karsten 1955: 30–33; Lundmark 1982: 13–56; Kulonen et al. 2005: 32–33). However, the sun is a prominent natural phenomenon connected with mythologies almost universally (Eliade 1958, Part III “The Sun and Sun-Worship”). Although cognates of this word appear as a supernatural agent, it is not clear that the word was transmitted in this connection. The fact that beaivi is a female being on the Scandinavian Peninsula and a male being on the Kola Peninsula (Lundmark 1982: 50; 1985; Kulonen et al. 2005: 32–33) suggests that the same word became identified with different conceptions of the sun in each region. On the other hand, Ernst Manker (1950: 62) observes that the sun appears to be prominently represented on all Sámi drum-types and there are regional differences in its representation, yet it is never presented with an anthropomorphic form (1950: 62–68; Lundmark 1982: 39–46). There are thus striking differences in traditions related to the sun in different regions, but also broad patterns that seem to extend across different regions. A critical review of evidence of the traditions related to the sun is needed with attention to regional differences.35 Nevertheless, the general impression of the evidence is that the term *peajvē spread with Proto-Sámi but was no more connected to the spread of associated religious concepts, beliefs and practices than *mänö.

Three additional terms warrant mention here although they remain extremely ambiguous:

(19) *peșē (§866) (básse)
‘sacred, holy’
Proto-Sámi *pesē and its Finnic cognate (~ Fi. pyhā) may have other Uralic cognates (Saarikivi 2007: 327–331), but concepts of ‘sacred’ are so common (e.g. Anttonen 2013: 14) that the spread of this word cannot be assumed to have communicated, rather than translated, the concept as Proto-Sámi spread.

Proto-Sámi *emēs has cognates in Finnic (~ Fi. ihme [‘wonder, miracle’]) and Ante Aikio (2015: 8–10) has recently identified cognates in Khanty (Proto-Khanty *jēm [‘religious or social taboo’], *jēməŋ [‘sacred’]). Aikio (2015: 9) also observes that the South and Ume Sámi forms have clearly been borrowed from more northerly Sámi languages. This word may have been connected to religious concepts or beliefs in Pre-Sámi, but it is not clear that these were maintained in Proto-Sámi’s spread. In later languages, the word appears simply as a label for what is other or unknown.

Proto-Sámi *jämē- has been argued to have cognates in Finnic and Komi languages that suggest it spread with Proto-Sámi, but the meaning ‘death’ would be a euphemism according to this etymology (Saarikivi 2007: 337; see also Koponen 2005: 154–155). It is then unclear whether the word spread with Proto-Sámi in the sense of ‘to die’ or if it developed this meaning through contacts with other languages and subsequently spread through Proto-Sámi dialects.

Proto-Sámi vocabulary shared with other Uralic languages exhibits words for categories associated with beliefs, mythology and ritual practices. These include fundamental categories of empirical experience such as ‘sun’ and ‘to die’ as well as socially constructed categories of ‘shaman’ and ‘sacred’. However, the spread of this vocabulary is not accompanied by evidence that Proto-Sámi conceptions, institutions and practices spread with them as opposed to being used as practical and potentially quite broad labels for local understandings of phenomena and local practices – i.e. pragmatic translations for intergroup communication.

**Vocabulary of Unknown Origin**

The picture is completed by considering Common Proto-Sámi terms of unknown origin. These include one of the most prominent and widely discussed words connected with Sámi religions:

(22) *siejtē (∗§1140) (sieidi)

‘sacrificial stone’

The term *siejtē is perhaps the most noteworthy among terms reviewed here because it refers to sites of ritual activity that allowed access to the unseen world. As such, it presents the possibility that Proto-Sámi may have spread with concepts about particular types of religiously significant site in the landscape. The term is not attested for South or Ume Sámi, i.e. in the southwest and adjacent part of the central-west religion region, but it is considered borrowed into Finnish place names even in southern Finland (Aikio 2007b: 172–173, 191–192). Distinguishing a Finnish borrowing of *siejtē from one of Proto-Sámi sijtē (∗§1130) (sija) [‘(Sámi) village’] is phonologically problematic, but a local form of *siejtē is likely behind toponyms for rock formations (see Aikio 2007b:191; 2009: 147). If *siejtē was current in souther Finland, it was likely also in Southwest Proto-Sámi but dropped out.

There is no consensus on this word’s etymology. The vowel combination *ie–ē indicates the word is a loan (Aikio 2012: 84). If borrowed before Proto-Sámi’s spread, *siejtē could have been carried in conjunction with practices for engaging with the unseen world and associated conceptions. If borrowed after Proto-Sámi had spread, it could be an indicator of practices and associated conceptions spreading through the extended language network. The practices and conceptions may have been subject to waves of transformation and reinterpretation, but they nevertheless seem to have a direct correlation with practices.

Loans of uncertain etymology include a term related to the material side of shamanic practice:

(23) *pelēmē (∗§856) (ballin)

‘beater for a shaman’s drum’

Lehtiranta only lists cognates of *pelēmē in Lule and Ter Sámi, while Pekka Sammallahti (1989: s.v. ‘ballin:m’) lists a North Sámi form. The limited attestations of this may simply be owing to limitations of the sources regarding
terminology for such a specific object. The beaters for Sámi shaman drums generally exhibit a common basic form (Manker 1938: 300–346), and they are found across regions with markedly different types of drum construction. Traditions of classic shamanism are characterized by cross-cultural isoglosses of individual features (e.g. Pavlinskaya 2001). Consequently, there is no reason to assume that this isogloss of drum beaters is linked to the spread of the noun *pelêmē with or through Proto-Sámi. Although *pelêmē appears linked especially to uses of the drum in technologies familiar to classic shamanism, it is not clear that the term spread in conjunction with that technology or particular practices.

One term of unknown origin groups with supernatural beings of legends and tales:

(24) *ācē (§29) (āhci)
‘groin, crotch; female troll-monster’

Itkonen (1976: 25–44) contextualizes the folklore associated with *ācē as belonging to the traditions of Northern Eurasian hunting cultures. Although the term connects with beliefs traditions, it could have spread through Proto-Sámi dialects in connection with narration.

Two additional words might be mentioned alongside the Proto-Finnic loan of *tāvte:

(25) *pākće̮s (§881) (bāvččas)
‘pain, ache’

(26) *tāłkkes (§1220) (dālkkas)
‘medicine, drug’

The word *pākće̮s was likely related to understandings of the body while *tāłkkes was potentially connected with some type or types of healing practice. However, the significance of these terms remains unknown.

The vocabulary of unknown etymology does not exhibit clear semantic groupings. The term *siejtē is of special interest because it connects directly with ritual practices. Nevertheless, so long as the etymologies remain unknown, it is impossible to determine whether these words were carried with the spread of Proto-Sámi or passed through the language networks later.

**Overview of Common Proto-Sámi Religious Vocabulary**

Most of the twenty-six terms surveyed fall into distinct groups, which will be reviewed here before discussing their general implications. It is worth reiterating that ‘Common Proto-Sámi’ refers to vocabulary reconstructed for dialects with documented languages and may not be representative of dialects of Finland and Karelia. The words *emēs [*‘strange’], *pelêmē [*‘drum-beater’] and *siejtē [*‘sacrificial stone’] lack evidence in South and Ume Sámi, and thus may have already been absent from Southwest Proto-Sámi. *Sāvyje lacks a cognate in Ume and its referent in South Sámi differs considerably from cognates in other Sámi languages, leaving its history in the Southwest dialect unclear.

**Cosmology (2 words)**
The Uralic or West Uralic term (18) *peajvē [*‘day, sun’] spread with Proto-Sámi. Although the sun seems to have been of religious and ritual significance throughout Sámi language areas, variation in the sun’s gender makes it questionable whether the mythic identity of the sun spread with language. The word *mănō [*‘moon’] is a Proto-Scandinavian loan that spread through Proto-Sámi language networks after their geographic dispersal. It is not clear that it spread with any beliefs or practices related to the moon. Neither *peajvē nor *mănō seem to support a correlation between the spread of Proto-Sámi language and religious concepts or practices connected with cosmology. The example of *mănō makes the negotiation of a Common Proto-Sámi lexicon appear to have potentially been largely independent of religion.

**Shamanism (5 words)**
Three of the eight terms considered Uralic or West Uralic in origin are linked to shamanism. Only (14) *noajtē [*‘shaman’] can be considered to have spread in this capacity. However, the term’s use suggests that it was semantically quite flexible and inclusive rather like Modern English priest or shaman. Associations of (15) *koamī [*‘shaman drum; cover’] and (16) *keavve [*‘hoop, ring, drum’] with shamanism seem to have been secondary and are not uniform across Sámi languages. West Uralic (17) *vuolē [*‘song; to invoke, curse’] refers to a performance practice, but it remains unclear whether the connection to magic or ritual developed during language spread; nor is it clear that the word was associated with ‘shamanism’. The word (23) *pelêmē [*‘drum-
beater’], of uncertain origin, is linked to the materiality of shamanic practices. Only two of these words, *noajtē* and *pelēmē* belong unambiguously to the Common Proto-Sámi vocabulary of shamanism: it is not clear that the latter spread with Proto-Sámi, while the former seems not to have been specific to any particular practice or practitioner.

Delimiting the Supernatural (4 words)
The Uralic or West Uralic word (19) *pesē* ['sacred, holy'] was likely connected with delimiting spaces and times as religiously significant. However, the concept is so common that the word may quite possibly have been transferred to local concepts in Proto-Sámi’ spread. Etymologically, the word (20) *emēs* ['strange'] could have entailed a concept parallel to *pesē*, but it may have lost connotations of the sacred in the process of Proto-Sámi spread if not before.

Two words stand out because they structure the supernatural in the landscape. The Proto-Scandinavian loan (2) *sāvje* was most likely encountered as a common noun for a body of fresh water. For reasons unknown, it became linked to supernatural concepts within the Proto-Sámi language network. The diversity of phenomena with which it is identified in different Sámi languages suggests that, rather than spreading with a uniform concept or practices, speakers applied *sāvje* as a term within local religion formations. It seems unlikely that *sāvje* ever designated a uniform concept or phenomenon across Proto-Sámi dialect areas. The word (22) *siejtē* refers to a focus of ritual activity which is identified as a physical site for engaging in communication with the supernatural world. This word seems to be the only lexical item reviewed with a strong probability of spreading in conjunction with religious concepts and practices. Since *siejtē* seems to be a loan into Proto-Sámi, however, it is unclear whether the term and connection with ritual or religious practices was established early and spread with the language or spread later through the dialect continuum.

The Bear (1 word)
The Proto-Scandinavian loan *piernē* ['bear'] could link to naming-avoidance and thus reflect taboos or concerns about how bears were referred to. This would be consistent with later traditions of bear ceremonialism among the Sámi, but such traditions of the bear are so common that it does not indicate traditions related to bears spread with Proto-Sámi.

Burial and ‘Souls’ (5 words)
This set includes the Late Proto-Finnic loans (7) *hāvtē* ['grave, hole'], (8) *kālmē* ['grave'], (9) *heanjē* ['breath; spirit'] and (10) *vājmō* ['marrow; heart'] as well as the potentially Uralic or West Uralic *jāmē* ['-to die']. These five terms are potentially all semantically central vocabulary that would be more resistant to exchange, even if such words were not exempt from the negotiation of a Common Proto-Sámi vocabulary. This group accounts for four of the five addressed Late Proto-Finnic loans, to which the fifth, (11) *tāvte* ['illness, malady'], addressed in the following section, can also be potentially linked through connection to vernacular physiology. Any clustering could be accidental. However, it potentially includes all of the Late-Proto-Finnic loans reviewed while constituting almost 20% of the total vocabulary reviewed – two factors that reduce the likelihood of coincidence. (The development in the semantics of the inherited term *jāmē*-could also relate to this cluster, although evidence is lacking.) That there are two terms related to the materiality of burial is particularly striking. This vocabulary seems to reflect Proto-Finnic impacts on practices related to death and conceptions of the soul.

Historically, it seems most probable that these impacts preceded significant spread of Proto-Sámi. Once established, the terms linked to burial and death would presumably be used categorically and transferred to new contexts. This model would be consistent with long-term continuities in the archaeological record and the corresponding lack of evidence for new mortuary practices and relevant conceptions spreading once the dialect continuum had been established. The vocabulary cluster seem much less likely to be linked to a spread of practices in conjunction with Proto-Sámi. Terms related to vernacular physiology may have been to some degree encoded with the concepts and symbols to which they referred. The spread of the vocabulary may thus have had some impact on local conceptions. Nevertheless, their impacts on local categories and conceptions should not be exaggerated as religion per se.
Illness, Luck and Medicine (5 words)
In pre-modern environments, disruptions to the body such as illness or injury interfaced with vernacular models of physiology. Vernacular physiology engaged a mythic level of thought concerning the body and how it works. This brings the remaining Late Proto-Finnic loan (11) *tävei [‘illness, malady’] into alignment with the cluster related to death and physiology above, grouping also with (25) *pääkēs [‘pain, ache’], of uncertain etymology.

In Western societies today, physical disorders are clearly distinguished from social disorders like difficulty getting married or supernatural disorders like being cursed. In pre-modern societies, our scientifically-based distinctions between physical, social and supernatural fields do not hold: a healer can be visited to restore lost ‘luck’; physical illness can be interpreted as an outcome of curse of another supernatural agency. The word (26) *tālkke̮s [‘medicine’], of uncertain etymology, may also belong to the same sphere.

All five words in this section could have been relevant to ritual specialists. They also belong to categories that easily increase in vocabulary. In other words, there can be many words for ‘pain’, ‘illness’, ‘medicine’ or even ‘luck’ that make meaningful distinctions.

Supernatural Agents of Legends (4 words)
Four words designate supernatural agents of chaos or harm that are characters of legends and tales. The Proto-Finnic loan (12) *pearke̮le̮ is has a long history but emerges as only a general term for ‘evil spirit, devil’. The Proto-Scandinavian loan (3) *rāvke̮ seems to have spread in conjunction with a specific concept, presumably in connection with narrative traditions. The roots of the Proto-Scandinavian loan (4) *stālō are unclear, but this word seems to have developed considerably and spread widely within the Proto-Sámi language networks, again in connection with narrative traditions. The being called (24) *ācē appears to be particularly connected with Northern Eurasian hunting cultures and similarly spread through the Proto-Sámi language networks, although with an independent origin. All four categories of supernatural beings named in the Common Proto-Sámi lexicon are adversaries of society, agents of chaos. With the possible exception of *pearke̮le̮, they are entities of narrative discourse, not objects of ritual, prayer and other religious activities.

Gaps in the Common Proto-Sámi Lexicon
Theonyms are conspicuously lacking from this inventory. This absence is more pronounced when Proto-Sámi retains cognates of the probable name of the Proto-Uralic sky god *Ilma [‘Sky’] as a common noun with no indication of its use as a theonym:39

(27) *elmē (§12) (albmī)
‘sky’

Uralic languages generally exhibit a historical pattern of semantic correlation that leads the phenomenon ‘sky’ to correspond to the theonym of the sky-god (Frog 2017). Proto-Sámi (less likely Pre-Sámi) seems not only to have lost the probable theonym *Elmē: it also exhibits another term which equally lacks a corresponding theonym:

(28) *ājmō (§37) (ābmnu)
‘sky, world, weather’

There is no consensus on the etymology of *ājmō. It has been approached as from a Pre-Sámi language phase with a cognate in Finnic (~ Fi. *aimō [‘great; real’]) or as a Proto-Scandinavian loan (~ ON heímr [‘abode; region; village; world’]).40 In either case, the noun for the phenomenon does not exhibit a corollary theonym,41 suggesting that Proto-Sámi diverged from the Uralic pattern of correlating the noun with the name of a corresponding god.

The central west and northwest religion regions exhibit an identification of the thunder god with derivatives of:

(29) *ājji (§32) (āddjā)
‘grandfather’

*Ājjē (~ Fi. ajjá [‘grandfather’]) appears in this use in Ume, Arjeplog, Lule, Inari, Kemi, and most North Sámi areas (Rydving 2010: 97–101). It is paralleled in designations for the thunder-god in Finnic cultures as ‘Grandfather’ (Fi. Ājja), ‘Old Man’ (Fi. Ukko), and so on.42
(The attribute of age is also built into the South Sámi theonym Hovrengaelies, where, gaellies is a word for ‘old man’).43 Proto-Sámi *äjjē may thus have been carried with the language as a way to designate the thunder god. However, the designation’s ambiguity would not necessarily require a change in the conception of the local god.

In the northeast religion region and in coastal North Sámi, the name of the thunder god and central sky god, Proto-Sámi *Tiermēs (Dierpmis) (Rydving 2010: 98–102), appears to be a loan from a Palaeo-European language (Aikio 2012: 84). This theonym is an indicator that a prominent feature of indigenous religion was maintained through the language shift.

Some vocabulary of the Common Proto-Sámi lexicon was interfaced with religious concepts, yet there is a general absence of terms for otherworldly agents of a cosmogony or cosmology that would likely be at the center of religious discourse and activities. The exceptions are words for the ‘sun’ and ‘moon’, the former having spread with the language and the latter a loan that spread through Proto-Sámi dialects; neither seems linked to a spread of ideas about these celestial bodies as agents.

The lack of lexical evidence for positive otherworldly agents and forces that could be connected with religious activity in Common Proto-Sámi, contrasts with words of diverse background for four types of negative agents. In other words, about 15% of the 26 potential words reviewed were terms for supernatural agents, none of which would be central to religious activity; instead, they are types of supernatural agents that people would mainly talk about, and which could complement and expand any local set of words for ‘monster’. On the other hand, the name of the main god in Northeast Proto-Sámi seems to have continuity from a linguistic-cultural group that underwent a language shift, which is counter-evidence to religion spreading with the language. Such gaps in lexical evidence are part of the context in which Common Proto-Sámi words like (14) *noajē ['shaman'] or (8) *kālmē ['grave'] must be considered.

Implications
A significant amount of information about the history of Sámi languages is encoded in the empirical data of the languages themselves. Proto-Sámi’s intensive contacts with both North Germanic or Scandinavian languages and Palaeo-European languages of Lapland concentrate in the period ca. AD 200–500. The Late Proto-Finnic loans related to burial and ‘souls’ (or at least *hevja ['breath, spirit']) seem most likely to have entered Proto-Sámi in conjunction with a process of changing practices and understandings of vernacular physiology rather than the words being borrowed independently of one another and their semantic grouping being coincidental. It was proposed above that the assimilation of terms most probably occurred prior to, or at an early phase of, Proto-Sámi’s spread, when the speech community or network was still relatively unified. If this is accepted, it implies that Proto-Sámi had not spread from southern Finland and Karelia before these loans, which can be dated to around or after AD 200 according to the phonetic shapes of *hāvtē [‘grave’] and *hevja. Although this does not indicate that practices and understandings linked to the words spread to the Kola and Scandinavian Peninsulas, it suggests a terminus post quem of ca. the 3rd century AD for Proto-Sámi’s spread through Finland and Karelia. This dating is complementary to the 3rd century AD as a terminus post quem for intense contacts with both Proto-Scandinavian and indigenous languages of Lapland. When evidence of the Great Sámi Vowel Shift suggests Proto-Sámi was initially spoken by a relatively small speech community, the geographical reach of this language seems to have exploded over a relatively short period of time.

The extent of vocabulary exchange in the Proto-Sámi language network (at least at its geographical peripheries of Scandinavia and Lapland) indicates the role of this language in communication across extended networks. The fact that loans included core vocabulary suggests that trans-community intelligibility across the full area was sufficiently significant that all vocabulary was open to negotiation, at least for some period of time. Nevertheless, there seems to be a general lack of linguistic evidence for a common religion and mythology shared across this network, even if there were shared nominal categories like ‘shaman’ and ‘sacred’.
It is unclear whether the category *siejtē* spread with the language, like the Late Proto-Finnic vocabulary linked to burial and ‘souls’, or spread later through the dialect continuum. In either case, *siejtē* appears exceptional because it probably spread in conjunction with an innovation to religious practices. This innovation may have only been an element of religion shared across communities rather than a spread of ‘religion’ as a complex system more pervasive in organizing social life.

Rather than Proto-Sámi spreading with religion – and by implication with ‘Proto-Sámi culture’ as social semiotic – the linguistic evidence appears more consistent with Proto-Sámi spreading at least initially as a medium of communication for extended networks of culturally distinct groups. This would not mean that it spread without any concepts or practices connected with religion. Instead, whatever may have been carried with it or spread later through those networks would more likely have been taken up into local and regional religion formations that could have remained quite diverse in other respects.

Of course, Proto-Sámi language spread via people, and those people doubtless had religious ideas, practices and a broader religious register of behaviour. We lack knowledge on the social side of the language’s spread. Proto-Sámi-speaking populations that moved to the Kola and Scandinavian Peninsulas or became active there in long-distance mobility may have been relatively few. Once their language became established and other groups began undergoing language shifts, their own religion and culture may have simply been eclipsed. Or the language’s success as a medium for inter-group communication might derive from an ideology of religious and cultural adaptability. Or Proto-Sámi might have become a language for inter-group communication before leaving Finland, carried to the peninsulas by people who had another primary language, culture and religion. Whatever happened, if it is roughly correct that Proto-Sámi spread primarily as a medium of inter-group communication, then this has a number of implications for the analysis of Sámi religions.

First of all, binary concerns of whether a feature of religion is ‘Sámi’ or ‘foreign’ must open to consider continuity of elements through a language shift. Theonyms and the identities of gods known on a localized basis such as *Ruto* could potentially have a non-Sámi heritage no less than *Tiermēs*. Non-linguistic behaviours may also have had continuity of local transmission through a language shift. Earlier research presumed that a continuity of material culture co-occurred with a continuity of language. This led medieval Sámi cultures to be traced in the archaeological record through continuities of “a coherent and roughly unified material repertoire” (Svestad 2013: 124) going back to the first and second millennium BC. Such continuities include so-called scree graves (urgraver), wrapping the deceased in birch bark and uses of metal objects. Language chronology reveals that these archaeological cultures must have undergone language shifts to Proto-Sámi, presumably during the Iron Age.

The significant differences in techniques or technologies for constructing drums should not be assumed to reflect a Common Proto-Sámi drum tradition that underwent great regional changes and innovations, nor should the regional differences in iconography (Manker 1938: 82–104, esp. Fig 67, 109–150, 447–838; see also Bertell 2017). These could reflect differences in the local heritage of indigenous groups that remained emblematic through the shift to Proto-Sámi of how ‘we’ make drums as opposed to how ‘they’ do. Of course, such aspects of material culture would continue to evolve through ongoing contacts between groups both before and after the language shift. Language is only one system of signifying behaviour, and other varieties of signifying behaviours might have continuity through language change.

The alternative model of language spread outlined here would also mean that Sámi religions cannot be assumed to reflect an Uralic heritage. In this light, uses of Sámi evidence in the comparative study of Uralic religions should require careful justification. For example, the conception found among Sámi that a shaman loses his power when he has lost his teeth (Rydving 2010: 82) has parallels in Nenets (Lehtisalo 1924: 166), Northern Selkups (Tuchkova et al. 2010: 249), Komi (Konokov et al. 2003: 310), and Finno-Karelian (Stark 2006: 280) traditions. It could thus be consistent with an Uralic heritage and may have spread with Proto-Sámi language. On the other
hand. Finno-Karelians, among whom this conception was prominent, were active in trade networks to the north in the Middle Ages and some immigrated into Lapland during that period. Proto-Sámi speakers could have adopted the concept through contacts with them. It is thus necessary to apply K.B. Wiklund’s (1916: 46) dictum that “one must here first and foremost seek to determine the source’s geographical provenance,” and combine it with a critical comparative method.

When Sámi languages are potentially spoken by multiple cultures that at some point began speaking Proto-Sámi language, generalizations of ‘(pan-)Sámi religion’ become highly problematic. Comparisons to Old Norse (e.g. Price 2002; Tolley 2009) or Finno-Karelian (e.g. Frog 2013) traditions require cautious assessment of ‘which’ Sámi religion formation is being considered or whether comparison is made with features found across religion formations. Proposing cross-cultural isoglosses of elements of ritual (Tolley 2009 I: 260) or mythology (Frog 2011) should similarly be more nuanced than they have been in the past. Propositions of influences on, or received from, ‘Sámi’ traditions (e.g. Unwerth 1911; Strömäck 2000 [1935]) should also consider whether parallels might reflect an indigenous culture behind these impacts.

If language shifts to Proto-Sámi allowed continuities of indigenous religions and ritual technologies, this could potentially shed light on the variations that seem to set ‘Sámi shamanism’ apart from other forms of classic shamanism. These variations have otherwise been interpreted as the result of a deterioration or breakdown in an inherited form of the tradition.47 The concept of ‘shamanism’ has been flexed in scientific and popular discourse to include phenomena on a global scale (e.g. Eliade 2004 [1964]), with the result that the label ‘shaman’ often seems more evaluative than informative (see also Rydving 2011). Central and Northern Eurasian or ‘classic’ shamanism (Siikala 1978) is a more specific if still broad areal phenomenon found across languages and cultures. It is not a religion; classic shamanism refers to a complex of features linked to ritual technologies, practices, conceptions of the body, relations of the specialist to agents and forces in the unseen world, cosmological structures and so forth (see e.g. Vajda 1958). This complex has evolved historically and exhibits numerous culture-specific manifestations. Comparable elements in compared traditions may thus be equivalent rather than identical.

A distinctive development of classic shamanism is the centralization of power and authority to mediate with the unseen world in the person of the shaman. One manifestation of this development is the so-called ‘cult of shamans’, whereby shamans could be elevated to the status of guardian spirits or gods (Hultkrantz 1995 [1993]: 149–151). The history of this development is unclear. The broader form of shamanism in which it emerged is considered to be rooted in small hunting societies and is generally accepted as having roots going back to the Palaeolithic period. Some form of classic shamanism is commonly inferred as part of an Uralic heritage.48 In either case it is inferred as probable for Pre-Sámi culture. On the other hand, the features that set apart forms of shamanism found among Sámi groups have been considered potentially more archaic from a broad comparative perspective. For example, the evidence can give the impression that “there was no proper boundary-line between the shamans and the laity” (Hultkrantz 1992: 140): men who were not formally shamans could use the drum; Sám shams lack formal costing; and everyone is imagined to have helping spirits rather than such supernatural support being exclusive to the shaman (Hultkrantz 1987; 1992).49 Northern Fennoscandia and the Scandinavian Peninsula are at the geographical periphery of the area of classic shamanism. It is therefore open to question whether the practices of indigenous groups in these territories were affected by the developments of classic shamanism. Interpreting of features of Sámi shamanism as more archaic than developments in classic shamanism would be anachronous if this shamanism is presumed to have an Uralic heritage. However, the same features would be reasonable for Palaeo-European groups of Lapland who began speaking Proto-Sámi language but retained their established structures of religion. By reconsidering the relationship between Sámi language and religion, old riddles like these can be approached in new ways.
This model also has another side that should not be overlooked. If Proto-Sámi spread without a full package of culture, it would presumably only be equipped for a limited range of linguistic behaviours and activities. Languages are not uniform, monolithic entities; they are constituted of multitudes of registers, each linked to repeatable practices and recurrent social situations (e.g. Halliday 1978; Agha 2007). Among the relatively small speech communities of mobile hunting and fishing cultures, multilingualism can be expected as a norm (e.g. Saarikivi & Lavento 2012). If Proto-Sámi spread centrally as a medium of communication leading it to become *de facto a lingua franca*, it would most likely coexist with the registers in local languages used for ritual, epic, entertainment and so forth. Local language shifts would lead this distribution of communicative labour to break down. Different practices would require the formation of metrical or functional Proto-Sámi equivalents or they would simply not survive the changing of generations as the old language became opaque (cf. Nenet epic performed in Komi motivated by language shift: Konakov et al. 2003: 65–66). There is no evidence of an epic poetry tradition in any Sámi language nor of a principle Proto-Sámi oral meter, nor even of a shared Proto-Sámi poetic system. Proto-Sámi seems to have had vocabulary for varieties of oral performance behaviours, including *vuolē* addressed above, *lávlō* (lālvut) [*to sing*] (§578) (borrowed from Proto-Finnic, ~ Fi. *lauaa* [*to sing*]) and *juojke̮* (juoigat) [*to yoik*] (§288) (etymology uncertain, as is its relationship to North Finnic cognates, ~ Fi. *joikua* [*to yoik*]). The verb *juojke̮* seems to designate a distinctive category and could reflect a practice that spread with Proto-Sámi language. Nevertheless, the word (and practice) could also have spread later, potentially in response to gaps left in verbal art following language shifts.

The question of registers of language might seem tangential, yet registers of verbal art associated with ritual practices and essential cultural knowledge become interfaced with different areas of vernacular mythology (see Frog 2015: 47–50). If Proto-Sámi did not spread with such registers, it is unlikely to have spread with a ‘Proto-Sámi mythology’ and ‘Proto-Sámi religion’. At the same time, language shifts to Proto-Sámi would entail a discontinuity of such indigenous registers. Thus, language shifts would produce significant disruptions and transformations in the communication of orally transmitted knowledge within these groups.

**Rethinking Assumptions**

If Proto-Sámi may have spread primarily as a medium of communication, then a Common Proto-Sámi culture as social semiotic cannot be taken as a given: it must be tested and critically reassessed. The preceding discussion has argued grounds for the theory that Proto-Sámi spread as a medium of communication. Focus was on the rate and geographical scope of language spread in relation to the lack of internal linguistic evidence that language spread with corollary religious practices and mythology. The arguments have not demonstrated that no complex religious system accompanied the spread of Proto-Sámi language, nor was that the aim. The aim was to problematize the fundamental research assumption that Proto-Sámi language spread in conjunction with a full complex of culture and ethnic identity. The theory outlined here presents an alternative model that appears to reasonably account for the data. It can now be further explored and tested against a wider range of evidence. It may eventually be found that Proto-Sámi did spread with a significant package of culture, of which a *siejtē* tradition was only one element. On the other hand, the toponym *Tiermēs* indicates, at the very least, religious creolization. The review of evidence here illustrates that imaging that Proto-Sámi spread ‘with culture’ or ‘without culture’ easily inclines to binary extremes of either/or whereas the reality – whatever it may have been – was most likely somewhere in between.

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Notes
1. These materials are covered in the discussion of Valtonen 2008.
2. A theory of a language shift was advanced more than a century ago by K.B. Wiklund; on this and related discussions, see Aikio 2004: 6–7; 2012: 80–81.
3. Lehtiranta reconstructs to the period described in the terminology that he uses as ‘Middle Proto-Sámi’ (keskikänatalaiseame) whereas Aikio’s ‘Proto-Sámi’ corresponds more closely to the ‘Late Proto-Sámi’ in Lehtiranta’s terminology. The main difference is that Lehtiranta follows the earlier standard practice of presenting *g̈ for *uo, long bottom-open o (not available in most electronic fonts) for *oa, *e̞ for *ie and *e̞ for *ea in stressed-syllables (cf. Kroonen 1981: 76). I very much appreciate Juha Kuokkala’s assistance in navigating the differences in terminology used by these and other scholars, as well as how the different terms get related to the chronology of specific phonological changes.
4. E.g. Sammallahti 1998; see also the review of models of Uralic language stemmas in Syrjänä et al. 2013; this view seems, however, to be rapidly changing: see e.g. Saarikivi 2011; Zhitlov 2014; Kallio 2015a.
5. Jorma Koivulehto (2001: 239–247) has discussed an extremely early group of Indo-European loans, of which a significant proportion are attested only in Sámi languages (see also Sammallahti 2012: 99; cf. Kallio 2009). The number of relevant etymologies is limited, but if Koivulehto’s interpretation is accepted, it would suggest a very early separation of Fennic and Sámi from a dialect of Proto-Uralic (Aikio 2012: 75–76).
7. The customary semantics attributed to the Germanic source word relate it to ‘bog ore’ (~ ON raúði [‘bog ore’], cf. raðbar [‘red’]) (e.g. Viitso 2012: 189); a more compelling proposal is that EPG *raudan- was also the earlier word for ‘iron’ and was then replaced by the Proto-Celtic *isarno- [‘iron’] → EPG *isarna- ~ *isarna- [‘iron’] (Kallio 2015a: 30; see also Kroonen 2013: 271, s.v. *isarna- ~ *izarna-).
8. The dating of this loan is problematic. The word could have been borrowed already with the introduction of iron objects before the introduction of iron-working technologies (Kallio 2015a: 30).
9. Aikio designates this the ‘east dialect’, but his designations consider surviving descendants of Proto-Sámi dialects. The terminology here allows for labelling additional Proto-Sámi dialects that, in the future, may be distinguished through toponymy and other loanword vocabulary.
10. Swedish toponymy with the element Lapp- seems to indicate that mobile groups were active both in the archipelago of southwest Finland during the medieval period (Heikkilä 2014: 316) and in roughly adjacent areas of Sweden, whence they spread to the north and inland (Zachrisson et al. 1997: 187). The macro-toponym Finländ also suggests Scandinavians earlier identified the populations of Southwest Finland on the trans-Baltic route with the mobile groups they called Finnar (see Frog & Saarikivi 2014/2015: 81–82). (See also Olsen 1995; Zachrisson et al. 1997; see Salo 2000; Zachrisson 2008.
11. Rydving’s regions were designated: southern, central, northern and Kemi Saami.
12. The formulation of the axiom is Kristiansen’s (2009: 115–116), earlier presented as one of several “assumptions” in an argument about Proto-Indo-European spread that is not relevant here.
13. In his discussion of radical changes in Scandinavian ritual practices during the Migration Period, Andreas Nordberg (2012) stresses that these most likely reflects reconfigurations within existing mythologies and broader religious frameworks. The changes mentioned in Proto-Sámi are primarily to have affected social organization, and thus may have only impacted particular social domains and practices.
14. The purpose in this article is to open the question of whether Proto-Sámi language spread in conjunction with religion. For the sake of discussion, Lehtiranta’s etymologies are accepted without detailed review. Most important here are the items of Proto-Sámi vocabulary themselves.
15. Centrality is conceived of in terms of the number of interdependencies which would be affected within a system if it were to change (see Converse 1964).
16. Some of the examples listed by Lehtiranta as having Finnic cognates are identified here as loans because they have not been affected by the Great Sámi Vowel Shift (e.g. *vajmá below)
17. See also Sammallahti 2012: 102; such languages are perhaps impossible to unravel from the toponymy.
18. This definition is adapted from Valk 2012: 23.
21. Lid 1933: 61–62; cf. ONP, s.v. *stáli’; cf. Cleasby & Vigfusson 1896: 589, s.v. *stálí’; de Vries 1961: 542, s.v. *stálí’, Kroonen 2013: 472, s.v. *stála-’, 472–473, s.v. *stalla-’, 475, s.v. *stálí’, ON stálí is only attested as a name epithet (four examples in ONP, s.v. *stáli’); although stáli may have resonated with stál [‘steel’], there are not corresponding uses of jarn [‘iron’] to form a name epithet or term for ‘man’. The statement in Kulonen et al. (2005: 408) that, “It has not been possible to establish the origin of the word stálí with any certainty,” seems exaggerated.
22. E.g. the epithets bjálki [‘rafter’], dettiáss [‘thud-beam’], skjökull [‘cart-pole’], stafir [‘staff’] and stóng [‘pole’] (Uckelman 2011). These epithets may have carried sexual connotations.
23. The most striking of these has been comparison with a Sámi Christmas mumming tradition in northern Norway where stállu is the term (or part of the term) for the otherworld visitor (see also Itkonen 1976: 14; Gunnell 1995: 105). However, Lid’s comparisons are limited by the methodology of his time. They are problematic because: a) the review of stállu traditions
is selective, bringing forward positive comparisons without situating these in the broader range of stållu traditions; b) it does not consider whether the term stållu may have been identified with these traditions after ca. AD 500; c) it does not open the implication that stållu would have been borrowed potentially in conjunction with a network of traditions related to Yule tide, or d) whether it is reasonable to suggest that e.g. Christmas mumming would be a tradition among mobile groups before ca. AD 500.

24. The lack of medieval evidence for a supernatural being called ståli in Old Norse would then be largely a result of the term taking root in Icelandic tradition. The absence of evidence of ståli from poetry is ambiguous (cf. risi ['giant'], exceptional in poetry). Hypothetically, ståli could have also been misidentified as stålu, the genitive plural of stål ['steel'].

25. The observation above that the language ecology on the Scandinavian Peninsula seems to have supported initial consonant clusters beginning with /s/ does not resolve which languages were present.

26. Bear ceremonialism has been considered to have Palaeolithic roots: see Janhunen 2003; Germanpré & Hämäläinen 2007; Witzel 2012: 243–244, 399–400.

27. Lehtiranta also reconstructs *sormē (sormi) ['untimely death'] (§1152), generally accepted as a Finnic loan (~ Fi. surma ['(untimely) death'], attested with cognates in northeast and northwest Proto-Sámi. Phonologically, this word gives the superficial impression of having undergone the vowel shift and thus as having been borrowed already in Pre-Sámi, but it is considered a case of 'etymological nativization' (Aikio 2007a: 26).

28. I would like to thank Johan Schalin for discussing this issue with me.

29. The alternative scenario would require accounting for the pervasive spread of two terms related to ‘grave’ across diverse Proto-Sámi cultural areas although these do not exhibit uniformity or convergence of burial practices in the archaeological record on a corresponding scope.

30. The borrowing of the Finnic word for ‘god’ (Fi. & Kar. jumala) is found throughout the Sámi languages (e.g. Lule jümel, Kildin jumel, North Sámi jumel). Cognates are attested in South, Ume, Pite, Lule, North, Inari, Skolt, Akkala, Kildin and Ter Sámi (Álgu Database, Language: Finnish, Word family: jumala). The sound change of Finnic diphthong ju- is irregular, suggesting the word is a younger loan (Korhonen 1981: 83). It becomes ju-fjú- in South, Ume, Pite and Lule Sámi on the Scandinavian Peninsula, i- in North, Inari and Skolt Sámi, and ji- in Akkala, Kildin and Ter on the Kola Peninsula. Lehtiranta does not reconstruct it as belonging to the Common Proto-Sámi vocabulary. The history of this word and its spread warrants detailed investigation, particularly with regard to whether it has entered some of these languages specifically in connection with Christianity.

31. For example, The Saami: A Cultural Encyclopaedia (Kulonen et al. 2005) does not include an entry for beargalat or ‘devil’, nor does the term appear under the entry ‘spirits’ (2005: 406–407).

32. See further LägLoS I, s.v. ‘arpa’; SKES I, s.v. ‘arpa’; SSA I, s.v. ‘arpa’; the word has been reconstructed back to Proto-Uralic through comparison with a word from Hungarian, but the vowel correspondence is irregular (UEW #25, FU ‘arpa’); an extremely early loan from Turkic has also been proposed (but cf. Janhunen 1986).

33. In his overview of the historical stratification of the lexicon of Sámi languages, Sammallahti (1998: 123) presents noaidi among terms that “date back to (at least) Proto-Finn-Ugrian” rather than to Proto-Finn- Ugric or Proto-Uralic (which he distinguishes). Kulonen et al. (2005: 244–245) suggest that if the words are related, the phonological irregularity could be an indication that the word spread laterally through language networks, but this remains speculation.

34. SSA only lists a meaning of ‘drum’ for South Sámi and ‘Sámi of Sweden’ in early sources; use for ‘drum’ may thus be relatively localized. An etymology from Pre-Indo-Iranian has been proposed by Koivolehto (2001: 249).

35. The female sun-being is found adjacent to Scandinavian culture and aligns with the northern Indo-European zone where the sun is identified as feminine, considered potentially attributable to substrate influence (West 2007: 195–196). A female deity has also been associated with the sun in Uralic cultures (Siikala 2002b). Traditions of a male sun-being on the Kola Peninsula stand apart from both of these.

36. This leads to an etymology from Proto-Uralic that renders moot the complex argument for an early Baltic loan (Aikio 2015: 9–10; cf. Sammallahti 1998: 126, 227).

37. Asko Parpola’s (2004) relatively recent etymology has been positively received. He argues that *siejtē is a borrowing of a Norwegian dialectal derivative of Old Norse seiðr ['sorcery'] with a terminus post quem of the 13th century (2004: 241–242). Phonologically, this is satisfying, but the semantic development ‘witchcraft, shamanism’ > *sieði sites’ requires an intermediate step connecting the Norwegian word to practices at sieði sites, for which there is no evidence. In terms of chronology, the settlement history of southern Finland would seem to require that the loan be established in Proto-Sámi dialects there almost immediately for *siejtē-based toponyms to be borrowed in areas where the mobile cultures were already retreating inland. Moreover, sieði sites were already in use by the 13th century (Äikäs 2011), which would mean the loan’s spread involved the rapid and widespread replacement of locally established words for these sites. The 13th century seems late for this loan. A Scandinavian etymology would also be inconsistent with other loans related to religious vocabulary.

38. In this case, variation in forms of the word in Finnish toponyms (Aikio 2007b: 190) might reflect its historical diversification in local dialects. When phonological evidence indicates the word was borrowed into Proto-Sámi, continuity from before or early in the language’s spread could also be relevant.
to potential etymologies. An etymology of *siejtē that relates it to Late Middle Proto-Finnic *siitte (~ Fi. hiisi) would thus date it to between the Great Sámi Vowel Shift and the shift from /š/ to /h/ in the transition to Late Proto Sámi (ca. AD 200). Historically, hiisi sites were places associated with death and ritual engagements with supernatural powers (e.g. Bergsland 1964; Koski 1990: 434–435; Anttonen 2013: 26–28). If Middle Proto-Sámi *siitte and Proto-Sámi are related, *siejtē would have spread with Proto-Sámi, but the etymology requires postulating ad hoc sound changes or hypothesizing involvement of a third, unknown language.  

39. For a full discussion of this topic with a review of the evidence, see Frog 2017: §1; cf. Rédei et al. 1986–1988: 81.) An isolated cognate appears in a late borrowing of the (North?) Finnic form Ilmaris > North Sámi Ilmaris, attested in a 17th-century trial (Krohn 1915: 13–14; Rydving 2010: 48–49, 95) and Anders Fjellner presents a name Ilmar个国家 (Donner 1876: 84, also see 82 and note to line 195), which could reflect the same loan or an adaptation influenced by Finnish Ilmarinen learned from Kalevala (on which see also Lundmark 1979).  

40. SXA I: s.v. ‘aimo’; Sammallaha 1998: 227; Kuokkala 2016 and works there cited; Kuokkala suggests that the Finnic term could potentially have been borrowed from Sámi.  

41. Cf. also the early Germanic loan yielding Proto-Sámi *vērtō (fiēttā(g)) [‘clear weather’] (§1412) which again does not manifest as a theonym.  

42. In Finno-Karelian languages, see Harva 1948: 79–80; in Estonian, see Loomits 1949–1957 II: 6–10.  

43. The stem Horve- < ðör- [‘Thor’] is a post-syncope form; it could not have been borrowed much before the Viking Age at the earliest, though it could have been borrowed later. The theonym Hovregaellies is customarily interpreted as a borrowing of bórr karl [‘Old Man Thor’], but gaellies is a pre-syncope loan from an earlier period than Horve-. I have elsewhere argued that the loan of bórr would likely have undergone semantic correlation, becoming a common noun for ‘thunder’, and thus the genitive construction with Hovvre-n would likely have originally meant ‘Old Man of Thunder’ (Frog 2017).  


46. The Finno-Karelian and Komi traditions refer to vernacular ritual specialists who are not shamans in the classic sense but fill that role in society.  

47. E.g. Erich Kasten (1989) argues that shamans’ ineffectiveness during the Black Death and subsequent societal changes linked to reindeer pastoralism displaced this specialist role from earlier areas of activity and authority.  


49. The lack of a special costume and range of (male) members of the community who might use a drum can similarly be compared to the so-called ‘family shamanism’ of the Koryaks, which is also debated (e.g. Eliade 2004 [1964]: 252 and works there cited).  

50. Anders Fjellner (1795–1876) sought to fill this gap on the model of Elias Lönnrot’s epic Kalevala (1835; 1849), producing a few poems that were initially received as oral epic (Donner 1876; for discussion, see Lundmark 1979). Although these poems bring together a number of traditional elements, there does not seem to be any evidence that such stories circulated socially in a form or mode of expression that would be considered ‘epic’.  

51. The word could have been borrowed into the North Finnic languages or the corresponding dialect of Proto-Finnic from Proto-Sámi. However, the Proto-Sámi word can reconstruct to either a Pre-Sámi form *jojki- or *jaiki-; the former makes it possible that the term could belong to a shared vocabulary of the two language families, or that it was borrowed into Proto-Finnic at that stage. Use of the Finnic term generally seems encoded with cultural deixis: it is something that culturally ‘other’ (Sámi) people do. The word is also only found in the North Finnic languages to the north of the Gulf of Finland, which would be consistent with a loan. Yoik has an established tradition in Karelian language but only in the northern region of Viena (Frog & Stepanova 2011: 206–207), where Sámi groups had been gradually undergoing a shift in language and culture (e.g. Pöllä 1995). It is possible that yoiks were part of a Proto-Finnic heritage, but the relatively recent spread of Karelian through these regions makes it seem more probable that they are an outcome of cultural creolization.  

52. The Scandinavian loan *stālō, which probably simply meant something like ‘big guy’ in the source language, could thus simply have been a local word that superseded other local words in the communication network that lacked a shared word for ‘troll, ogre, giant’.  

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Forgotten *Laxdæla* Poetry: A Study and an Edition of Tyrfingur Finnsson’s *Visur uppá Laxdæla sögu*

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Abstract: The paper discusses the metre and the diction of a previously unpublished short poem composed in the 18th century about characters of Laxdæla saga. The stanzas are ostensibly in skaldic dróttkvætt. Analysis shows them to be a remarkably successful imitation of the classical metre, implying an extraordinarily good grasp of dróttkvætt poetics on the part of a poet who was composing several centuries after the end of the classical dróttkvætt period.

As early as the 12th century, an Icelander by the name of Haukr Valdisarson, otherwise unknown, composed verses praising the heroes of the sagas in the stanzas of his *Íslendingadrápa* [‘Encomium on Icelanders’] (Hughes 2008). The verses list over 27 Icelanders known to us through the *Íslendingasögur* [‘Sagas of Icelanders’]. The ending is lost – it could have included material on the Laxdæla heroes. Otherwise, it is not until the 16th century that stanzas inspired by the content and characters of *Laxdæla saga* [‘The Saga of the People of Salmon River Valley’] start to appear in manuscripts as appendices to the saga text. Þórður Magnússon á Strjúgi (ca. 1545–1610) is the first known Icelandic poet to compose a so-called *kappakvæði* [lit. ‘a poem about heroes’], a flexible poetic genre dedicated to praising/listing saga characters; Þórður’s poem includes stanzas in praise of Kjartan son of Óláfr (stanza 12) and Bolli son of Þorleikr (stanza 13), two of the principal *Laxdæla* characters. These panegyrics have been preserved only in late *Laxdæla* manuscripts, dating from the 17th and 18th centuries (Vanherpen 2012; 2015). All through the 17th century, scribes vigorously copied Þórður Magnússon’s stanzas word-for-word as a concluding piece to the saga text. These two stanzas from Þórður Magnússon’s *kappakvæði* were first edited and published by Jon Þorkelsson in his edition of the poem in the 4th volume of *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi (ANF)* in 1888 (Jon Þorkelsson 1888). In addition to his *kappakvæði*, Þórður’s celebrated *Fjösaríma* [‘The Cowshed Poem’] was also printed in this particular volume of ANF. In *Fjösaríma*, Þórður refers to *Laxdæla saga* in stanza 49, listing Kjartan Óláfsson among those heroes who never fought in a cowshed:

Kjartan spilla kunni hlíf,
karlmanns hafði sinni,
þegninn aldrei þreytti kíf
þar sem naut voru inni

…

(Jon Þorkelsson 1888.)

Kjartan knew how to break a[n enemy’s] shield, he was a popular man, the warrior never picked a quarrel at a place where cattle were kept …

New stanzas involving the heroes of *Laxdæla* appeared when, by the second half of the 17th century, poets and scribes started to write and create new *kappakvæði*. For example, a *kappakvæði* by Steinunn Finnsdóttir (ca. 1640 – ca. 1710) has two long stanzas on *Laxdæla saga* (JS 470 8vo, f. 343ff; Steinunn Finnsdóttir 1950: 116). Furthermore, other short praise poems were added to Þórður’s two stanzas as a companion piece to the saga text. Indeed, from the first half of the 18th century, there survives one such *kappakvæði* stanza jotted down by an anonymous scribe. In ÍB 45 fol. and TCD MS 2009 fol., the respective scribes copied an additional stanza on Kjartan Óláfsson (see ÍB 45 fol., f. 35v and TCD MS 2009 fol., f. 81v). Nearly half a century later, the anonymous scribe of Lbs 1212 4o added another stanza on Bolli Bollason to the two *kappakvæði* stanzas by Þórður Magnússon (Lbs 1212 4o, f. 101v).

Towards the middle of the 18th century, poets composed new *Laxdæla* character panegyrics very much in the same vein as Þórður Magnússon and Steinunn Finnsdóttir had. In Ms. 4° 126, a manuscript stored at the Nasjonalbiblioteket in Oslo, four anonymous poems called *Laxdæla hrós* [‘Laxdæla praise’] immediately follow the *Laxdæla saga* text (see Ms. 4° 126, pp. 169–170). The topics of these short poems are the saga’s characters Höskuldr
Dala-Kollsson, his illegitimate son Óláfr pái [‘The Peacock’], the latter’s son Kjartan, and Kjartan’s half-cousin Bolli (for details, see the plot summary below). And in 1747, one Tyrfingur Finnsson, an ex-vicar born in 1713 (date of death is unknown), composed seven short visur in honour of the main characters of the saga, one of which is in praise of Auðr dýját(a)umga [‘the Deep-Minded’ or ‘the Extremely Wealthy’] and another in praise of Guðrún, daughter of Ósvífr (Lbs 513 4º). Unique amongst the Laxdæla-inspired poetry, Tyrfingur’s poem is the first Icelandic kappakvæði that not only mentions, but is also in praise of, these two famous saga women.

Apparently, the last in a tradition of Laxdælakappakvæði poets is Gísli Konráðsson (1787–1877), who, in 1807, composed and wrote down a short poem in praise of Kjartan Óláfsson (Lbs 2457 4º, f. 102v). Although poetry inspired by Laxdæla saga continued to be written, by the early 19th century this particular tradition of Laxdælakappakvæði began to fade and quietly died out.

Even though interest in the use of skaldic poetry in the saga text itself has recently grown (Guðrún Nordal 2001; 2002), no research has been done so far on the kappakvæði that follow the saga in manuscripts or poetry that was inspired by the saga. The aim of this article is to draw attention to these hitherto unstudied texts by focusing on one particular set of Laxdæla stanzas, the visur by Tyrfingur Finnsson. We have opted for Tyrfingur’s stanzas because they are an attempt to write dróttkvætt poetry well past the commonly accepted date of the demise of that tradition, as well as because, in a rare departure from the canon, two of the stanzas praise female saga characters. We briefly discuss the author and poet Tyrfingur Finnsson, and we also provide information on the manuscript Lbs 513 4º and its contents. We present, for the first time, an edited text of the visur with an English translation of the poems presented over and against the Icelandic text, as well as a detailed commentary on the text and a discussion on the stanzas’ metre and diction.

The Scribe: Tyrfingur Finnsson

Very little is known about Tyrfingur Finnsson. He was born in 1713 at Akrar á Mýrum in Hraunhreppur, in western Iceland, where his father, Finnur Dóðarson (1687–1733), was a farmer. His mother, Guðrún Högnadóttir (1679–?), came from Straumfjörður. His paternal grandfather, Óður Finnsson (1651–1729), was a member of lögretta, then a public court of law, and a district administrative officer. (Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir 2011: 97.)

Tyrfingur attended the Cathedral School in Skálholt from 1728–1735 and in 1737 became a pastor at Staður in Súgandafjörður, in the West Fjords of Iceland (Páll Eggert Ólason 1952: 34). In 1740, he was found guilty of drunkenness and causing havoc during mass and consequently defrocked (Páll Eggert Ólason 1952: 34). Little is known about Tyrfingur after his defrocking, beside the fact he was active as a scribe when he wrote at least three manuscripts from 1742–1747. He is not mentioned in the Icelandic census of 1762, so one assumes he died before that date (Census of 1762).

The majority of works in Tyrfingur’s hand are theological texts; they were most likely written down during the years that he was a pastor. Two manuscripts, Lbs 513 4º and Lbs 2480 4º, written by him between 1742 and 1747, after his defrocking, contain sagas or saga-inspired texts. His choice of saga literature probably reflects his changing tastes and adds new works to his scribal repertoire, suggesting that the defrocking resulted in a sudden outburst of creativity.

Only a handful of manuscripts in Tyrfingur’s hand survive. Of these, only Lbs 513 4º sheds some light on the life of this little-known 18th-century pastor and his original Laxdælakappakvæði composition.

The Manuscript: Lbs 513 4º

Lbs 513 4º is a paper manuscript, 180 x 150 mm, containing 176 leaves of text (with five preceding and three following), all in Tyrfingur’s hand. Many of the leaves show signs of wear and tear. In particular, the edges of the paper bear brown and dark stains. This indicates that many hands have leafed through the manuscript: it appears to have been used (i.e. read) a lot. One or more leaves are missing at the beginning; these contained the title page and the opening portion of Eyrbyggja saga. The plain three-quarter’s brown leather binding
with gilded spine is not original. The foliation has been added later in pencil on every tenth leaf by an unidentified hand. The scribe ‘personalized’ his text by adding occasional decorated titles and letters (e.g. ff. 45r, 103r, 127r), coloured decorations (f. 45r), rubrication (e.g. 149r) and vignettes (ff. 15v and 172v).

Altogether, the manuscript contains sixteen texts: five family sagas, three fornaladarsögur (so-called ‘legendary sagas’), three þættir (i.e. short saga-like stories about characters that feature in major sagas) and some poetry. The Vísur uppá Laxdæla sǫgu are the fourth of these texts, arranged as follows:5

1. 1r–44v: Eyrbyggja saga (the beginning of the saga is missing)
2. 45r–97v: Laxdæla saga
3. 97v–102r: Bolla þáttur Bollasonar (as a continuation of the saga text without interruption or rubric)
4. 102v: Vísur uppá Laxdæla sǫgu
5. 103r–112v: Kjalnesinga saga
6. 112v–115v: Jöklurs þáttur Biasonar (Leaf 116r is blank.)
7. 116v: Gaður ['nursery rhymes']
8. 117r–118v: Hálfdanar þáttar svarta.
9. 119r–126r: Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum
10.126v: Draumípula
11.127r–138v: Viglundar saga
12.139r–147r: Hrafnskels saga Freysgoda
13.147v–148v: þorsteins þáttur forvitna
14.149r–172v: Hröðs saga kraka
15.172v: Bjarkamál
16.173r–176v: Starkáðar saga gamla: (incomplete)

The first three sagas are connected not only by genre (i.e. they are all family sagas) but also by content: their main characters are various descendants of the famous Norwegian hersir (a kind of tribal warlord) Ketill flatnefr ['Flatnose']. Eyrbyggja saga tells the story of the family of his son Bjørn austræni ['the Easterner']: Laxdæla saga concentrates on the family of his daughter Áudr djúp(a)udga, while Kjalnesinga saga details the lives of descendants of his son Helgi bjólan (< Gaelic beulan ['little mouth']). The other notable group of texts in the manuscript is formed by Hálfdanar þáttar svarta, Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum, Hröðs saga kraka cum Bjarkamál, and Starkáðar saga gamla: they are all set in Europe and deal with legendary ‘Viking’ kings.

Throughout the manuscript, Tyrfingur added marginal notes commenting in both Icelandic and Latin on the texts in question. In the first colophon, which follows the first text, Eyrbyggja saga, he informs the reader that the writing began during the winter of 1746:

Eyrbyggja sögu þessa skrifaði ég Tyrfingur Finnsson um veturinn 1746 (Lbs 513 4º, f. 44v).6

I, Tyrfingur Finnsson, wrote down this Eyrbyggja saga during the winter of 1746.

There is a second colophon following the second and third texts, Laxdæla saga and Bolla þáttur Bollasonar:

Skrifuð orðrett, ok sva stafrett sem verða kunni. Anno a Partu Virginis, Millesimo, Septingentesimo, Quadragesimo Septimo. Tyrfingur Finnsson. (Lbs 513 4º, f. 102r.)7

Copied word-for-word and, in so far as possible, letter-by-letter. In the year one thousand seven hundred forty-seven after the virgin birth, Tyrfingur Finnsson.

It is safe to assume that the vísur following the saga text were written down in 1747 and constitute an original contribution by Tyrfingur.

Summary of Laxdæla Plot as Relevant to the Stanzas

It is characteristic of Icelandic sagas to be organized around a central plot that is customarily preceded and followed by stories of earlier and later generations in the same family that contextualize it both historically and in society. Laxdæla saga starts with the story of the arrival in Iceland of Áudr djúp(a)udga, praised in stanza 1 below. Áudr escapes from Norway via Scotland, the Hebrides and Faroe Islands, and settles a large region in Breiðafjörður ['Broad Fjord'], in the northwest of Iceland. Several of her descendants were significant players in Icelandic politics, among them her great-grandson, Hóskuldur. He had several children, including two sons: Þorleikr by his wife and Ólafr by a slavewoman he bought while abroad. The slavewoman is later revealed to be Melkorka, a kidnapped daughter of an Irish king Myrkjartan. Ólafr grows up to be a man of renown and acquires the nickname pái
he builds a major new farmstead that he names Hjarðarholt ['The Herd Hill'] (stanza 2 below). He marries Þorgeðr, the daughter of the famous Icelandic chieftain and poet Egill Skallagrímsson from the farmstead of Borg ['Hill'], and has, by her, several sons, the most prominent of whom is Kjartan. Óláfr’s half-brother Þorleikr also fathers a son, Bolli, whom Óláfr agrees to foster. Bolli and Kjartan grow up together as best friends and half-cousins. On a nearby farmstead lives another important family headed by one Ósvífr, whose daughter Guðrún, the most beautiful and promising woman in the region and celebrated in stanza 5 below, is about the same age as Bolli and Kjartan. The three regularly meet while growing up and their later relationships are at the center of the plot.

At some point, Guðrún recounts a series of dreams to a soothsayer who predicts she is to be married four times: she will divorce the first husband, while the other three will each meet a violent death. It is the opinion of people that Guðrún and Kjartan are in love; yet she first goes through two marriages before it looks like they will be united. Kjartan is then about to depart for Norway with Bolli; Guðrún promises to wait for him for three years, and they will marry on his return. The foster-brothers leave for Norway, where both accomplish deeds of valour and become retainers of king Óláfr Tryggvason, who converted the country to Christianity. The king also wants Iceland to convert, and when his efforts fail, he takes several Icelanders hostage, including Kjartan, while Bolli returns to Iceland exactly as Guðrún’s three years of waiting expire. Ósvífr intervenes and has Guðrún marry Bolli, who plays along by telling Guðrún that Kjartan is having an affair in Norway with the king’s sister and claiming that Kjartan’s return is uncertain. When Kjartan comes back the following year, he is surprised to hear that his best friend and foster-brother have betrayed him. Kjartan marries another woman, and the relations between the neighbours quickly worsen. Kjartan’s wealth allows him to gradually buy all the land that Guðrún and Bolli’s farmstead could expand onto, with the aim of driving them out of the district. When the situation becomes untenable, Bolli is goaded by Guðrún into joining a party intent on killing Kjartan. Kjartan is ambushed by a certain stone in Svinadal ['Swine Valley'] in the West Fjords (see stanza 3), and after some hesitation and goading by Kjartan himself, Bolli kills Kjartan with the sword Fótbítr ['The Leg Cutter'] (see stanza 4). Ólafur pái, who is still alive, forbids Kjartan’s brothers from seeking revenge, but once he dies, his widow Þorgeðr shames her sons into killing Bolli, a deed which they ultimately accomplish, surprising Bolli alone in a shieling in the mountains. A key member of their party is one Helgi Harðbeinsson (stanza 7), a relative of one of the political allies of their father: he kills Bolli with a long spear he drives through both Bolli and his shield. Shortly afterwards, Guðrún gives birth to Bolli’s posthumous son, whom she names after his late father.

Guðrún longs for revenge, and having waited long enough for her sons to grow up, she manages to recruit a suitor of hers, one Þorgils Hólluson, to lead a revenge party (stanza 7), on a promise of marriage so craftily made that she is subsequently able to refuse him. The political situation is such that attacking Kjartan’s brothers is out of the question, so the avengers kill Helgi Harðbeinsson instead. Guðrún, however, has no intention to marry Þorgils, her sights being set on the richer and more powerful Þorkell Eyjólfsson (stanza 6), a fifth-generation descendant of Auðr by a different male line than that of Bolli and Kjartan. Þorgils Hólluson is killed and Guðrún marries Þorkell, her fourth husband. As she is about to marry him, he discovers that Guðrún is harbouring one Gunnar Piðrandabani ['Killer of Piðrandi'], whom Þorkell has sworn to kill, Piðrandi’s surviving brother being one of Þorkell’s political allies. Guðrún prevents this from happening, threatening to call off the marriage, and Þorkell later helps Gunnar to leave Iceland and provides him with a ship full of goods (stanza 5).

Subsequently, Þorkell visits Norway, where King Óláfr Haraldsson, later sainted, presents him with a shipload of wood for his services. One day, Óláfr suprises Þorkell on the scaffolding of a church the king is having built at Niðaróss ['Mouth of River Nid'] (modern Trondheim), which Þorkell is measuring. The king is offended by his guest’s presumption of
intending to build an equally large church in Iceland, and predicts that the wood given to Þorkell will not be used to build it. Þorkell returns to Iceland, only to drown in Breiðafjörður on his way to his farm at Helgafell ['Holy Mountain'] (stanz 6). Thus, two prophecies, the one of the king and the one of Guðrún’s dream, come true.

Guðrún then becomes a hermit nun at Helgafell, the first nun in Iceland, and the saga concludes with her death by natural causes, having famously confessed to her son Bolli Bollason: *Peim var ek verst er ek unni mest* ['To him I was worst whom I loved most'] (*Laxdæla saga*, ch. 78).

**Concerning This Edition of the Text**

**General Issues**

The text of *Visur uppá Laxdæla sǫgu* is written in two columns, with each line featuring a single line of a stanza. The stanzas are numbered and will be referenced by stanza number and line number (e.g. 3.4 indicates line 4 of stanza 3).

This edition reproduces the text diplomatically and as an Old Norse (ON) normalized text. This is quite a considerable so-called *fyrning* ['deliberate archaization'; lit. 'ancienting']. Late manuscripts are often used as sources especially for early ON texts; *fyrning* is a term used in editing practice when spellings, particularly Modern Icelandic (MI) spellings, of such manuscripts are replaced with standardized ON.8 The *fyrning* here is especially considerable for a text that was reliably composed in post-medieval times, and that relies, at times, on 18th-century pronunciation for rhymes, as well as on linguistic forms not found in ON (see comments to stanza 3 below). Nevertheless, we feel that this *fyrning* is warranted by the fact that the stanzas constitute an attempt to emulate ON *dróttkvætt* and concern characters from a famous ON text.

In the analysis, we quite consciously avoid addressing the issue of whether *dróttkvætt* poetry ‘survived’ past the traditional cut-off point of the 14th century of the classic editions of the corpus, such as Finnur Jónsson’s *Den norsk–landske Skjaldeigtning (Skj)*. We also avoid the question of whether *dróttkvætt* (or *dróttkvætt*-like) poetry composed past that point is ‘authentic’ or not. However, we use the relatively uncontroversial terms of classical and post-classical *dróttkvætt*. Although a full discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to offer some comment on them in order to frame Tyrfingur’s composition in relation to his knowledge of the *dróttkvætt* metre and associated skaldic diction.

Classical *dróttkvætt* is understood as the corpus of *Skj* (subsequently analysed in Meissner 1921); the full corpus of post-classical *dróttkvætt* is still to be established, and the research into it is currently unfolding (see e.g. Haukur Þorgeirsson 2014; Ragnar Ingi Ádalsteinsson 2014; Vísnabók Guðbrands 2000). On the surface, it appears unlikely that *dróttkvætt* survived in the post-classical period as a full-fledged oral tradition. Scholars tend to agree that *drápur*, the praise poems for kings, were the core genre of the tradition, yet this key ecological niche disappeared in the 14th century (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2014: 146) and was no longer extant by the time our text was composed. Yet, despite this loss, there were poems composed past that point which are hardly distinguishable from the classic *dróttkvætt* of *Skj*, such as the 16th-century *Heimsóxómi* ['Sins of the World'] (on which see Haukur Þorgeirsson 2014). It is thus quite likely that *dróttkvætt* poetry survived as an aural tradition and was still being read aloud, *inter alia* from manuscript pages, long past the above-mentioned cut-off point (Frog & Sverdlov 2016: 9). One piece of evidence for this is the sheer number and temporal distribution of manuscripts of the so-called *Laufás Edda* of Magnús Óláfsson (ca. 1573–1636), who re-arranged Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda* in a way not too unlike the much later scholarly work by Rudolf Meissner (1921): there are many dozens of these manuscripts, from the early 17th-century original to copies from the early second half of the 19th century (*Laufás Edda*, 39–155). The wide distribution and apparent accessibility of *Laufás Edda*, with its explanations of the nature of the metre and its lists of kennings and heitis, should have ensured the readability of the old *dróttkvætt* poetry and could have assisted in composition of texts in imitation of it. In the oft-repeated words of Matthew James Driscoll of *Den
Arnamagnæanske Samling in Copenhagen: “in Iceland, the Middle Ages end in 1922”, the year that the “last great Icelandic scribe”, Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi, died (Driscoll 2012). This statement implies a period of continuity far longer than what is the case in other traditions.

The present paper and edition are thus meant as a contribution to this ongoing discussion. In this light, the present authors are of the opinion that if, ultimately, a determination of the nature and degree of continuity between classical (medieval) and post-classical (post-medieval) dróttkvætt is to be made, it must rely inter alia on comparison of post-classical texts that look like dróttkvætt with the classical exponents of the metre to be found in Skj and its developing successor Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, notwithstanding the considerable differences in the age of composition and even in language (i.e. essentially MI vs. ON), even though the influence of later poetic tradition of rímur is clearly there. Not to be underestimated is also the fact that, for scholars from outside the field of post-medieval Icelandic literature, and even more so for general readers, the main (if not the only) point of interest in these stanzas would be exactly their relations to classical dróttkvætt poetry, one of the genres that rightfully made ON literature world-famous. These considerations are in the background of the present paper.

**Manuscript Spelling**

The spelling of the manuscript is quite typical for Icelandic of the time: y and e are used where i is required and vice versa (1.2 ítte for ítti, 5.2. slísa for slýsa); ̀ and ́ are not regularly distinguished and ð is used instead of ð (1.1 heiðúrs for heıðrs, 2.2 dýgd for dygð). An interesting feature is the regular use of double acute accent to mark the vowels a, o and u that were long in ON (1.1 tríða for ON tróða, 3.2 klára for ON klára, 3.6 trú for ON trú, and the preposition á [‘on’] is always spelled dã). The same does not happen for y and í: all y’s in the text are spelled with an umlaut sign above, and this y stands for all four original vowels, y, i, y, í (1.2 ítte for ON ýtti and 2.3 frýður for frôðr, 2.4 býng for bing, 5.7 ýfrinn for yfrinn, also the preposition í [‘in’] is always spelled i). When the single acute accent is used, it is placed over both short vowels and epenthetic -u-’s (so redundant in these cases, see examples above, but still useful as a reading aid, helping to distinguish handwritten u from n) and several times over the result of u-umlaut of a (6.1 mióg for mjók; this feature is well-known and such an ɔ is considered to be a graphemic variant of φ). The single acute accent is never put on long vowels, the only exception being 6.1 Eyjólf for Eyjólfs (see above for epenthetic -u-’s). The horizontal line, as usual, denotes a nasal consonant, but sometimes is put over an n or m already spelled out where no doubling is required (7.5 hugfullan for acc. sg. hugfullan); again, this helps to distinguish between handwritten u and n. The capital letters and commas, as well as other features in the diplomatic text (tall s etc.) are those of the manuscript, as can be observed in the accompanying image; the only visual difference is the use of regular d instead of uncrossed ो. The only occurrence of the Tironian et sign is rendered by italicized MI og. The number 7, in superscript and in-line, stands for a variant of ṛ used by the scribe: it is ṛ rotunda. Its manuscript shape is indistinguishable from letter z, but the use of the latter would have been counterintuitive.

**Metre, Diction, and Other Poetic Features**

The text of the stanzas is in 18th-century Icelandic but aims to imitate the rules of ON dróttkvætt. It largely succeeds in doing so, at times to spectacular effect. However, there are many deviations of various kinds. There are cases where metrical rules are broken; cases when the poet stretches the limits of what is unattested but theoretically possible in classical dróttkvætt; and cases where the poet uses what is unmistakably an innovation from the point of view of classical metre, yet such that it is better regarded as a ‘natural’ result of its actual (if one assumes full-fledged dróttkvætt tradition did survive in post-medieval times), or theoretically possible (if one assumes it did not), evolution. In this section, we discuss the most interesting of such features; for interpretations of individual words, see the commentary on the text.

**The Close**

One feature that clearly marks this text as a late imitation is the filling of the close. In classical dróttkvætt, each line (the ON term is vísu-ord
['stanza-word']) always ends with a close – i.e. its last two syllables must always be filled by an ON phonetic structure known as a long disyllable, defined as any word-form that has a first, long-stem syllable (i.e. a long vowel plus a short or long consonant or a short vowel plus a long consonant or a consonant cluster), and a second, final, short syllable (a short vowel followed by, at most, a single consonant). The long disyllable is the most frequent phonetic pattern of ON. Most of the close-filling words from our poem could have been used in a classical dróttkvætt close, e.g. mání (4.2), Bolli (5.2) etc. Some words, however, present difficulties from this point of view.

First, consider fullur in line 4.1 and merkur in 6.1: both are MI forms featuring an epenthetic -u- inside the final consonant cluster where ON had fullr and would have had *merkr (see also the possible reading brúður < ON brúðr in 5.5). In MI, these are two-syllable wordforms, but in ON they both were single-syllable forms, unfit for a close.9 Such forms fill the requirements of the classic close orthographically (cf. MI fullur ['full'] with an authentic ON long disyllable frillur ['concubines']) and also phonetically according to the phonology of the Icelandic of the time (Kristján Árnason 1980).10 Whether one assumes the survival of dróttkvætt past the classical period or not, admittance of forms such as fullur into the close necessarily constitutes an innovation (as they did not exist in ON), yet it must be regarded as an innovation that could have developed naturally with historical linguistic change.

Second, the stanzas also feature short disyllables as close fillings, such as 1.4 göfug, 2.1 ala, 6.5 gera, and 7.3 bera. From the point of view of the classical rules, these are inadmissible in classical dróttkvætt. The appearance of such forms in the close may be simply explained by the MI context of the application of an ON rule: classic dróttkvætt calls for a long disyllable and in MI all stressed syllables are ‘long’ (Kristján Árnason 1980: 213–216), thus bera was pronounced and perceived in MI as a long disyllable although it was not in ON, and thus would formally conform to the requirements of the close.

Another explanation, possibly working in unison with the former, stems from the likely mode of composition of our poem and the likely source for our poet’s knowledge of dróttkvætt. Unless the dróttkvætt tradition survived orally in the post-classical period, our poet’s likely source was a written one, and one of the best candidates is Laufás Edda (see above). Importantly, that text presents not only skaldic metres but also eddic ones, including ljóðaháttr (Sievers 1893: 79–90, §§53–58), and quotes, as Snorra Edda does, long sections of ljóðaháttr poems. The key metrical feature of ljóðaháttr is the so-called ‘complete line’ (Vollzeile in German terminology) which, like that of dróttkvætt, features a regular close (Sievers 1893: 82–89, §§7). The filler of the ljóðaháttr close is the short disyllable.11 In this light, it is perhaps intriguing that ljóðaháttr’s complete line and dróttkvætt’s line have other similarities: metrical, where both have three metrical stresses per line12 and a marked cadence or close,13 as well as poetic similarities (e.g. Smirnitskaya 1994; Sverdlov 2011; 2012). Collectively, these factors could have led our 18th-century dróttkvætt imitator to perceive the similarity of these meters and to use in his close what would have been perceived as a short disyllable in ON.

Alliteration

The first metrically interesting feature in the poem is the use of an extra set of alliteration in certain even lines in addition to regular alliteration and stem-rhyme (e.g. in 2.4 and 2.8). Classical dróttkvætt only has three lifts in the even lines (Sievers 1893: 25‒28, §§8–9), marked by two stem-rhyming words and another word that alliterates with two other words located in the previous odd line. ON dróttkvætt stem-rhymes alternate between skothending in odd lines, where syllables’ final consonant(s) are the same but preceding vowels must differ, and aðalhending in even lines, where both the final consonant(s) and preceding vowels are identical. In stanza 2, the poet has an extra pair of alliterating words inside two even lines, both located at the end of the respective half-stanzas (regular dróttkvætt alliteration is in bold; additional line-internal alliteration in bold italic; stem-rhymes underlined):

2.3–4: friðr gaf fyllir daga
Fáfnis bing Hjarðahl-ht-tingum.
2.7–8: bar, en bygðis af megðum
Borgar Ógils ódeiga

Lines 2.4 and 2.8 are rather unusual as dróttkvætt lines: only odd lines can (occasionally, as a special rule) have four lifts, i.e. have four different stems marked by line-internal alliteration and line-internal stem rhyme at the same time, for example in a stanza by the 11th-century skald Hávarði Skýrðingr ['the Lame from Ice Fjord'] (Skj B1: 181–12.7–8): garðr svall gogig sólar / Gehn, mîns sonar hêfna. Lines 2.4 and 2.8 are even lines, where line-internal alliteration was prohibited in classical dróttkvætt. In classical dróttkvætt scansion, each of these alliterating and rhyming syllables should be a lift (Smirnitskaya 1994: 349–356, esp. 350), thus the sound repetition tools would mark as many as five lifts: three regular ones, Fáñis (lift 1) alliterates with fríðr and fyllr from line 2.3, and böring rhymes with -ingum (lifts 2 and 3); and two extra lifts, nos. 4 and 5, on Hjarðr that alliterate with -hylr-. In line 2.8, one extra lift is in an even line, as Ógils (on which, see below), already marked by stem-rhyming with deiga, also alliterates with the negative particle ó-, elevating the latter to the position of the lift.

In classical dróttkvætt, we never find even lines that feature two different sets of alliterating words in addition to the stem rhyme. Snorri Sturluson’s poem Háttatal ['The List of Metres'] (HT) contains several examples of creative dróttkvætt-derived stanzas where the author deliberately introduces one extra sound repetition in his lines (e.g. HT stanzas 36, 38, 43–44). However, these are limited to only a few stanzas, the stanzas are clearly experimental, the sound repetition used is stem rhyme, not alliteration, and, importantly, the repetition itself is not a new one – the extra lift is marked by repeating the sound sequence from a key position, e.g. the close or the first alliterating syllable, not by introducing an entirely new line-internal sound repetition. The presence of such manifold extra sound repetition marks our stanzas as late: as pointed out by Ragnar Ingí Aðalsteinsson (2014), the development of extra alliteration sets is a typical feature of later Icelandic poetry.

Lines 2.4 and 2.8 also feature another departure from dróttkvætt metrical rules in marking the syllable immediately preceding the close (i.e. -hylt- and ó-) with alliteration. The marking of this particular syllable is, basically, forbidden in dróttkvætt (Smirnitskaya 1994: 360), with a rule-governed exception. Namely, here we have a compound noun, that is, a noun with a suffix and one with a prefix, crossing into the close. Normally, there is a cæsura before the close, but compound words are allowed to cross this boundary provided the phonetic splitting coincides with the morphological boundary (a hallmark of dróttkvætt). This is what happens in our case: the close boundary splits -hyltingum into two distinct morphemes, the stem hylt- and the suffix -ingum; ódeiga is correspondingly split into the negative prefix ó- and the stem -deiga; this is perfectly correct procedure, and the resulting long disyllable ‘rumps’ of -ingum and -deiga are perfect close-fillers. However, both hylt- and ó- are single-syllable morphemes, and a compound word that crosses into a close and has a single-syllable morpheme as its first element will never have this element marked.

The additional alliteration in lines 2.4 and 2.8 is thus in clear violation of rules of classical dróttkvætt. One may, however, surmise that our poet consciously aimed to produce a pair of such deviating lines to complete each half-stanza in an attempt to develop a new metrical line subtype of his own invention, as a way of marking the last line in each half-stanza. Emergence of new subtypes of dróttkvætt that rely on picking a peculiar prosodic type of a regular dróttkvætt line (which has a rich prosodic variety) and using it systematically in a stanza is something that did happen in the classical skaldic tradition, as seen in the majority of dróttkvætt stanzas in Snorri Sturluson’s Háttatal, which he claims are in different ‘metres’. In this way, Tyrfingur’s attempt parallels what went on in the classical skaldic tradition.

Further, line 2.8 features what should be regarded as an eye-rhyme, i.e. ‘rhyme’ based on spelling rather than sound. The ON spelling has the line running as Borgar Ógis ódeiga, yet this is an even line, which means some word there must stem-rhyme in full with the close-filler deiga. The word Ógis is pronounced [eis], and the close-filler is pronounced [erj], so no full rhyme, or aðalhending, is possible phonetically. The poet
is helped by the spelling Eigils which achieves the required full match between <eig> of Eigils and deiga, yet this requirement is only met visually. This line thus runs contrary to the rules of classical dróttkvætt: skaldic poetry functioned as oral poetry and thus by definition excluded such devices as eye-rhymes.\textsuperscript{17}

It is important to point out, too, that a few of the full stem-rhymes (aðalhendingar) employed by our poet clearly mark his text as late. The following lines illustrate this: in 7.6, where the late, and etymologically wrong, form tróll (ON has troll) is in aðalhending with Hállu, a correct ON form; in 6.2, where the late form bustum (ON has burstum) is in aðalhending with musteri, a correct ON form that never had an -r- before -st; in 4.8, where geýfu is in aðalhending with dreifir only thanks to 18\textsuperscript{th}-century and MI pronunciation of diphthongs ey and ei as identical, which was not the case in ON.

\textbf{Noun Phrase Word Order}

Several stanzas of the poem exhibit a peculiar treatment of prepositional phrases with compounds: normal expressions like í Svinadal are metrically packaged as dal í Svína, as in line 3.7. This is a curious case.

The first impression is that this specific arrangement is ‘naturally’ forced by rules of classical dróttkvætt: as this noun phrase is about to be put at the end of the line, it must match the requirement for filling of the close, and so end in a long disyllable. This can only be achieved by splitting the Svinadal compound in two and putting the monosyllable dal somewhere else, so that the line ends with the long disyllable of Svína. Splittings and word order inversions that resemble this do happen in classical dróttkvætt syntax (splits are also discussed in “Features Retained from Classical dróttkvætt” below).

The most famous case of such a split + inversion is probably by Egill Skallagrímsson, in a stanza from Eglis saga 47 (also Skj B-I 43–6.4): í dal-miskunn fiska. What Egill does is, first, coin a three-stem nonce kenning for summer, dal-fiska miskunn (dal- [bare stem of n.masc. dalr ‘valley, dale’], fiska [n.masc.gen.pl. of fiskr ‘fish’], miskunn [n.fem.nom/dat/acc.sg ‘mercy’, lit. ‘mis-knowledge’]). Literally it reads ‘the mercy of fishes of the valley’: fish of the valley > SNAKE, mercy of SNAKE > summer.\textsuperscript{18} Notice that Egill’s coinage is a three-stem compound, not a two-stem one like Svinadal. Yet Egill cannot use this ‘correct’ word order if the kenning is to be put at the end of the line (as it is), because the compound miskunn does not meet the requirements of the close (see above): the first syllable of this word is short while the second is long, ruling out a position in the close. Nor can Egill put dal-fiska in the close – dal- alliterates with words dàð and drýga of the previous line, and, being a single-syllable word, thus cannot occupy the position in front of the close because of the rule we discussed in the previous section. So, the second thing Egill has to do is to split the three stems of the kenning (the nature of kenning as a compound noun specifically allows for this) and re-arrange them in a different order, so that fiska, being a long disyllable and perfectly matching the requirements of the close, comes last, while dal- comes first. The resulting sequence í dalmiskunn fiska [‘in the mercy of the valley of fishes’] makes no sense at all unless one reverse-engineers the metrical packaging process and re-assembles the elements in correct order; such reverse-engineering is a typical syntactic process involved in the parsing of classical dróttkvætt (e.g. Sverdlov 2009). We have to resort to similar reverse-engineering in the case of our poet’s dal í Svína for it to make sense. The similarity between classical dróttkvætt and the metre of our poet ends, however, right here.

Classical dróttkvætt allows such split-and-rearrange operations to be carried out for its kenning-compounds, not for regular compounds it employs; this is because such reverse-engineering is only possible thanks to the existence and use of kenning-models as recognition patterns, and thanks to the existence of kenning metrical packaging rules that are specific to them. Splitting a phrase around a preposition is not common in classical dróttkvætt, although it is sometimes found in the same final four positions of a line.\textsuperscript{19} Our poet does this repeatedly in the final four positions of a line: 2.2 geðs í bygðum; 3.8 knjám í Bolla; 5.3 dóms í drauma; and 7.7. dal í Skorra. Such splits are typical for certain rimur (e.g. Sörla rimur), which seems the more likely source of influence here.
The causes of dal á Svína and í dalmiskunn fiska are identical: the metre’s unyielding requirement to fill the close with a long disyllable. Also identical are the processes of splitting the compound and re-arranging stems and the overall results of a sequence of stems that meets the metrical rules but is not readable without reverse-engineering. Nevertheless, the material to which this procedure is applied and the particular re-arrangement are different, with our poet’s result breaking rules of classical dróttkvætt as we know it from the classical corpus.

Lexical and Syntactic Features
Several lexical and syntactical features ‘reveal’ the text as a late composition and an imitation.

One such feature is the predicative use of kennings and kenning-like structures. In classical dróttkvætt, kennings and heitis for men and women are used as replacements of their names and of respective pronouns; a typical classical dróttkvætt sentence would sound like ‘the tree of battle [MAN/WARRIOR] waved the fire of wound [SWORD]’ or ‘the tree of linen [WOMAN] served the dew of the cup [BEER]’. One never encounters phrases such as ‘King Haraldr was the tree of battle’; this is typical of other types of poetry which rely on metaphors and such like for building images and is thus absent from classical dróttkvætt where the syntactic function of a kenning is that of a pronoun.

Our poem seems to have a few cases in which this rule is broken. Stanza 1, for example if we read the sequences örræða-snor and ørlyg-tróða as kennings for WOMAN, we find such a case in line 1.5 Auðr var... örræða-snor [‘Auð was... sister of solution’] and in line 1.1 Auðr var ørlyg-tróða (see commentary below). The poet would appear here to rely on the old system of coining nonce poetic words, heitis as well as kennings, and to use it inventively, yet in a manner that stresses the gap between his poetic idiom and that of classical dróttkvætt.

Further, classical dróttkvætt is not a metre in which long strings of epithets would normally be used. The exception to this rule is certain usages in Christian skaldic poems, and this could be the influence on our poem, where such strings are encountered several times. In stanza 3, for example, lines 3.2 and 3.3 consist of almost nothing but adjectives describing qualities of Kjartan, joined together without even the verb to be; in a similar vein are the descriptions of Auðr in stanza 1, joined together in something resembling sentences coordinated via an (ellipted) conjunction ‘and’ and with the verb ‘to be’ ellipted everywhere but in the first sentence in line 1.2. Such syntax is alien to traditional skaldic poetry.

An example of an entirely different nature that also shows lateness of the text is the sequence Þorkell Eyjólfs from line 6.1. It stands for Þorkell Eyjólfsson (fourth husband of Guðrún daughter of Ósvífr). The genitive forms like Eyjólfs instead of full Eyjólfsson are not used in ON, either in prose or poetry. Forms such as this are typical for MI, and are usually explained as truncated patronymic compounds that omit the -son [‘son’] or -dóttir [‘daughter’] element. Truncated compounds are indeed typical for Icelandic, however, normally the truncated element is not the core, as it would be in this case, but the modifier. Perhaps a fuller explanation for this usage would be to regard it as parallel to the one that gave rise to certain Icelandic family names, essentially a form of place-name related nicknames, which were popular in Iceland in the 19th and 20th centuries: e.g. Kaldalóns in the name of famous Icelandic composer Sigvaldi Stefánsson Kaldalóns is identical in usage to this Eyjólfs, as is the ‘last name’ of Halldórr Laxness. This Kaldalóns-type usage, with the nickname in the genitive coming after the proper name, appears to be a simple inversion of the regular word order that is widely attested in ON sources. Examples of personal names plus place-name nicknames that come first are numerous, including many famous Icelanders such as Tungu-Oddr [‘Oddr from Tunga’] (tunga [n.fem. ‘promontory formed by confluence of two rivers’]), whose feud with bóðr gellir [‘the Bellower’], Þorkell Eyjólfsson’s grandfather, resulted in splitting Iceland into quarters, or Síðu-Hallr [‘Hallr from the Slope’] of Njáls saga, a person who played a key role in adoption of Christianity in Iceland, and others. In the ON names, the personal name comes last and the nickname first, thus forming a regular compound noun; in Kaldalóns-type usage, the compound is split and its first part, complete with genitive marker, is placed second. When Þorkell Eyjólfs in stanza 6.1 is
viewed not as a MI truncation but in terms of ON onomastics, it can be seen as another example of the order inversion of the compound stems that we discuss here (and which is common in classical dróttkvætt in the case of kennings, see next and previous sections). If we restore the order, we get Eyjólfur-Porkell, which is probably not perfect ON, as such compounds were mostly formed with place names as the first element, but it at least matches the regular, recognizable pattern of the first element of the personal name compound being the distinguishing feature for the carrier of the name – so it is employed in the same function as regular patronymics.

**Kennings**

Kennings are rightfully considered to be a core element of the vocabulary and poetics of classical dróttkvætt. They form a tightly-knit system with a rich network of internal links (on these see Fidjestøl 1974 and particularly Sverdlov 2015 which presents the network graphically), the functioning of which relies on heiti creation (Gurevich 1984; Gurevich & Matyushina 2000: 17–30; Sverdlov 2003b: 42–62, 103–120), on patterns of variation and extension (Marold 1983; Sverdlov 2003b: 107–109; 2015) and metrical packaging rules (Sverdlov 2012; Frog 2016). Our poet demonstrates both his considerable knowledge of the facts of this system and his understanding of the fundamental principles of variation and semantic rules of heiti creation, which have necessarily been derived from his own working analysis of the contents of Laufas Edda, as well as from rímur tradition. At the same time, he bends these rules beyond what is factually attested in the corpus of classical skaldic poetry. Some of his innovations could have arguably been developed within the oral tradition, had it survived up to his day (or, if one assumes that it did survive, were developed this way). Others are not supported by the skaldic system and remain in the category of nonce coinages, sometimes at odds with the principles of the classical system.

A good example of this is provided by the drakons dikja dreifir sequence from lines 4.7–8. On the surface, it is a straightforward extended kenning: dreifir, derived from the verb dreifa ['to scatter'] (itself a causative of drifa ['to drive']), is a classic nomen agentis baseword for a kenning for MAN/WARRIOR, and the kenning reads ‘the scatterer of bed/road of the dragon’ → ‘scatterer of GOLD’ → WARRIOR. However, the baseword for the embedded kenning for GOLD is exceptional. The word dik ['dike, ditch'], of which here we have a genitive plural form, is never used in classical kennings for GOLD of the model ‘bed of the dragon’. Skaldic heitis are created out of regular words by semantically ‘downgrading’ them (semantic ‘deterioration’ in Smirnitskaya 1992; ‘levelling’ in Frog 2015) to what is best called, somewhat in the spirit of the famous work of Anna Wierzbicka (1972), a ‘prime’. In the case of dik, the normal ‘prime’ extracted from it when it is turned into a heiti is WATER, thus its normal use is that of a determinant in kennings for GOLD (e.g. ‘sun of the dike’ → GOLD). Extracting the meaning of BED, is, however, a theoretical possibility: the kenning-model ‘bed/abode of dragon’ uses heitis created from ON words denoting ‘road’ and ‘path’, and because snakes (and dragons are snakes) do live in dikes, dikes might be interpreted as their homes/beds/roads. The situation when different primes are extracted from the same word when the skaldic system, or an individual skald, creates a heiti out of it, is far from unknown in classical dróttkvætt: for example, the word mási ['moon'] can function as a baseword for ‘fire of battle’ → SWORD kennings if the prime of FIRE is extracted, because the moon is a source of light, and it can also function as a baseword for ‘something round or flat of the ship’ → SHIELD kennings if the prime of ROUNDNESS is extracted, as shields are round (Sverdlov 2003b: 54). It also follows that the same word-turned-heiti is able to function as both baseword and determinant in different kenning-models: e.g. ON hauðr ['earth'] can act as a baseword in kennings of SEA such as knarrar hauðr ['earth of ship'], and as determinant in kennings of SEA such as hauðr-men ['necklace of the earth'] (Sverdlov 2003b: 201–202). Thus, in theory, the same thing could have happened with dik too, if it were done at the right time and then picked up by tradition; the extant classical corpus, however, does not attest such usage beyond a single occurrence of a nonce kenning for HELL diki djólfa ['dike (i.e. abode) of devils'] (LP: 81).
The vápnageyfa sequence from line 4.8 is a peculiar case. Were the word géyfa ['particularly dark snowstorm'] to have existed in ON times, it could have indeed served as a good baseword for a kenning of BATTLE (vápnageyfa ['snowstorm of weapons' → BATTLE]). The classic kenning-model 'bad weather of weapon(s)' uses all kinds of words denoting bad weather as basewords (e.g. 'hail of sword' etc.). The ON word 'weapon' (vápn) however, is rarely used as the determinant (Meissner 1921: 176, 190; Sverdlov 2003b: 189–195; Frog 2016: 189), as classical dróttkvætt likes to use words with less abstract semantics as source material for heiti-making (Sverdlov 2003b: 50). Nevertheless, the use of vápnageyfa in the final four positions of the verse conforms to one of the two metrical templates in which vápn was regularly and even formulaically used for BATTLE kennings in classical dróttkvætt, frequently, as here, in a prepositional phrase (Frog 2014: 63–64). It seems unlikely our poet had internalized such subtleties of word usage, leaving it unclear whether he had an exemplar verse in mind.

More substantial deviations are observable in the fyllir dáða sequence from line 2.3. This is unmistakably a kenning for WARRIOR, yet it looks somewhat awkward. The word fyllir is derived from the verb fylla ['to fill'] (a causative derived from the adjective fullr ['full']), and thus means ‘filler’; it is thus a classic nomen agentis baseword for kenning for WARRIOR. The trick is that normally fyllir is paired with very specific determinants: those that are heiti for BEASTS OF BATTLE, adding up to the kenning-model ‘feeder of the wolf’ → WARRIOR (i.e. one who, literally, fills the wolf with food, on which see Sverdlov 2003a). Here, however, we have the word dáð ['deed'] as a determinant, adding up to a ‘filler of deeds’. This coinage is a good indication that the poet’s grasp of principles of skaldic composition was good enough, even too good: its existence depends on understanding that nomina agentis basewords for kennings for MAN/WARRIOR are rather devoid of any actual sense, their semantics having been reduced to their function of a baseword and vague meaning of ‘doer’, and that ultimately each such baseword is interchangeable with any other of its ilk, without a reference to the source-verb’s semantics. The key word here, however, is ‘ultimately’: not all opportunities present in the skaldic system are, in fact, fully realized and entextualized (Sverdlov 2015: 29–31). The tenor of the list of basewords for any kenning-model is, indeed, to make any member of the list interchangeable with any other, i.e. to allow them to co-occur with any determinant; in actuality, this ideal is not (always) achieved. In this particular case, we see that the knowledge of the actual skaldic tradition on the part of our poet was somewhat patchy: in the extant classical skaldic corpus, dáð is normally only used as a bare stem in adjectives such as dáðreyndr [lit. ‘deed-tried’, i.e. ‘experienced’], with only two kenning-like coinages like dáð-geymir (for Christ) and dáð-hittir (referring to Bishop Páll) attested.

Further, in stanza 7 we encounter a curious semantic problem that is retained from classical dróttkvætt. Namely, in line 7.2, we have hringpoll, accusative singular of hring-polr, normally a kenning for WARRIOR, with polr [n.masc. ‘fir-tree’) a typical baseword acting as a heiti for TREE, and hringr being (here, as in other kennings) a heiti for SWORD, resulting in a classic kenning-model ‘tree of weapon’. Yet we have a problem here: the stanza at this point clearly refers to an object, not to a human actor, Helgi Harðbeinsson, who is mentioned in the preceding line. The solution seems to be to read the heitis differently: the basic meaning of hringr in kenning vocabulary is the sword’s guard (literally ‘ring’), and if this basic meaning is the active one here, then also polr might be read not as a heiti for TREE but as a heiti for ELONGATED OBJECT, resulting in a kenning that reads ‘the pole of the guard’, which matches a well-attested model for a kenning for SWORD, ‘elongated object of sword-part”, such as hjalta vyndr ['wand of the hilt'] (Meissner 1921: 162). This reading would make grammatical sense and would result in the ON phrase being translated as ‘Helgi Harðbeinsson ran a sword through Bolli’. However, this would be factually wrong, because the saga explicitly tells us Helgi kills Bolli with a spear (Laxdæla 55).

It is unnecessary to assume that the poet is misremembering the saga text here, which he follows rather closely in most cases, particularly in stanza 6. This more likely reflects a very real
problem in the classical kenning system: while it is often assumed that the referent of SPEAR exists in the system as a separate and distinguishable entity, in reality it is poorly distinguished by formal means alone. It does not seem to have developed a kenning-model that is stable and unique to it, which is necessary to prove any referent’s existence. Meissner (1921: 145) says this explicitly: “Kenningar des Speer sind [...] von den Schwertkenningar nicht immer mit Sicherheit zu sondern” ['It is not always possible to reliably distinguish between the kennings for SPEAR and those for SWORD’]. The material indeed shows that some basewords for alleged kennings for SPEAR are identical to those used for kennings of SWORD, while other basewords that seem to denote either a SPEAR or an ARROW are in fact identical to typical BAD WEATHER basewords for kennings of BATTLE (e.g. él ['snow-shower']), further complicating the distinction. This is because even in the case in which such a baseword is used with a determinant that is a heiti for PART OF BOW (resulting in a hypothetical model ‘projectile of bow-part’, where ‘projectile’ prime is extracted from a ‘bad weather’ word, where e.g. rain droplets are ‘seen’ as projectiles, and the model meaning ARROW), this heiti can be understood as simply a heiti for BOW. Thus, in the case of a suspected ARROW kenning, a determinant that ‘wants’ to be recognized as PART OF BOW, will nevertheless be recognized by default as simply a WEAPON determinant, and the detected model will be ‘bad weather of weapon’, i.e. a core kenning-model for BATTLE, not the hypothetical ‘projectile’ model for ARROW.

This means that any kenning that intends to be a kenning for SPEAR is always in danger of being misidentified as either one for SWORD or for BATTLE, and the system of kennings has no internal way out of this conundrum, not having developed a list of basewords and determinants from which the combination would yield a uniquely recognizable kenning-model for it. And our poet is clearly aware of this, attempting a system-external way (i.e. one not relying exclusively on baseword/determinant variation) to resolve the ambiguity.

Helgi Harðbeinsson’s spear is mentioned twice in stanza 7, each time referring to it with – necessarily, as we have just discussed – a SWORD kenning: the first is the above-mentioned hring-pollr (itself mistakable for the kenning of MAN/WARRIOR), the second is sára-teinn [‘tooth of wounds’]. And to the latter he attaches an epithet, an agreed adjective breiðr [‘broad’] (7.3 sáratein breiðan). This is remarkable because this epithet is specifically used for spears, e.g. in the famous words of Grettir’s brother Atli in Grettis saga 45 as he is being killed with a broad-tipped spear: Pau tiðkast nú, in breiðu spjótin ['They are quite in vogue these days, those broad-tipped spears’]. What is also remarkable is that the reason this particular adjective is picked is purely formal, that is, the adjective is picked with the specific aim of solving the problem of kenning-system ambiguity, and its choice is not driven by the actual words of Laxdæla, which in fact it contradicts. While the spear that killed Atli in Grettis saga is indeed broad, the one that Helgi Harðbeinsson kills Bolli with is specifically described as ‘long’: Helgi Harðbeinsson ok hafði i hendi spjót þat, er alnar var leng fjöðrin ['And now Helgi son of Hardbein held a spear in his hands, one such that had a blade a whole ell long'] (Laxdæla 55). Had our poet picked the saga word, his attempt to solve the ambiguity would have failed, as ‘long’ would be assumed to reinforce the reading of the kenning in question as SWORD. By picking breiðr, the poet provides the reader/hearer with a trigger to overrule the basic kenning pattern recognition rule, proving his in-depth awareness both of a particular problem within the traditional system and of the system-compliant way this problem might be bypassed.

Features Retained from Classical dróttkvætt
As we noted above, despite the features discussed thus far, the poet’s attempt to imitate classical dróttkvætt is largely successful. This is due to the retention of many key features, besides the reproduction of the obvious bulk of metrical rules regarding alliteration, stem-rhyme, use of the close, pairing of odd and even lines, syllable count (even if with 18th-century syllables), prosodic structure of the fillers of the various positions and so forth.

One particularly famous quirk of classical dróttkvætt is its split-sentence technique (sometimes called ‘intercalation’): in the flow of the verse, sentence A can suddenly be
interrupted, sometimes mid-word, and a new sentence B will start, with sentence A continuing either after the whole of sentence B, or only part of it. Our poet does employ this technique in stanza 3, where the sentence [Kjartan] vistaðisk í mjallhvítu trú Kristi ["Kjartan was steadfast in the spotless faith of Christ"] is split in two by the intervening ‘interjection’ – [Kjartan] af bar ǫllum ["Kjartan was head and shoulders above all the rest"].

Distancing parts of noun, adjective and verb phrases is also one of the hallmarks of classical dróttkvætt. Our poem has a few examples of this. In stanza 3, the adjectival phrase í mjallhvítu trú ["in spotless (lit. snow-white) faith"] is split into two parts separated by a considerable distance: the adjective mjallhvítu is stranded in 3.5, while the preposition í and trú are in 3.6, with the three-word predication af bar ǫllum between them.
Text, Commentary, and Approximate Translation

Wýsúr úppá Laxdæla Sógú . T. F. S .

1. Auðr var Erleg tróða,
ytta mund Rínar Súnda,
Heiðrurs verþ hárra búrþa,
her=Jófurs drottning göfug,
úrræþa Snór i Snerru,
Snúðug tróð vegú ûdar,
treysti klár huguíð Kristo,
á Krosshlóum bað Gram Só-la7.

1. Auðr var ørlyg-tróða,
ytta mund Rínar-sunda,
heiðrurs-verð hárra burða,
her-joðurs drottning gofug,
ðráða-snor í snerru,
snúðug tróð veig-úða,
treysti klár-huguð Kristo,
á Krosshlóum bað gram sólar.

Regular word order


Approximate English translation

Auðr [the Deep-minded] was an exceptional woman,
she distributed the money of Rhinewater [→ GOLD], a very honourable [woman] of high birth, a famous queenly wife of a boar of an army [→ PRINCE], a woman who knew how to solve difficult problems, the agile water’s fire’s [→ GOLD’S] faggot [→ WOMAN], clear-minded, believed in Christ,
she prayed to the Prince of the Sun [→ CHRIST] at Krosshólar.

Commentary

(1.1) ørlyg-tróða – tróða [n.fem.nom.sg. ‘faggot, bundle of sticks’], because of meaning and gender, acts as a baseword for kennings for WOMAN (LP: 572), in a mirror image of masculine nouns with the core meaning of WOOD/TREE that are commonly used as basewords for kennings for MAN/WARRIOR. In this case ørlyg- [bare stem of ørlygðrarlag n.neut.pl. ‘fate; exploits, war’] could be interpreted as a heiti for BATTLE or SHIELD (LP: 667), which would correspond to a nonce kenning-model for WOMAN coined as part mirror image, part carbon copy of a kenning for MAN/WARRIOR in the following way: the determinants are identical to a kenning for MAN/WARRIOR, the basewords are feminine-gender ‘TREE’-words (see above). This is an expansion of the opportunity partially exploited by the classical kenning system, where feminine-gender ‘TREE’-words are used to coin kennings for WOMAN, but, of the determinants common for kennings for MAN/WARRIOR, only those for GOLD are used (Meissner 1921: 413–420; Sverdlov 2015). However, this is an emendation, and there is an opportunity not to emend the manuscript’s erleg. The adjective erlegur [adj.masc. ‘proper, honest, upright’] was current in 18th-century Icelandic (today’s form is ærlegur) but is not attested in ON; tróða should here be regarded as a heiti for WOMAN.

(1.2) ýtti mund Rínar-sunda – ýtti [v.3.sg.pret. ind. of ýta ‘to push out’]; mund [n.masc. acc.sg. of mundr ‘bride-price’, i.e. a sum supplied by the groom in a marriage contract that becomes the exclusive property of the bride]; Rínar-sunda ‘water of the Rhine’ (Rínar [n.fem.gen.sg. of Rín ‘Rhine’], sunda [n.neut.gen.pl. of sund ‘sound, strait, channel’]). If mundr is read as a heiti for TREASURE, ‘treasure of the Rhine’ is a conventional kenning for GOLD. The sequence can be read (Auðr) ýtti mund Rínar-sunda [‘distributed GOLD’], characterizing Auðr by the classic Old Germanic kingly/princely activity of distributing gold to retainers and thus identifying her with that role, a role to which her position as a landnámsmaðr [‘prime settler’; lit. ‘land-claim-man’] in Iceland can be seen as equivalent. Syntactically, this phrase could be modelled on a common classical dróttkvætt pattern for an extended kenning in which a nomen agentis baseword has been expanded to full
The meaning of *snerra* in both readings is identical – not the literal ‘battle’ but ‘dire straits’.

(1.6) *snúðug* tróð veig-úða – *snúðug* [adj.fem. nom.sg. of *snúðgr* ‘agile’], tróð [n.neut. nom.sg. ‘wood’], úða [n.masc.gen.sg. of *úði* ‘fire’, very rare]. The manuscript’s *vegu* does not make much sense, so we suggest the conjecture *veig* [bare stem of n.fem. *veig* ‘a drink’]. As tróð is identical to *tróða* in 1.1, then with *úði* as a heiti for fire and *veig-* as a heiti for water we get a straightforward ‘fire of water’ → *GOLD* kenning, which is then used as a determinant for kenning for *WOMAN* where tróð is the baseword. *Snúðug* agrees with tróð; the entirety means ‘agile woman’ and refers to Auðr. The syntax of the stanza is somewhat loose; this adjective phrase is either part of the predication Auðr var from line 1.1, or that of predication *treysti* from line 1.7, or that of predication *bað* from line 1.8.

(1.7) *klár-hugud* – klár [bare stem of adj. klárr ‘clear’]; hugud [adj.fem.nom.sg. of *hugadr* ‘minded, having this or that temperament’]. The entirety is a compound adjective

predication by replacing the baseword with the finite verb form. The skaldic *nomen agentis* baseword derived from *ýta* is *ýtr*, which is used regularly with *GOLD* determinants in ‘distributor of gold’ kennings for *MAN/WARRIOR* (Meissner 1921: 307). The hypothetical kenning-instance would have been *ýtr munds Rínar-sunda*, matching a common enough pattern of the classical poetry. Other interpretations are possible, but depend on emending the text.

(1.3) *heðrs-verð* – *heðrs* [n.masc.gen.sg. of *heðr* ‘honour’], *verð* [adj.fem.nom.sg. of *verðr* ‘worthy’]. A compound adjective meaning ‘honourable, praiseworthy’, which agrees with the subject Auðr.

(1.3) *hárra burða* – *hárra* [adj.fem.gen.sg. of hár ‘high, tall’], *burða* [n.masc.gen.pl. of *burðr* ‘birth’], ‘of high birth’, i.e. noble. With the syntax of the stanza being somewhat loose, this adjective phrase is most likely to be part of the long string of coordinated/apposited predications that seem to make up the first half-stanza; all of these share the subject, Auðr, named in the first but ellipted in those that follow, of which three also share the predicate.

(1.4) *her-jofurs drottning* – *her-* [bare stem of n.masc. *herr* ‘host, army, people’]; *jofurs* [n.masc.gen.sg. of *jofurr* lit. ‘wild boar’ but used almost exclusively as ‘prince, king’], *drottning* [n.fem.nom.sg. ‘queen’]. *Her-jofurr* [lit. ‘prince of the army / people’] could be read as a kenning for prince20 or as a compound heiti for prince; it should refer to Auðr’s husband, Óláfr hvíti, because here Auðr is called his ‘queen’.

(1.5) *órræða-snor* í *snerra* – *órræða*- [n.neut. gen.pl. of *órræði* ‘a tool, means to achieve an end; solution’]; *snerru* [n.fem.dat.sg. of *snerra* ‘onslaught’]. The manuscript’s *snor* can be interpreted in two ways. One possibility is to read it as *snor* [adj.fem. nom.sg. of *snarr* ‘hard; swift; keen’]; if so, *órræða-snor* is a compound adjective meaning ‘decision-swift’. It may also be read as *snor* [n.fem. ‘daughter-in-law’] (etymologically unrelated), here functioning either as a baseword for a kenning of *WOMAN* or a simple heiti for *WOMAN*. The resulting *órræða-snor* would then mean ‘resourceful woman’, the same as in the pervers reading. *Snerra*, derived from the same stem as *snarr*, is a *BATTLE-heiti*; as Auðr did not take an active part in any battle, *snerra* may be read as an *ad hoc* heiti for *DIFFICULT SITUATION*; finding solutions to disputes was a key skill for a medieval Icelandic chieftain (Byock 2001: ch. 10), and in such a reading Auðr here seems to be once again (as in line 1.2) depicted as a leader of men in the specific social situation of Iceland. More specifically, *snerra* could be seen as a variant of *áfriðr* [n.masc. ‘war, feud’], and a reference to the latter word’s occurrence in *Laxdæla saga* 4 in connection to Auðr’s escape from Scotland:

Hon hafði brott með sér allt frendlið sitt, þat er á lífi var, ok þykkjask menn varla dømi til finna, at einn kvenmaðr hafi komízk í brott ór þvikum ófriði með jafnmíklu fæ ok þuruneyti.

She [Auðr] had taken away with her all her relatives who were still alive, and the opinion of men is that there is hardly any other example of a woman escaping such a desperate situation with so much wealth and so many followers.

The meaning of *snerra* in both readings is identical — not the literal ‘battle’ but ‘dire straits’.

(1.6) *snúðug* tróð veig-úða – *snúðug* [adj.fem. nom.sg. of *snúðgr* ‘agile’], tróð [n.neut. nom.sg. ‘wood’], úða [n.masc.gen.sg. of *úði* ‘fire’, very rare]. The manuscript’s *vegu* does not make much sense, so we suggest the conjecture *veig* [bare stem of n.fem. *veig* ‘a drink’]. As tróð is identical to *tróða* in 1.1, then with *úði* as a heiti for fire and *veig-* as a heiti for water we get a straightforward ‘fire of water’ → *GOLD* kenning, which is then used as a determinant for kenning for *WOMAN* where tróð is the baseword. *Snúðug* agrees with tróð; the entirety means ‘agile woman’ and refers to Auðr. The syntax of the stanza is somewhat loose; this adjective phrase is either part of the predication Auðr var from line 1.1, or that of predication *treysti* from line 1.7, or that of predication *bað* from line 1.8.

(1.7) *klár-hugud* – klár [bare stem of adj. klárr ‘clear’]; hugud [adj.fem.nom.sg. of *hugadr* ‘minded, having this or that temperament’]. The entirety is a compound adjective
meaning ‘clear-minded’, and agrees with Auðr. ‘Clearness’ of mind could possibly be pleonasm, an extra reference to her being Christian, according to this stanza, and not pagan, even though no direct information as to Auðr’s faith is provided in Laxdæla, and by default one assumes she was pagan. It could also refer to her bold decision to promptly leave Scotland after deaths of her father and son, and to head, ultimately, for Iceland (see commentary on 1.5).

(1.7) Kristo – this is dat.sg. form of Latin Christus; it is dative because treysti [v.3.sg. pret.ind. of treysta ‘trust to, rely upon’] in the meaning active in this context (which in ON would normally also require reflexive variant treystask) here takes an object. The use of the original Latin declension for Latin names is quite typical in ON texts (see e.g. Sturla Bóðarson’s Hákonar saga Hákaronar).

(1.8) gram sólar – sólar [n.fem.gen.sg. of sól ‘sun’], gram [n.masc.acc.sg. of gramr ‘king’]. The noun phrase reads as [‘prince of the sun’]; it is a straightforward kenning for CHRIST (Meissner 1921: 372).

(1.8) Krosshólm – kross [n.masc.gen.sg. of kross ‘cross’], hólum [n.masc.dat.pl. of hóll/hváll ‘hill’]. The place-name reads as ‘The Hills of the Cross’, but no such place is mentioned in Laxdæla saga. It, as well as the claim – unsubstantiated by the saga text or other saga sources – that Auðr was Christian, appears in Landnámabók (1986: 139, ch. S97/H84). Jesse Byock (2001: ch. 16) discusses the issues surrounding the Christian faith of some of the first settlers.

2. Ölafur Pá nam ala, ydíl dygd geðs í bygðum, frýþr gaf fyllir dáða, fáfnis byng hiart þa, markýþr son Melkorku, Mýrkjartans ætt og hiarta, bar, en bygðisk af mægðum, Borg Egils ü-deiga.

2. Ölafur Pá nam ala iðil-dygd geðs í bygðum, frór gaf fyllir dáða Fáfnis bing Hjarð-hyldingum.

Markverðr sonr Melkorku Myrkjartans ætt ok hjarta bar, en bygðisk af mægðum Borgar Egils ödeiga.

Regular word order

Approximate English translation
Óláf Pá nurtured exceptional virtue in the house of the spirit [→ BREAST/ CHEST (heart)], the handsome doer of deeds [→ WARRIOR (Óláfr)] gave the pillow of Fáfnir [→ GOLD] to inhabitants of Hjarðaholt.

The remarkable son of Melkorka [→ ÓLÁFR] was Myrkjartan’s flesh and blood, and through marriage he became a relative of the formidable Egil [Skallagrímsson] of Borg.

Commentary
(2.1) pá – [n.masc.nom.sg. ‘peacock’]. This is a strong-declension form; in ON texts, a different an-declension form pái is normally used as Óláfr’s nickname.

(2.1) nam ala – nam [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of nema ‘take’], ala [v.inf. ‘to feed’]. In ON, nema normally takes a noun as a direct object (as in e.g. nema land [‘claim a piece of land as property’]), but it could also be used in an emphatic construction nema + infinitive, as here. The object of ala is iðil-dygd (see below). On the phonetic form of ala and its metrical implications, see “The Close” above.

(2.2) iðil-dygd – dygd [n.fem.acc.sg. of dygd ‘virtue, probity’], the object of ala in 2.1. The first element of the compound iðil-dygd, present in such MI words as iðil-fagur [‘very beautiful’], is derived from the ON prefix ið- [‘very’] (JdV: 283) and acts as a reinforcement; the overall meaning of the noun is ‘exceptional virtue’. On alliteration in this line, see “Alliteration” above.

(2.3) geðs í bygðum – geðs [n.neut.gen.sg. of geð ‘mind, mood, spirit’], bygðum [n.fem. dat.pl. of bygð ‘abode, habitation’]. The whole stands for í geðs bygðum [‘in the dwelling-places of spirit’] and is a rather conventional kenning for BREAST/ CHEST.
(Meissner 1921: 134–138); one wants the English translation to read ‘in his heart’, yet the kenning used is not a kenning for heart, as the latter has a different model (Meissner 1921: 138). On the syntax of this noun phrase, see “Noun Phrase Word Order” above. (2.3) friðr – [adj.masc.nom.sg. ‘beautiful’]. This word cannot be friðr [n.masc. ‘peace’] with short i, because r in this word is not radical (acc. sg. from is frið) and the phrase already has a noun in the nominative (Óláfr).

(2.3) fyllir dáða – fyllir [n.masc.nom.sg. ‘filler’], dáða [n.fem.gen.pl. of dáð ‘deed’]. The whole is an awkward kenning for WARRIOR, referring to Óláfr. See “Kennings” above.

(2.4) Fáfnis bing – bing [n.masc.acc.sg. of bingr ‘bed, bolster’], Fáfnis [n.masc.gen.sg. of Fáfnir ‘Fafnir’, a dragon’s name]. The whole is a straightforward kenning ‘bed of a dragon’ → GOLD. On the manuscript’s dotted y for short i, see “Manuscript Spelling”.

(2.4) Hjarð-hyltingum – [n.masc.dat.pl. of Hjarð-hyltingr ‘person who dwells at Hjarðarholi’, the farmstead of Óláfr pái]. Lines 2.3 and 2.4 as a whole amount to: friðr fyllir dáða gaf Hjarðhyltingum bing Fáfnis ['lit. ‘the handsome warrior gave gold to the dwellers of Hjarðarholi’], portraying Óláfr as a king giving gold to his retainers. Being a 10th-century Iceland, Óláfr was not a king and had no retainers either.22 This is just a poetic way to indicate his status as a leader of men and owner of Hjarðarholi, paralleling a similar description of Auðr in stanza 1. On alliteration in this line, see “Alliteration” above.

(2.5) markverðr – mark- [bare stem of n.neut. mark ‘mark, brand; sign’], verðr [adj.masc. nom.sg. ‘worthily’]. The whole is a compound adjective meaning ‘remarkable’; this word in not in ClVig, hence it is another indication of lateness of our text.

(2.7) byggðisk af meðgðum – [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of byggja ‘to become populated’], meðgðum [n.masc.dat.pl. of meðg ‘relationship through marriage’]. A rather unusual construction given the verb’s meaning. It is normally used in phrases such as in Ísland byggðisk ['Iceland was settled, became an inhabited land’]; here it seems that this verb is applied to Óláfr pái and means ‘became inhabited through marriage by the decisiveness of Egill of Borg’. Highlighting his settlement in Iceland contrasts with ‘he had continued the heart and family of Myrkjartan’ (i.e. Óláfr pái’s Irish maternal grandfather) of the previous line. Another possibility is to read byggja as ‘marry, establish relationship with’, in ClVig, however, it is implied that only the non-reflexive form byggja can carry this meaning; if so, as it takes an object in genitive, Egils ódeiga is to be read as the genitive singular (ódeiga [adj.masc.gen.sg. of ódeigi, the weak form of ódeigr ‘unsoft, harsh’]), it agrees with Egils [n.masc.gen.sg. of Egill], yielding ‘and then established a connection with the harsh Egill of Borg through marriage’ (Óláfr pái married Egill’s daughter Porgerðr). We prefer the latter, but it seems to be stretching the limits of grammar.

(2.8) Egils – [n.masc.gen.sg. of Egill, personal name]; on the manuscript spelling Eigoís, see “Alliteration” above.

(2.8) ódeiga – [adj.masc.gen.sg. of ódeigi, the weak form of ódeigr ‘unsoft, harsh’], a fitting epithet for Egill’s fiery temper. On alliteration and stem-rhyme in this line, see “Alliteration” above.

3.
Kúrt bar Óláfsson Kiþtan, klára, fagúr á háreñ, göldýndúr, giófüll, Sýnde, gnötter meftú íprótta, miallhvýtú af bar öllum, í trú viðfadeft chrífte, dò við Stein dal á Svýna, dórpoll7 kniám í Bolla.

3.

Regular word order
Kjartan Óláfsson bar klára kurt. [Kjartan var] fagr á hárin [neuter plural with definite article].
Approximate English translation
Kjartan, son of Óláfr, was a true gentleman, and a fair-haired one at that, good-natured, munificent, possessed a lot of various skills. He was head and shoulders above all the rest, a firm believer in the spotless faith of Christ, [he] died by a stone in Svinadal, tree of spears [➔ WARRIOR (Kjartan)], on Bolli’s knees.

Commentary
(3.1) kurt – [n.fem.acc.sg. of kurt ‘courtesy, fine manners, chivalrous feat’], often used with verb bara ['carry, bear'].
(3.2) klára – klár [adj.fem.acc.sg. of klár ‘clear’], strong form, agreed with kurt.
(3.3) góðlyndr – góð- [bare stem of adj. góðr ‘good’], -lyndr [adj.masc.nom.sg. ‘mooded, tempered in this or that manner’]; the whole is a compound adjective meaning ‘good-natured, good-spirited’.
(3.4) gnóttir mestu íþrótta – gnóttir [n.fem. acc.pl. of gnótt ‘abundance, plenty’], mestu [adj. ‘most’], íþrótta [n.fem.gen. pl. of íþrotta ‘sport, skill’]. The adjective is in a weak form in the plural, thus it can be agreed with either íþróttu or with gnóttir. The resulting meanings ‘awesome plenty of skills’ or ‘plenty of awesome skills’ are identical.

(3.5) mjallhvítu – mjall- [bare unumlatued stem of n.masc. mjóli ‘fresh powdery snow’], hvítu [adj.fem.dat.sg. of hvítr ‘white’, weak form]. A compound adjective meaning ‘as pure as driven snow’, rendered here in translation as ‘spotless’. The second element is relevant there: ‘white’ is a traditional ON epithet for Christ, and the weak form of the adjective denotes the permanence of the characteristic denoted. The compound adjective is agreed with trú [n.fem.dat.sg. of trúa ‘faith’] in 3.6 (on the syntax, see “Features Retained from Classical dróttkvætt”).
uses is ON \textit{hálta} [‘to hold’], the usual ON verb for this expression.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{(3.6) Kristi} – this is gen.sg. form of Latin \textit{Christus} (the phrase is \textit{trú Kristi} [‘Christ’s faith’]), not of Icelandic \textit{Kristr}, where \textit{Kristi} also features but as a dative case form (see also the comment on line 1.7).

\textbf{(3.7) stein} – [n.masc.acc.sg. of \textit{steinn} ‘stone’].

Kjartan is killed in the ambush of Bolli and Guðrún’s brothers; the fight between them takes place near a certain large stone in the Swine Valley, Svínadal (\textit{Laxdæla saga} 49).

\textbf{(3.7) dal á Svína} – stands for \textit{á Svínadal} in the sentence [Kjartan] dö við stein á Svínadal, í knjöm Bolla ['[Kjartan] died on Bolli’s knees next to a stone in Svínadal’]; see “Noun Phrase Word Order” above).

\textbf{(3.8) dpr-pollr} – \textit{dpr}– [bare stem from n.neut. darr ‘spear’], \textit{pollr} [n.masc.nom.sg. ‘fir-tree; peg, thole’ (the latter is a cognate)]; the whole means ‘spear-tree’, a kenning for \textbf{WARRIOR}. The form \textit{dpr}– marks the text as late. In ON, the same form would have been the plural unumlauted stem from neuter noun \textit{darr} [‘spear’], however, this particular usage is unattested in classical \textit{dróttkvætt}, where the word \textit{darr}, if used in plural, is always in genitive (\textit{darr-}) and hardly ever used in kennings for \textbf{WARRIOR}.,\textsuperscript{24} its normal role is as a determinant for kennings of \textbf{BATTLE} (see e.g. commentary on 7.7). In the \textit{rímir} tradition, however, the earlier-neuter plural \textit{dpr} was re-interpreted as a singular form (and also changed gender to masculine in some cases, see [OR: 70]). It is this later form that our poet uses to coin a kenning – but coins it according to an ancient model.

4.

Bolle var fremdar fullr, frán veitti Rýnar mána, ólukka mest hann œsti

...
(4.3) ólukka mest hann æsti – æsti [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of asalása ‘to incite, stir up’]; ólukka [n.fem.nom.sg. lit. ‘un-luck’, here ‘evil fate’], hann [pron.masc.acc.sg. of hann ‘he’]. Here, hann is the accusative object of the verb and ólukka is the nominative subject, assigning agency to luck as an active force, as is usual in Icelandic lore. Ólukka is here translated into English as ‘evil fate’ to avoid any misleading implications that the killing of Kjartan was an accident of ‘luck’ in its modern English sense.

(4.5) Fótbíti brá hann bitrum – Fótbíti [n.masc.dat.sg. of Fótbítr ‘Leg-Cutter’, a sword-name]; brá [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of bregða ‘to set in swift motion, brandish’], bitrum [adj.masc.dat.sg. of bitr lit. ‘bitter’ (a cognate), here ‘sharp’]. Both the noun bitr and adjective bitr are derived from the same ON verb bita [‘to cut’ (cognate of English to bite), producing an etymological stem-rhyme; bitr is regularly used as an epithet for swords in ON because of the meaning of the verb. Both -bíti and bitrum are dat. sg. because bregða calls for a dative of instrument (lit. ‘he [Bolli] brandished with a sharp sword’).

(4.6) bruggar sér dauðans muggu – bruggar [v.3.sg.pres.ind. of brugga ‘to brew’], sér [pron.dat.sg. ‘to himself’], dauðans [n.masc.gen.sg. of dauði ‘death’, with a suffixed definite article], muggu [n.fem.acc.sg. of mugga ‘soft-drizzling mist’, here a heiti for storm]. ON brugga, although cognate with English brew, is normally used in the sense ‘to trouble, confound; to concoct, scheme’ and almost never with the sense of cooking, as here, where the object is mugga, a kind of wet snowstorm. The expression (Bolli) bruggar sér dauðans muggu [‘brews himself a storm of death’] refers to the doom of revenge that Bolli prepares for himself by killing Kjartan.

(4.7–8) drakons dikja dreifir – dreifir [n.masc.nom.sg. ‘scatterer’, a nomen agentis from v. dreifa ‘scatter, disseperse’]; dikja [n.neut.gen.pl. of dik/dík ‘dike’]; drakons [n.masc.gen.sg. of drakon ‘dragon’]. In ON, dreki was more common for ‘dragon’, but drakon is also found. On the use of dik as a heiti for bed here, see “Kennings” above; the whole is a straightforward extended kenning for MAN/WARRIOR referring to Bolli: ‘scatterer of bed of the dragon’ → ‘scatterer of gold’ → WARRIOR.

(4.8) vápnageyfu – geyfu [n.fem.dat.sg. of geyfa ‘an unusually dark snowstorm’, related to n.fem. gufa ‘vapour’]; vápna [n.neut.gen.pl. of vápn ‘weapon’]. The whole reads as a kenning ‘snowstorm of weapons’ → BATTLE. Geyfa is neither in ClVig nor in LP and is another mark of the lateness of the text; on vápna in this kenning, see “Kennings” above.

5. All-nett var Ölyvís dötter, olle þó Slífa Bolla, barst heife dóms í draúma, dími gæfa Siñar æfe. Þiðranda-bana Brúder, beck af fiýgeñ, frá Reckum, þreif bú7t, vid ofla ýfreñ, unúr fallda vard Núña.

5. All-nett var Ösvífísdóttir, olli þó slysi Bolla; barsk henni dóms í draúma dimm-gæfa sinnar æfi; Þiðrandabana, brúðar bekk af stúgin, frá rekkum þreif bert við ofsa yfrinn; Unnr falda varð nunna.

Regular word order

Approximate English translation
Guðrún, the daughter of Ösvífr, was [a] splendid woman, however she made life difficult for [her husband] Bolli. The bad luck that was to be her lot in life revealed itself to her in a fateful dream. [She] snatched [Gunnar] the Killer of Þiðrandi from the hands of men [of her groom Pørkel], having stepped down from the women’s bench, and provided him [= Gunnar] with lots of wealth. Unm of female headgear [→ WOMAN (Guðrún)] became a nun.
Commentary

(5.2) olli slysi – olli [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of valda ‘wield; cause, inflict’], slysi [n.neut.dat.sg. of slys ‘bad accident; mischief’]. In sagas, slys is characteristically used to describe female scheming (e.g. the actions of Hallgerðr, Bolli’s aunt from Njáls saga). The manuscript has slysa, which is a gen.pl. form; however, the verb valda takes an object in dative case, so we emend accordingly.

(5.3) barsk – [v.3.sg.pret.ind.refl. of bera ‘to bear, carry’, not berask [‘to be seen’]25]. The subject for this verb is dimm-gæfa [‘bad fate’] in 5.4, and the phrase literally means ‘bad fate carried itself’ i döms drauma [‘into fateful dreams’] (see below), i.e. the bad fate ‘entered’ into Guðrún’s fateful dreams, thus revealing itself.

(5.3) döms i drauma – döms [n.masc.gen.sg. of dömr ‘judgement; doom’], drauma [n.masc. acc.pl. of draumr ‘dream’]. The normal word order of words/stems is i döms drauma [‘into a fateful, prophetic dream’] (on the syntax, see “Noun Phrase Word Order” above). Drauma is here in accusative plural, which, when used with prepositions í, á etc., implies motion (in)to (see barsk above), whereas the dative would imply a state of being in or at a place or thing. The phrase refers to the episode in Laxdæla 33 where Guðrún recounts four of her dreams and these are interpreted as predicting each of her four marriages.

(5.4) dimm-gæfa – dimm- [bare stem of adj. dimmr ‘dark, dim’], gæfa [n.fem.nom.sg. ‘luck’]. This compound is an invention of our poet, literally meaning ‘dark luck’, i.e. bad luck, bad fate. The ON word for this would have been ógæfa [lit. ‘unluck’], on which see 4.3.

(5.5) Piðrandad-bana – bana [n.masc.acc.sg. of bani ‘death; killer’], Piðrandad [n.masc. gen.sg. of Piðrandi, a personal name]. This refers to the episode of Guðrún hiding the killer of Piðrandi (Laxdæla 69).

(5.5–6) brúðar bekk – bekk [n.masc.acc.sg. of bekkr ‘bench’ (a cognate)], brúðar [MI n.fem.gen.sg. of brúðr ‘bride’]: the compound noun means ‘women’s bench’, an area in an Icelandic longhouse. The manuscript spelling brúðir with -e- does not make sense; the possible conjectures are bróðir [n.masc.nom. ‘brother’], brúðar and brúður [n.fem.nom. ‘bride’]. The former is rejected because no brothers of Gunnar Piðrandabani feature in the particular episode of Laxdæla, whereas the latter corresponds verbally to the relevant section of Laxdæla 69 (lexical matches underlined):

En Guðrún sat innar á þverpalli ok þar konur hjá henni ok höfðu líþ á höfði; en þegar hon verð r vor víð, stíg þon af brúðbekkinum ok heitr á sína menn at veita Gunnari lið.

Guðrún meanwhile sat on the women’s bench with other ladies around herself, and all wore festive headgear; so when she becomes aware [of the commotion related to Þorkell seeing through Gunnarr’s disguise], she steps down from the women’s bench and orders her men to defend Gunnarr.

It is possible to read brúður as the nominative subject (= Guðrún), although this would be an indicator of the lateness of the poem since in ON the form would be brúðr, unsuitable for the close. We prefer to read the brúðar bekk as a compound that consciously mirrors the phrasing of the saga (which requires editorially moving the end-line comma). The use of the genitive inflection of brúðr thus appears as a metrically motivated alternative to the bare stem forming the compound owing to the rhythm of the close. This particular type of enjambment in which a two-stem non-kenning compound is split in two by the end of the line is not very common in classical dróttkvætt, although it is used. The case is accusative because motion is implied in the verb phrase stígin af -bekk [‘standing up from bench’] (5.3).

(5.6) stígin – [pp.fem.nom.sg of stíginn ‘risen’, of v. stiga ‘step upwards; run’]. This agrees in gender, case and number with Guðrún, hence a single n, despite the nasal overstroke in the manuscript. As noted in “Manuscript Spelling”, a nasal stroke over n may function here as a reading aid, distinguishing handwritten n (marked by an acute accent) from n (marked with overstroke).

(5.6) rekkrum – [n.masc.dat.pl. of rekkr ‘free man’]. The word is used as a poetic synonym for men in general, here referring to companions of Þorkell.
(5.7) *þreif* – [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of *þrífa* ‘to clutch, grasp, take hold’]. Gudrun here is said to ‘grasp Gunnar away from Þorkell’s men’.

(5.7) *ofsa yfrinn* – *yfrinn* [adj.masc.acc.sg ‘excessive’], *ofsa* [n.masc.acc.sg of *øfsi* ‘arrogance; extravagance’]. The word *øfsi* typically means ‘tyranny, overbearance’, and more precisely readiness to resort to violence in pursuit of one’s goals with arrogant disregard for laws and justice (Byock 2001: chs. 10, 13); by extension it also just means ‘extravagance’, as in riches etc., which is the meaning active here. The phrase means that Gudrun has provided (or, to be precise, had her husband Þorkell provide) Gunnar with a lot of money on his way out of Iceland.

(5.8) *Unnr falda* – *falda* [n.fem.gen.pl. of *faldr*, ‘special women’s headgear’ worn by high-status ladies in Iceland], *Unnr* [n.fem.nom.sg, a female personal name]. It is a regular kenning for woman coined according to a well-attested model ‘female name of piece of female attire’ [LP: 582; Meissner 1921: 405–409]. This headgear appears in the episode of *Laxdæla* quoted in 5.5, where *lín* [lit. ‘linen’] is a common synonym for *faldr*, which was white and made of that fabric. In some ON texts, Ævdr the Deep-Minded is called *Unnr* instead of *Auðr*. Our poet could potentially be linking Guðrún to the earlier heroine of the poem. With emendation, another interpretation is possible. Regular word order

**Approximate English translation**

Þorkell Eyjólfs, a most remarkable man, having climbed high on the gables, with his own hands measured the frame of that very beautiful minster in Trondheim; he was eager to build a large house of One God at Helgafell, even though the gracious king forbade that; death ruined his plans.

**Commentary**

(6.1) *Þorkell Eyjólfs* – i.e. Þorkell Eyjólfssson, fourth husband of Guðrún (see plot summary above). On the particular form and word order of this sequence, see “Lexical and Syntactic Features” above.

(6.1) *merkr* – [adj.masc.nom.sg. ‘remarkable, noteworthy, truthful’]. Agreed with *Þorkell*.

(6.2) *musteris* – [n.neut.gen.sg. of *mustari* ‘temple’]. The word is derived from Latin *monasterium* (> English *minster*); the word is in the same form in *Laxdæla* 74, to the events of which most of this stanza refers.

(6.2) *burstum* – [n.fem.dat.pl. of *burst* ‘gable’ in a house]; *hátt á burstum* [‘high on the gables’] is part of the clause that has *mældi* as the principal verb (6.4), meaning that Þorkell was measuring the church while having climbed high up the scaffolding as described in *Laxdæla* 74. The manuscript spelling has *bustum*, lacking -r-, a common spelling mistake already in ON times; we restore it here for clarity. However, *burst* is the correct spelling and pronunciation for the 18th century (e.g. Björn Halldórsson 1992: 95) and necessary here for correct *aðalhending*, a full stem rhyme with *musteris* (which has never had r before s), which is a mark of the lateness of the text.
(6.3) í ósi Níðar – osi [n.masc.dat.sg of óss ‘mouth of a river’], Níðar [n.fem.gen.sg of Níð ‘river Nid’]. This stands for í Níðarósi [‘in Trondheim’], where the events of Laxdæla 74 take place (on the syntax, see “Noun Phrase Word Order” above).

(6.4) mældi armi – [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of mæla ‘measure’], armi [n.masc.dat.sg. of armr ‘arm’]. The verb has d in preterite, unlike its etymologically distinct homonyms mæla [v. ‘speak’], which has t, and mæla/mála [v. ‘paint’]. Armí is a dative instrumental; the phrase means ‘Þorkell measured the wooden frame of it (i.e. the church) with his own hand’. This is the only finite verb in the first half-stanza; the sentence runs as follows: Þorkell Eyjófls, mjǫk merkr, mældi armi þess alfríðs musteris í Níðarósi, hátt á burstum [‘Þorkell of Eyjólfr, a famous person, measured the frame of the very beautiful church in Trondheim with his own hand, [sitting] high on the gable’].

(6.4) karma – [n.masc.acc.pl. of karmr ‘wooden frame’]. Þorkell was measuring the church’s frame while it was still being built (see plot summary above).

(6.5) eins – eins [adj.masc.gen.sg of einn ‘one’] is a displaced adjective agreed with guðs [n.masc.gen.sg of guð ‘God’], and the correct word order for this noun phrase is stóran rann eins guðs [‘big house of one God’]. In the same verse, stóran [adj.masc.acc.sg of stórr ‘big’], agreed with rann [n.masc.acc.sg of ran ‘house’], is also a displaced adjective. Such displacement is nothing unusual for classical dróttkvætt and is used regularly alongside other splittings and inversions (see “Features Retained from Classical dróttkvætt”). This noun phrase features several splits and inversions: the correct word order is either stóran rann eins guðs or eins guðs stóran rann with nn distancings. The actual order in the stanza text is eins stóran ... guðs rann with three distancings (between stóran and rann, rann and eins, and eins and guðs) and several inversions.

(6.5) girndisk – [v.3.sg.pret.ind.refl. of girna ‘to yearn for, long for, have a craving for’]. An expansion on the reference to Laxdæla 74. The manuscript spelling with -t- is a mark of lateness: it is MI, while ON has preterite with d (to which we emend).

(6.5) gera – [v.inf. ‘make’]. See “Concerning the Close”.

(6.6) banni – [v.3.sg.pres.subj. of banna ‘forbid’]. The phrase runs þó konungr banni [‘even though the king forbade [that]’]. In the saga, however, the king did not forbid Þorkell to copy his church; Óláfr was offended by actions of Þorkell (i.e. his attempts to copy and even surpass the king’s church), regarding this as a presumption, and uttered a prophecy to the effect that the wood taken by Þorkell will not be used to build the huge church he intends to, thus effectively cursing him.

(6.7) hollr – [adj.masc.nom.sg. ‘gracious (of kings and chiefs)’]. Agreed with konungr [n.masc.nom.sg. ‘king’] in the previous line.

(6.8) afmáði – [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of af-má ‘to destroy’]. A rather rare ON verb.

7.

Hardbeins Son Helge giórde, hrýngþoll i giegnum Bolla, Sáratein breiðan bera, blán íkipte hýlldar mána; Húgfúllan Helga fellir Hóllú Sonar býntrólled, darraskúr dal í Skorra, dýnde úr Skýuml ûnda.

7.

Harðbeinsson Helgi gerði hringþoll í gegnum Bolli, sáratein breiðjan bera blán, skipti Hildar mána. Hugfúllan Helga fellir Hóllusonar býntrólled. Darraskúr dal í Skorra dýndi úr skýuml únda.

Regular word order

Approximate English translation
Helgi Harðbeinsson ran a spear through Bolli, carried a wide-bladed spear
blue, split the moon of battle [→ SHIELD].
The fearless Helgi was killed
by the armour-troll [→ GROUP OF WARRIORS/
The rain of spears [→ BATTLE] at Skorradal
rained from the skies [i.e. was very loud].

Commentary
(7.2) hring-poll – hring- [bare stem of n.masc. hríngr ‘bracelet; sword’s guard’; poll [n.masc.acc.sg. of pollr ‘fir-tree’]. The whole is a kenning-like structure that here means SPEAR, referring to that with which Helgi kills Bolli (Laxdæla 55) (see “Kennings” above).

(7.3) sáratein – sára [n.neut.gen.pl. of sár ‘wound, sore’], tein [n.masc.acc.sg. of teinn ‘thorn’]. The whole is a classic kenning ‘thorn of wound’ → SPEAR, yet here, like hring-pollr [‘ring-fir’] → SPEAR in 7.2, means SPEAR.

(7.4) blán – [adj.masc.acc.sg. of blár ‘blue or jet-black’]. It is most likely agreed with sáratein (a SPEAR-kenning: 7.3), depicting the dark color of metal, but may also be agreed with mána (baseword in a SHIELD-kenning: 7.4).

(7.4) skipti – [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of skipta ‘divide into shares; be of importance’]. A rare and somewhat awkward Icelandic use of the verb, as its meaning here seems to be ‘to split into parts by striking’, presumably referring to Helgi’s spear going (‘splitting’) through Bolli’s shield and pinning him to the wall, according to the saga.

(7.4) Hildar mána – Hildar [n.fem.gen.sg. of Hildr ‘Hildr’ (name of a valkyrie), acts as heiti for BATTLE]; mána [n.masc.acc.sg. of máni ‘moon’]. The whole is a ‘moon of battle’ → SHIELD kenning.

(7.6) Hollusonar – [n.masc.gen.sg. of Høllusonr ‘son of Halla’]. A reference to Þorgils Hølluson, whom Guðrún was able to go into killing Helgi through a deceitful promise of marriage (Laxdæla 57–65; see plot summary above).

(7.6) bryn-trollit – bryn- [bare stem of n.fem. brynjla ‘armour, coat of mail’], trollt [n.neut.nom.sg. of troll ‘troll’, with agreed postpositive definitive article]. The whole reads ‘troll of armour’, a kind of halberd according to ClVig, but it can also be read as kenning for AXE. The correct form is troll (JdV: 598), while the manuscript has troll, a later variant form; we replace it with the etymologically correct one for the sake of editorial consistency, yet the late form is necessary here for a correct adalhending with (etymologically correct) Høllu and is a mark of the lateness of text. The whole phrase means ‘Halla’s son’s halberd/axe killed the valiant Helgi’, which is inconsistent with the saga: the axe is carried by Helgi, while both Þorgils Hølluson and Bolli Bollason carry swords; also, it is Bolli who kills Helgi. A factual error on the part of our poet seems very unlikely: he is attentive to tiny details of the saga text, sometimes with direct verbal correspondences (see 5.5 above). We presume that our poet has not made a mistake or worked from an anomalous copy of the saga. We therefore interpret ‘the armour-troll’ not as a weapon but as an ad hoc kenning → WARRIOR. Neuter nouns can have a collective meaning in the singular, and its use here can thus be construed as ‘GROUP OF TROLLS/ARMY’, referring to Þorgils Hølluson’s party that dispatched Helgi. In classical poetry, troll is only attested as a baseword in kennings for AXE, never for MAN/WARRIOR, and this type of collective use of the neuter singular is not found; this use of bryntroll → ARMY can thus be considered a poetic invention of our poet with no basis in the kenning system of classical dróttkvætt.

(7.7) darra-skúr – darra [n.neut.gen.pl. of darr ‘spear’], skúr [n.fem.nom.sg. ‘shower’]. ‘Shower of spears’ → BATTLE is a straightforward ‘bad weather of weapon’ kenning.

(7.7) dal í Skorra – stands for í Skorradal. Skorradal is where Helgi Harðbeinsson lived and was killed in an event referenced by this stanza (on syntax, see “Noun Phrase Word Order” above).

(7.8) dundi – [v.3.sg.pret.ind. of dynja ‘to gush, shower, pour (of rain), with the additional notion of sound’ (following ClVig: 111)]. The presence of ‘noise’ in the semantics allows the verb to be used in the meanings ‘to din, rumble’, referring to battle; here it is semantically agreed with skúr, the whole phrase meaning ‘the battle made so much noise as to fill the sky’, yet
also literally ‘the rain of spears at Skorradal was falling down with a great noise out of the clouds’. Such word choice, where, e.g. the verb is picked to (partially) agree semantically with the literal (i.e. inactive) meaning of a kenning baseword (in our case, the basic meaning of the baseword skír is ‘rain’, and the rain pours, hence the choice of dynja), is typical for certain varieties of skaldic verse and described in Snorra Edda (HT 6–7, sections on sannkenningar and nýgörvingar).

**Conclusion**

We believe this little poem is a very interesting text for several reasons. Not only does it represent an attempt to write in dróttkvætt, a very strict metre on many levels, including syntactic, lexical and phraseological, a long time after the oral dróttkvætt tradition had likely died out, but also an attempt that, as we believe we have shown, should be judged as largely successful. The author demonstrates his very advanced understanding of the metrical requirements of dróttkvætt, as well as his very effective grasp of skaldic poetics and the generative principles of skaldic vocabulary – a truly remarkable achievement. Even if dróttkvætt was not alive in his time, it does come alive in his poem. The poet also demonstrates his skill and creativity in two veins, one that successfully fits new developments in the language into the confines of the old rules, and one that stretches what was in fact theoretically possible, even though unrealized, in classical dróttkvætt, and in other veins that are either unrelated to the dróttkvætt modus operandi or altogether impossible. It is a curious example of what may be styled as a ‘post-mortem’ life of a metre and a poetic system that was once central to the Icelandic tradition, and one that, apparently, was still alive aurally (though most likely not orally), had remained culturally relevant, and, to a degree, resurrectable and renewable centuries later. Further, such evidence of the very active engagement of our poet/scribe with the skaldic tradition should also be considered important for wider issues of the existence and (especially post-medieval) transmission of ON prosimetric texts such as sagas; even if Tyrfringur is probably a rather rare bird in that he composed skaldic verse at such a late date, he certainly could not have been that rare in possessing a very advanced working comprehension of it.

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**Notes**

1. **Vísur um Kjartan og Bolla** by Bóður Magnússön are preserved in the following Laxdæla manuscripts from the 17th century: TCD MS. 1008 fol., AM 127 fol., AM 126 fol., AM 125 fol., — 4°, AM 396 fol. From the 18th century: Add. Ms. 11111 fol., IB 45 fol., TCD MS 1009 fol., Lbs 151 4°, Ms. 4° 306, Lbs 1212 4°.

2. In this article, we only refer to stanzas from kappakvæði or panegyrics in praise of Laxdæla saga characters that were used as finishing pieces to the saga text. As they are not relevant to the topic of the current article, the discussion does not extend to other poems that conclude the saga (e.g. in IB 71 4° and Lbs 1332 4°) or stand-alone poetry inspired by the saga (e.g. Kjartanskvæði preserved in JS 520 8° and Laxdelaðgarður by Eiríkur Bjarnason in the autograph JS 46 4°). For a more thorough discussion of these, see the forthcoming doctoral thesis of Sofie Vanherpen.

3. The third vísa or stanza was published in Modern Icelandic spelling without any further analysis or discussion in (Kjartan Oláfsson 1999: 5).

4. These three manuscripts are: Lbs 2480 40r written in 1742 (Páll Eggert Ólason 1935–1937: 325), MS Boreal 144 written in 1746 (Madan 1897: 469) and Lbs 513 4r written in 1746–1747 (Páll Eggert Ólason 1918: 262).

5. In more detail, see: https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/is/Lbs04-0513.

6. This is the opening sentence of a very long period detailing the provenence of this text of Eyrrýgja saga.

7. The following note, in a different hand, is added to this colophon: Prestur af Stað í Súgandafjörði [‘Pastor at Staður in Súgandafjörður’] (Lbs 513 4o, f. 102r).

8. One case of þyrfing are editions of Vápnfríðinga saga (1950), of which only a singlevellum leaf of a (late) medieval manuscript survives (Jón Helgason 1975: 62–78), while the bulk of the saga texts preserved in paper manuscripts that date from 16th century or later have essentially MI spellings. Despite this, the non-diplomatic editions of the saga

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routinely replace the spellings of these post-
medieval manuscripts with ON ones.

9. A peculiar case is 2.5 markv/br where no epenthetic -u-
is spelled out (cf. 3.3 gøldýndir in an identical grammatical role and in identical metrical position).

10. Although the discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to point out that it is not at all clear whether the syllables called ‘long’ in MI and syllables counted as ‘long’ in ON dróttkvætt rely on the same concept of ‘length’, and, if not, whether these ‘lengths’ are comparable (Kristján Árnason 1980: 203–216).

11. As a matter of exception, some complete lines of ljóðahlátr have a monosyllabic close or, as a matter of extremely rare exception, the dróttkvætt type of close, i.e. in the form of long disyllable (Sievers 1893: 84, §57.4).

12. Some complete lines of ljóðahlátr, as a matter of exception, have only two lifts (Sievers 1893: 89, §57.8).

13. As contrasted with the end of the long line of Old English metre and ON fomyrðislág, which consistently lack marking and have, consequently, weak ends.


15. In such exceptional cases this syllable is the single one of a single-syllable separate word that is not part of the compound crossing into the close. Also, it can only happen in odd lines, as in this odd line from yet another stanza by Hávarðr (SKj B-1, 180–6–3): hvatr frík at brá bírum (cf. stanza 4 below). This issue is discussed in some detail in a paper by Willaim Craigie (1900): see esp. 356–359 for the limited number of examples. Craigie also mentions (1900: 361), without discussing, three examples of proper dróttkvætt lines (out of many thousands) that violate even this codified exception, i.e. they feature a compound crossing into the close that has a single-syllable first element marked by alliteration. However, in all such cases this syllable doubles alliterates with the close, i.e. they all feature that metrical rarity, a compound noun with internal double alliteration (not infrequent in general Icelandic language, but studiously avoided in poetry). It is also telling that two of these three examples are, again, from Snorri Sturluson’s experimental Hátattal, and only one, coined by Björn Híðielakappi (SKj B-1, 282–23), is from a ‘common’ source. The present authors, on scanning the entirety of SKj, have found only two additional lines not mentioned by Craigie, both by the 10th-century skald Kormákr Ógmundarson, and both involving the same compound Tin-teini (SKj B-1, 78–38, 81–49). Such is the rarity of this deviant phenomenon.

16. Cf. the following even line from another stanza by Hávarðr (SKj B-1, 180–7–8): íngjarna þór-bjarnar: þórbjarnar phonetically and morphologically matches hyttl-ingum and ó-deiga but the element þór is not marked by any sound repetition tools, with the alliteration falling on im- for vowel alliteration with the preceding line and -bjarnar stem-rhyming with -sjarna.

17. On similar rhyming features in wider Icelandic poetry, see Jón Axel Harðarson 2007.

18. Egill’s coinage is a kenning hapax legomenon. Kennings for SUMMER do not exist; what we do have are kennings for WINTER with the kenning-model of ‘death of snakes’ (e.g. naðr [n.masc. gen.sg. of naðr ‘viper, snake’] ógn [n.fem.nom.sg. ‘dread, terror, menace’], HT 83). So Egill coins a one-off kenning mirror antonym, replacing ‘death’ with ‘mercy’. This process is a good illustration of how new kenning models for new referents were generated and passed (Egill’s coinage is only parseable thanks to the existence of the regular ‘death of snakes’ kenning-model). This one-off model, however, did not stick – we find only two later coinages with miskunn, both probably stemming from Egill’s unique coinage as the absence of variation in their basewords implies.

19. E.g. at gusti geirs [‘in the gust of the spear’ = battle] in the anonymous Óláfs drápa Tregyvosnor 17.4: hæstr varð geirs at gusti; cf. í drífu vífs Mistar [‘in the snowstorm of the woman of Mist (a Valkyrie)’ = battle] in Guthormr sindri’s Hákonadrápá 1.4: Mistar vífs í drífu.

20. The interpretation of her-jjjurr as a kenning for prince would be anomalous for classical Icelandic: jjurr is rarely as a baseword for such kennings, most often used alone as a laudatory epithet, while herr, though fitting the semantic requirements of a determinant of such kennings, is never used as one (Meissner 1921: 354).

21. The only way to keep the original végur is to assume it is gen. sg. of Vega, the proper name of the star in the constellation Lyra. This would be, as far as we know, a unique appearance of this star’s name in Icelandic poetry. Such a word, similarly to mámi [‘moon’], can act as a heiti for fire in kennings for gold coined following the model of ‘fire of water’; we can get water if we assume that the manuscript’s úðar stands for unnar, gen. sg. of unnr [‘wave’]. The alternation between forms in -unnar and in -úðr is attested in ON and particularly for this word (OR: 380), but we still have to emend the double acute accent, signifying a long vowel, to short one. If so, we get a three-stem extended kenning for woman with inverted stem order, unnar Vega trúð [‘the faggot of the star of the wave’ → ‘faggot of GOLD’ → WOMAN’].

22. On the attempt very rich and powerful Icelanders of the Sturlunga Age to have retainers, see (Byock 2001: 345).

23. Þá mölti konungr: “Deiss vil ek bíðja þik, Kjartan, at þú haldir vel trú þína” [‘Then the king said: “This I will ask of you, Kjartan, that you remain steadfast in your faith!”’] (Laxdæla 43).

24. LP (s.v. ‘darr’) attests only one case of its use as a determinant in a warrior kenning.

25. According to CIVig (s.v.), berask [‘to be seen’] is the result of conflation with the homonymous weak verb beira [‘to make naked, to bare’].
26. In ClVig we find that in later poetry faldr is a synonym for Iceland itself; faldr being a stately white garment, the island with its glaciers was interpreted as a fine lady with a white headgear, or as a lovely headdress for the sea. If so, one can emend the manuscript’s unnarur to unnar and end up with a three-stem compound noun unnar-falda-nunna, meaning ‘a nun of Iceland’, i.e. the first or the most famous Icelandic nun [lit. ‘the nun of the hat of the waves’], unnar falda (see the commentary on 5.8). Notice that gen. pl. of falda works fine in either version. In dróttkvætt it does not matter whether we have a bare stem, or a stem seemingly marked with gen. sg., or one with gen. pl.: because (almost) no adjectives are ever agreed with inner heits of an extended kenning, this case-marker becomes simply an interfix, a ‘meaningless’ glue between compound elements (for definition of interfix, see Haspelmath, Sims 2010: 139, 332; for its usage in kennings, see Sverdløv 2006).

27. Such a mistake can even be found among quoted examples in ClVig (s.v. ‘burst’).

**Abbreviations**

3.sg. – third person singular
acc. – accusative case
adj. – adjective
ANF – Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi.
ClVig = Cleasby & Vigfusson. 1957.
dat. – dative case
fem. – feminine gender
gen. – genitive case
HT = Snorri Sturluson, Edda: Háttatal.
ind. – indicative mood
inf. – infinitive
JdV = de Vries 1962.
LP = Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis.
lit. – literally
M – Modern Icelandic
mas. – masculine gender
MS – manuscript
n. – noun
neut. – neuter gender
nom. – nominative case
ON – Old Norse
OR = Finnur Jónsson 1926–1928.
pl. – plural number
pp. – past participle
prep. – preposition
pres. – present tense
pret. – pretetrite tense
pron. – pronoun
refl. – reflexive
sg. – singular number
Skj = Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning.
subj. – subjunctive mood
v. – verb

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How Did the First Humans Perceive the Starry Night? – On the Pleiades

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Abstract: This study applies phylogenetic software to motifs connected with the Pleiades as identified in Yuri Berezkin’s database, The Analytical Catalogue of World Mythology and Folklore. The aim of analysis is to determine which, if any, of the analysed motifs are likely to have spread in conjunction with the earliest migrations out of Africa and to the Americas. The Pleiades analysis is compared to an analysis of Orion motifs.

Numerous studies have shown that many particular episodes and structural elements of mythological narratives were able to subsist over very long periods of time and that the relations which once existed between peoples separated by time and space can be interpreted through such narrative evidence (e.g. Gouhier 1892; Bogoras 1902; Jochelson 1905; Hatt 1949; Korotayev et al. 2011; Witzel 2012; Berezkin 2013; 2017; Le Quellec 2014). Mainly three types of comparative methods have been used to reconstruct narrative episodes and fragments of the worldview known to people who lived in particular epochs and regions: distribution-based studies, structural studies and phylogenetic approaches. The purpose of the present paper is to show the same by using phylogenetic methods with reference to a specific case. Here, a corpus of motifs will be statistically studied to highlight the evolution of the mythology around the Pleaides. These stars form one of the most frequently and prominently recognized constellations among the hunter-gatherer societies of both hemispheres (Hayden and Villeneuve 2011). According to many authors, including Claude Lévi-Strauss (1971a) and George E. Lankford (2007), beliefs surrounding this constellation are particularly likely to be rooted in a very early period. The mythology of the Pleaides could thus be a good indicator of extremely early long-distance migrations.

Comparative Methods

Before proceeding to the analysis, the comparative method used here will be briefly contextualized in relation to different types of comparative methods that have been used in long-term diachronic studies of mythology. The types of methods will be discussed in terms of myths as narrative plots associated with mythology and mythological motifs as elements of narrative smaller than a plot. Discussion of the methods reviewed in terms of mythology reflects the focus of the present paper, whereas uses of comparative methods reviewed are not limited to studies of myths and mythological motifs.

Areological Approaches

A method based on the study of the distribution of various myths and mythological motifs to deduce their history and their age can be described as an areological method or areology. Such methods show the clustering of different traits, motifs or versions of the same myth in order to draw conclusions about their history. The basic idea of areological methods is that the geographical distribution of a particular myth or motif is a historical outcome of its spread over time. The formalization of areological methods for the comparative research of myths began already at the end of the 19th century, with the Geographical Method of Julius Krohn, which was the foundation of what became known as the (Classic) Historical-Geographic Method (Krohn 1926; see also Frog 2013). Areoalogical methods are often used within a culture or across cultures to consider developments and exchanges that have occurred within a few centuries or a millennium of the documented traditions. On the other hand, an extensive distribution of a narrative across both Eurasia and North America normally suggests a much earlier background to the geographical relation going back to the first human migrations to the New World in the Palaeolithic, because such myths could not otherwise be communicated across these continents until recent centuries in contacts that would not normally account for such distributions of the myth.
For instance, two different Eurasian versions of the Cosmic Hunt show Eurasian—North-American parallels at the level of minor details. According to the first version, the object of the hunt and the hunters are associated with Ursa Major, the Big Dipper or Plough. Three stars of the handle of the Big Dipper are hunters and the dipper itself is an animal; Alcor, a star that appears alongside the star at the end of the Big Dipper’s handle, is a dog or a cooking pot. According to the second version, the object of the hunt and the hunter are associated with Orion. Orion’s Belt represents one or (more typically) three deer, antelopes, mountain sheep or buffaloes; the hunter is Rigel or another star below Orion’s Belt; the hunter’s arrow has pierced the game and is identified either with Betelgeuze or with the stars of Orion’s Head. The correspondences between the Eurasian and the North-American traditions are at a level of detail and complexity that can only be explained by a remote historical relation (Berezkin 2006; 2012; 2017: 73–116, Figures. 21, 25, 26). Remote historical relations have been identified for several myths and motifs, such as the motif of a dog guarding the river of the death (Berezkin 2005), the battle between dwarfs and cranes (Berezkin 2007a; Le Quellec & d’Huy 2017), and diverse narratives surrounding the origin of death (Le Quellec 2015a).

In addition to considering the distribution of single myths or motifs, areal studies can consider the distribution of myths in relation to one another. Two independent studies also show a complementary distribution of myths of the origin of humanity from underground, and of an earth-diver raising dry land from the bottom of the ocean following a succession of dives. Myths of the origin of humanity from underground are concentrated in the southern hemisphere, while the earth-diver myths are concentrated in the northern hemisphere, with few cases where they overlap. Both studies conclude that the narratives had two stages of diffusion: the myths of the origins of human beings followed one or several of the first migrations of homo sapiens out of Africa, after which the earth-diver narratives emerged and were carried in subsequent migrations from Eurasia to Northern America (Berezkin 2007b; 2010; Le Quellec 2014; 2015b). Binary, complementary distribution is found for numerous narratives (Berezkin 2013; Witzel 2012) and corresponds to what we know about the first human migrations.

**Structural Approaches**

A structural method for historical reconstruction defines a myth as the sum of all its versions. It is always possible to order all the variants of the same myth in a series, forming a group of permutations where the variants are related to one another through a series of transformations. These transformations can include the change of an element into its opposite, like here becoming there without altering a tale’s abstract structure (Lévi-Strauss 1955).

For example, Clause Lévi-Strauss (1971a: 20) compares a myth of the Greeks and a myth of the Takelma. In both, the raven is sent to remedy the lack of celestial water by means of the only available terrestrial water: a fountain (Greek) or an ocean (Takelma). Owing to greed (Greek: the bird waits for the fruit to ripen) or laziness (Takelma), the bird neglects its mission. As a punishment, the raven will be thirsty during the summer and thus his voice becomes hoarse because of his parched throat. The Greek myth is connected to the eponymous constellation Corvus [Latin ‘Raven’], which marks the end of the dry season. This myth corresponds to a myth from the Xerente people of South America about the origin of Orion and the Pleiades, constellations of summer months in South America that correspondingly mark the beginning rather than the end of the dry season. Similarly, the Blackfoot have a myth very close to that of the Xerente to explain the origin of the Pleiades, heralding a rainy period. Additionally, in North-West America, Raven is often associated with alternating tides, itself often associated with periods of drought and humidity, and of abundance and scarcity. Lévi-Strauss (1971a) concludes that it is not inconceivable that the same myth, transformed through the inversion of one of its elements in relation to the latitude and regional climate, or another myth of the same type, was used to explain the origin of a constellation linked to the dry season in all of these cultures. By comparing these, he asserts that the different versions could ultimately derive from the survival of an ancient myth’s underlying structure.
Phylogenetic Approaches

Phylogenetic classification is a system of classification of species based on the degree of genetic relationship between them. Phylogenetic approaches to myths basically seek to organize relations into a family tree on the biological model. This type of stemmatic method and associated biological metaphor was used for the study of myths already prior to the term ‘phylogenetics’ in Folklore Studies, known especially through the Classic Historical-Geographic Method with its background in Philology (Krohn 1926; Frog 2013). In The Tale of Cupid and Psyche (1955), for example, Jan-Öjvind Swahn used this type of method to examine the transmission of Arne-Thompson tale-types AT 425 and 428. Today, phylogenetic approaches are being reinvented through the adaptation of software developed for genetic research to studies of culture. Phylogenetic trees are not generated for their own sake: they are considered in relation to current knowledge and theories about the transmission and variation of traditions (Frog 2013). The relationship between language and other aspects of culture such as mythology and religion is now recognized as more complex than has often been assumed in earlier scholarship (Frog, this issue). The spread and transformation of a myth are recognized as separate processes: a myth may first spread and then undergo localized transformations in relation to cultural contacts, social change or difference in the local ecology, or transformation may be integrated into the process of spread itself. Although the processes concerned are obscure in the remote past, they are processes that occur socially and may therefore involve creating relations of sameness and difference with other groups. What spreads may also not be a myth as a stable plot; it may be only a motif, such as that of the sky-woman and of the mysterious housekeeper (d’Huy 2016d), although it is also possible that motifs may be all that remains recognizable in the data from plots that spread in the extremely remote past.

The first to have applied statistical and phylogenetic software to myths and folktales is, to the best of our knowledge, Thomas Abler. Abler used phylogenetic software to classify 41 versions of the Iroquoian myth of the creation of the world in a 1987 article. Most of the clades in the resulting stemmas or trees were shown to correspond to tribal or national traditions. The idea of using phylogenetic software to classify versions or types of narratives was taken up again by Jun’ichi Oda (2001) and later by Jamie Tehrani (2013). Since 2012, one of the present authors (JdH) has used statistical and phylogenetic tools to explore folktales in a new way. The software construes a synchronic classification of diverse versions of a same myth. Those synchronic relations are organized in a stemmatic hierarchy that suggests the myth’s diachronic evolution from a common ancestor. This perspective on diachronic evolution offers the possibility of assessing where the diffusion of a myth may mirror the first human migrations, to quantify the proportion of borrowings and innovations in different branches of its evolution, and to reconstruct first narratives, some going back to the upper Palaeolithic, and potentially even to the era of the first migrations from Africa. This method has been applied to numerous families of myths, and folktales among which may be mentioned the Cosmic Hunt (d’Huy 2012a; 2013b; 2016c), the narrative of Polyphemus (d’Huy 2012b; 2013a; 2015b), the narrative of the perverted message (Le Quellec 2015a) and of the emergence of humanity (Quellec 2015b), narratives linked to Balor-type creatures (Lajoye 2015), the motif of the sky-woman and of the mysterious housekeeper (d’Huy 2016d), and the fight between dwarfs and birds (Le Quellec & d’Huy 2016). Many of these analyses are of the themes but are based on very different corpora (three different databases for the Cosmic Hunt and for Polyphemus), offering a check of results. Results have also been checked by comparing them to what has been found from other non-statistical comparative methods.

Of course, myths are not genes, and software borrowed from biology can only provide a tool to organize myths (Abler 1987; d’Huy 2012a), traditions (d’Huy 2015a; da Silva & Tehrani 2016) or motifs (d’Huy 2016a) as data. If we accept that the more common features shared by two traditions or myths, the more likely they are to be related, then it is also possible to build diachronic ‘trees’ of myths or oral traditions that are considered to be most likely related owing to the number and
complexity of their shared features. Note that whatever the distance between two versions or traditions of the database is, the shared features should be sufficiently numerous to make random proximity impossible. The phylogenetic message present in the database should also be checked, for example with alternative methods or different data sets.

**Grounds for the Study**

As noted above, beliefs connected with constellations have been considered likely to be historically enduring even if they undergo transformations over time, making them particularly interesting for long-term diachronic study. To test this hypothesis, we used Lankford’s (2007: 263–264) table 11.1 “Occurrences of major motifs and subtypes”, which identifies the presence or absence of the eighteen star-related beliefs he identified among North American cultures (Eurasian cultures in the table were not considered).

These were taken as data without prior clustering. Using Berezkin’s database, geographical locations were identified for each linguistic-cultural group where relevant motifs have been found. A Mantel test (Jaccard’s coefficient matrix, 10,000 permutations) was applied to this data using SAM v.4.0 (Rangel et al. 2010). First, only the 24 ethnic groups with at least three of the eighteen motifs were analyzed to avoid sample bias: some of these cultures have been studied much more than others, which may account for ‘gaps’ in certain mythologies where only one comparable type was found. Then, for the same reason, only the 15 ethnic groups with at least four of the eighteen motifs were studied. Question marks in Lankford’s table have been treated as absence and a Jaccard coefficient matrix has been used. Robert M. Ross and Quentin D. Atkinson (2016) have examined the effect of distance in folktale inventories of 18 hunter-gatherer cultures of Siberia, Alaska, Canada,
and Greenland, spread across 6000 kilometers. They found that linguistic relatedness and geographic proximity were independent factors in predicting shared folktales, calculating that geographical distance is related to 25.50% of variance in the inventories. In Lankford’s data, geographical distance appears related to only 3.09% of the variance in the first dataset (p=0.004), and 9% (p=0.002) in the second (Figure 1a–b). In other words, geographical distribution does not seem to be a significant factor in which groups share motifs. This result is far lower than in Ross and Atkinson’s study, which is a potential indicator that the distribution of relevant motifs is an outcome of their longer history rather than attributable to recent contacts between adjacent populations and their networks. This preliminary finding is a potential indicator of the greater endurance of star-related beliefs among hunter-gatherer cultures. Similar conclusions have been reached in studies of d’Huy (2015a) and da Silva and Tehrani (2016), although these must be regarded with caution because their datasets were based on the Aarne–Thompson–Uther tale-type index, which is inadequate for such analyses (see Berezkin 2015; d’Huy et al. 2017). The small dataset and the large geographic distances between the groups serve as a reminder that caution is needed when attempting to interpret this data. Nevertheless, the analysis of data by George Lankford suggests strong connections in star-beliefs across North American cultures that would at least be consistent with deep historical roots in these traditions.

Further perspective on this data is provided by a NeighborNet (Jaccard; Bryant & Moulton 2004) analysis constructed with Splitstree 4.14.4. (Huson & Bryant 2006) in order to visualize specific relationships among traditions of the linguistic-cultural groups (Figure 2a–b). The network shows a low mean delta score (0.32 for the first database; 0.23 for the second). In general the closer to zero the delta score is, the more the data will exhibit a straightforward stemmatic tree. These scores can be compared to the mean delta-score of the principal language families of the world. These language families are generally accepted as analysable in tree-like relations, and the mean delta score within these language families has been calculated by Søren Wichmann et al. (2001) as 0.31. Comparison with the scores reflected in Figure 2a–b suggests that the transmission of these mythological traditions is more tree-like than for many language families. Moreover, the NeighborNet analysis shows a low correlation between the mythologies and language family. Such low correlation presents the possibility of mythological substrate influence which

Figure 2a: NeighborNet based on the Jaccard folktale distance matrix for the 24 ethnic groups in Lankford’s dataset exhibiting three or more motifs. Box-like structures indicate a conflicting signal (i.e. suggesting similar independent inventions, borrowings).
antedates the spread of the language families (cf. also Frog, this issue, on the spread of Proto-Sámi). Geographical distance appears as a strikingly low factor in the Mantel tests, suggesting that contacts between groups have not been significant in the distribution of these traditions. This observation, coupled with the common ‘Amerindian’ nature of the myths, makes a hypothesis of recent changes owing to contact networks improbable. Although further research is needed, the low correlation of motifs with language family make it seem more probable that these elements of star-related mythology have largely survived historical changes in culture and language, potentially going back to the first inhabitants of the continent. Although these findings remain tentative owing to limitations of the corpus analysed, mythology of the stars seems to be particularly well suited to phylogenetic analysis for long-term perspectives on the history of motifs, potentially extending back into the Palaeolithic.

Material
The databases used in this paper were built from a database developed by Yuri Berezkin. This database, available in Russian on http://ruthenia.ru/folklore/berezkin, was consulted in October 2017. The Analytical Catalogue of World Mythology and Folklore consists of ca. 55,000 summaries of narratives and descriptions of mythological ideas among ca. 1500 large and small ethnic groups combined into almost 1000 traditions, mostly on the basis of language. Most of the texts in the database were recorded between 1850 and 1980.

Such narratives easily pass the test of a certain degree of distortion due to translation, which affects their linguistic surface but not their structure. Indeed, according to Lévi-Strauss (1958: 232), the signification of a text is preserved even through the worst translation. The basic content of stories is easily translated, for which elementary command of the corresponding language is usually sufficient. What is impossible to translate – people’s attitude towards the stories and their feelings when they hear them – are studied by another discipline: cultural anthropology. Furthermore, Yuri Berezkin classifies narratives at a high level of abstraction, which reduces the probably of impacts from translation on the encoding of mythological motifs. Such a classification system avoids dealing with elements that may be deformed, such as surface details of narration. Within a corpus of this size and at such a level of abstraction, issues of the ‘quality’ of individual sources and their translation do not present significant methodological problems in quantitative analysis.

The mythological motifs selected in Berezkin’s database are cultural elements subject to replication. There is no evidence in the database that all the motifs studied have the same history. On the contrary, each motif seems to have a distribution area of its own.

Figure 2b: NeighborNet based on the Jaccard folktale distance matrix for the 15 ethnic groups in Lankford’s dataset exhibiting four or more motifs. Box-like structures indicate a conflicting signal (i.e. suggesting similar independent inventions, borrowings).
This avoids a vicious circle: a perfect homogeneity of the data could have explained the existence of general trends; but if such trends were to be found here, they would be attributable to data selection.

For the current paper, all the units where the Pleiades appeared in the summary of a motif were added to the dataset. The delimitation of the field is thematic and relationships between motifs is not presupposed, but rather needs to be demonstrated (see below). This leaves 21 motifs listed here according to Berezkin’s motif system, as listed in Table 1:

Table 1. The 21 motifs according to Berezkin’s motif system analysed in the current paper.

1. B42K In the Cosmic Hunt tale, either hunters or game are identified with the Pleiades.
2. B47 In former times or presently, the Pleiades or other group of stars produced or produce severe cold until the present.
3. B47A A cow steps on the stars of the Pleiades, which were a dangerous being that lived on the earth. Part of these stars slip through its split hoof.
4. B59 A group of people (usually children, brothers or sisters) play, dance, ascend to the sky and turn into the Pleiades or another compact constellation.
5. B60 Children come into conflict with their parents who do not pay enough attention to them, condemn their sexual behaviour, do not give them enough food, clothes, etc.; the children abandon their parents, become birds, bats, atmospheric phenomena, or stars (usually the Pleiades).
6. I94 The Pleiades are a sieve, holes in the firmament, etc.
7. I95 The Pleiades are a sieve to process agricultural products.
8. I98A The Pleiades are a brooding hen, a hen with its chicks, chickens.
9. I98B The Pleiades are wild ducks, a nest or eggs of wild ducks.
10. I98c The Pleiades are a flock of birds.
11. I99 The Pleiades are a group of boys, lads, men, or a group of different people, but predominantly males.
12. I100 The Pleiades are a group of girls or women (with children).
13. I100A The Pleiades are a woman with her children.
Figure 3b. Cultural regions of the Americas according to the work of Yuri Berezkin.
14.1100C God transformed man into cuckoo, his wife and children into the Pleiades.

15.1108 The Pleiades are one anthropomorphic person, not several persons.

16.1114 Ursa Major and the Pleiades are described in the context of one and the same tale, Ursa Major being associated with men and the Pleiades with women.

17.1115 Orion and the Pleiades are described in the context of one and the same tale.

18.1115A Orion and the Pleiades are opposed as a man or men and a woman or women. Usually Orion is male.

19.1122 The Pleiades are a nest, a swarm of insects.

20.1130 Orion, the Pleiades, Ursa Major or Ursa Minor are a hunting or fishing net.

21.M50 A man (usually Coyote) tries to join a group of persons who are or become stars (usually the Pleiades) but suffers a reversal. He pursues the stars to have sexual contact with them or to be re-integrated with members of his family.

To avoid bias in the documentation of cultural areas (on units used in this analysis, see below), only those cultural areas possessing more than six relevant motifs (more than 1/4 of the all motifs considered) were retained.

The level of analysis chosen for the database is the cultural area, according to Berezkin’s division of the world into a series of areas on the basis of general culture (Figure 3a–b). Obvious long-distance borrowings were already excluded from the database. The cultural unity of each area may maintain consistent boundaries with its neighbours, with a significant part of variation that occurs between areas, significant area-internal similarity, and a decrease of the probability of short-distance borrowings. Accordingly, structural (Lévi-Strauss 1971b) and phylogenetic (Ross et al. 2013) methods show a strong effect of ethnolinguistic and cultural boundaries on the distribution of myths and the folktales. Additionally, in traditional societies, the mythological motifs used in the current database are believed to be ‘true’; they are consequently less easily and rapidly borrowed than for folktales.

A dataset of individual ethnic groups was also created to check the results. Only ethnic groups with at least four motifs were retained (five or six motifs eliminates too many ethnic groups to make the corpus significant).

To sum-up, the dataset used is not based on a predefined idea of genealogy. It also has to be noted that the obtained results will be easily falsifiable by establishing new datasets.

**Method**

Each cultural area was coded by a series of 1s and 0s according to the presence or the absence of each studied motif. This produced columns of binary codes for every cultural area. Uncertainty in the presence or absence of a motif was coded with a question mark. ‘Absent’ does not mean that the motif never

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*Figure 4. Tree based on Pleiades motifs in the database of Yuri Berezkin according to cultural area.*
existed in that tradition, only that it has not been documented there or otherwise has not been recorded in Berezkin’s database. This issue was a motivation for a two-level analysis by both ethnic groups and cultural areas.

Mesquite 3.2 (Maddison and Maddison 2017) was then used to construct the 1000 most parsimonious trees for the character matrix (method SPR) to address phylogenetic uncertainty and only those clades present in more than 0.50 of the reconstructed trees (Figure 4). This tree represents the branching history of descent linking traditions. It should be noted that a tree can only establish an extremely simplified evolutionary model of myths.

Another approach – the creation of networks, used for the first time in comparative mythology in 2012 (d’Huy 2012b; 2013a–c; Ross et al. 2013) – can visually report borrowings between versions and/or common independent inventions. From the same data that permits the construction of the tree, it is possible to create a NeighborNet (Figure 5; Jaccard) with SplitsTree 4.14.4 as above. In such a network, boxes indicate common features between taxa that seem not to be
inherited phylogenetically, or, in our case, borrowings or independent inventions.

To check the previous results, another NeighborNet was built from 29 individual ethnic groups and the same motifs previously used from Berezkin’s database (Jaccard; Figure 6). To keep the maximum number of linguistic-cultural groups, only those with more than three of the relevant motifs were retained.

**Results and Discussion**

The first point to address is the unity of the corpus and the existence of a phylogenetic signal.

About the NeighborNet, the average delta score of the network built from cultural areas (0.40) and from individual ethnic groups (0.37) show a relatively low, yet existing, tree-like message, comparable to what Russell D. Gray et al. (2010) obtained for Austronesian (0.44) and Indo-European (0.4) language families using typological data, i.e. structural and functional features of many languages.

The delta score ranges from 0 to 1; it equals zero if the data are well-fitted to the tree. The LSFit, expressed as a percentage, shows how accurate the correspondence between the pairwise distances in the graph and the pairwise distances in the matrix are. The fit of the data to the NeighborNet network (Saitou & Nei 1987; Gascuel 1997; Uncorrected_P: 98.18; Jaccard: 98.11; calculated with Splitstree 4.14.4) is better than its fit to a bio Neighbor-joining tree (Uncorrected_P: 95.8; Jaccard: 95.74; Figure 7). Consequently, the data fit better with a reticulating network than with a tree. However, there is a small difference between the two LSFit, which indicates that the data also corresponds well to a tree.

Concerning the tree, from a mathematical point of view, it is possible to calculate the Retention Index (RI) to measure the amount of homoplasy (i.e. parallel evolution, including convergence) but also how well synapomorphies (shared ancestry between a pair of character or trait states) explain the tree. It is calculated as \((h - s) / (h - m)\), where \(h\) is the maximum number of changes on a tree, \(s\), the number of changes on the tree and \(m\), the minimum number of changes in the dataset. The RI must be the highest possible (close to 1).

According to Charles L. Nunn et al. (2010), a high RI (for example, greater than 0.60) usually indicates a low horizontal transmission (including borrowings, total or partial, from nearby societies) and an essentially vertical sense of inter-generational transmission. The applicability of these findings to our database is justified because the areal diffusion of studied motifs is very largely or wholly independent of one another. Here, the RI of the tree is 0.56. Such results indicate that most of the motifs are synapomorphic character states, providing evidence of grouping and that they share a common history. The obtained tree indicates general trends of diffusion, and not the sense of diffusion or the evolution of each feature taken individually.

Using SAM v.4.0 (Rangel et al. 2010), Mantel test was applied to the Eurasian ethnic groups (\(n > 3\); data and geographical locations found in Berezkin’s database, Jaccard’s coefficient matrix, 10,000 permutations) to individual ethnic groups to test the
phylogenetic message. According to the previous results, the geographic distance explains 4.4% of the variance (global Pearson’s r: 0.211; p=0.021), which could imply a strong phylogenetic message (Figure 8). Such a result may be due to the disappearance of some motifs over time, but it reduces the likelihood of a recent diffusion of the motifs and supports the interpretation of a vertical transmission.

The tree in Figure 4 suggests a common branching tree of descent for traditions around the globe. Relations in this tree group in broad geographical areas that correlate well with knowledge of the earliest migrations of human populations and the developments that make Eurasia a distinctive cultural area. The tree can be readily interpreted as suggesting that mythology connected with the Pleiades was established already in Africa, whence it spread with the first human migrations. It also appears to reflect two waves of migration into the Americas. The first of these would seem to have originated from or to have also spread into Southeastern Asia (Melanesia) and also dispersed across North and South America, although its traces are found mainly in the south part of North America and in South America (Great Southwest, Chaco, Guyana). The second wave of migration, doubtless Palaeolithic, probably spread from somewhere in northern Eurasia (see Figure 5) and impacted especially North America (Coast Plateau, Great Plains, California). The first wave, with extensions deeper into inner Africa, Eurasia and America, is probably the older one, while the second would have partially superseded the first in many regions. The two waves of migrations into the Americas have been confirmed by recent genetic data (e.g. Kashani et al. 2012; Raghavan et al. 2014; Skoglund et al. 2015) and diverse studies in comparative mythology have revealed differences in the mythology correlated with each wave (e.g. Korotayev et al. 2011; Berezkin 2013; Le Quellec 2014; 2015b; d’Huy 2012a; 2016b; 2016d; 2017a). The Eurasian grouping of Figure 4 would show an independent development from Eurasian areas, probably due to the reconquest of these lands after the last Glacial Maximum.

The phylogenetic analysis of motifs in Figures 4 and 5 can be compared with that of ethnic groups in Figure 6 as in Table 2. Figure 6 is constructed from a less extensive dataset (only ethnic groups with four or more relevant motifs), so it is probably less reliable. This would explain the presence of a cluster of ethnic groups not found in figures 4 and 5. The global structure of the tree, from the initial migrations out of Africa to the settlement of the Americas, is also found in other trees built from radically different datasets, such as motifs connected with the myths of the serpent (d’Huy 2016a), the Milky Way (d’Huy 2017b), or with matriarchy and the origin of fire (d’Huy 2017c). This model of diffusion is also broadly supported by the work of Yuri Berezkin (2013) and Jean-Loïc Le Quellec (2014; 2015b). Correspondence between the resulting trees and what we know about first human migrations is hardly a
surprise. Indeed, a significant correlation between the distribution of certain motifs and the distribution of certain genes has been highlighted by Andrey Korotayev and Daria Khaltourina with Yuri Berezkin (2011). In addition, the low correlation between the relationships of a set of narrative-types (in the form of an oral tradition belonging to a given population) and the geographical distance separating these populations is an indicator of an essentially vertical distribution of the oral narratives (see above).

**Methodological Considerations for Reconstruction**

Once the tree in Figure 4 is established, it becomes possible to statistically reconstruct what the earliest mythology was that spread at the time of migrations out of Africa process. The method of reconstruction chosen here is the maximum likelihood method (d’Huy 2012a; 2015a; da Silva & Tehrani 2016). This method calculates the most probable ancestral states at each node of the tree that, within a model of evolution, would produce the observed evidence, allowing states at all other nodes to vary. Use of this method leads to certain methodological concerns that require discussion.

First, the tree is generated through the analysis of all 21 motifs listed in Table 1, following which individual motifs are traced on the tree. The tree thus becomes treated as having objective and uniform validity for all the analysed motifs while being independent of any one of them. Faced with this problem, Sara Graça da Silva and Jamshid J. Tehrani (2016) came up with the ingenious solution of taking an undisputed tree of the genetic relations between Indo-European languages and then analysing tale-types documented in those...
languages against that tree. A major risk in adopting this method is that approximations can be built on approximations. In their case, da Silva and Tehrani seek to establish the tales with continuity from the beginning of the Indo-European diffusion. However, the stemma of Indo-European used (da Silva & Tehrani 2016: Figure 2) is both ideal and its regular progressive branching of language families is far from certain; the stemmatic relations of languages within its branches also appear inaccurate, mixing West Slavic languages like Polish with East Slavic languages like Russian, and so forth. Although assessing data against an independent tree is ideal, assessment becomes conditional on the validity of that tree, which may itself be problematic. Such a method is also limited in applicability by the time-depth of the available trees: the histories of language families can be traced back no more than several thousand years, which is only a small percentage of the time since the first migrations from Africa. Here, it is considered best, though not ideal, to reconstruct the motifs present in the past by using the tree constructed from sets of related motifs, provided that the reconstructed motifs can be verified using other methods. The reconstruction of the earliest presence or absence of motifs depends on the structure of

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Table 3. Likelihood of the data under the Markov k-state 1 parameter and the symmetrical Markov k-state 2 parameter models. The asymmetrical Markov k-state 2 parameter model has a higher likelihood than the Mk1 model; however, most of the time, the first model does not support the parobability significantly more than the second. Note that a motif reconstructed for the migration out of Africa possess a much higher rate of change from state from 0 to 1 than for the rate of change from 1 to 0 (with the exception of I115A).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asymmetrical Markov k-state 2 parameter model</th>
<th>Markov k-state 1 parameter model</th>
<th>2*ln(likelihood ratio) of asymmetrical vs symmetrical model (assuming chi-square 1 d.f.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forward rate (0=&gt;1)</td>
<td>Backward rate (1=&gt;0)</td>
<td>LogL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B42K</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>1.095</td>
<td>-11.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B47</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>-10.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B47A</td>
<td>1.410</td>
<td>13.400</td>
<td>-6.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B59</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>-5.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B60</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>-7.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I94</td>
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<td>0.065</td>
<td>-8.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>I98A</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I98B</td>
<td>0.063</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>13.193</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>0.107</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>115A</td>
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<td>0.201</td>
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<tr>
<td>122</td>
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<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>16.102</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M50</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>-14.399</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the tree. Even if the structure of the tree in Figure 4 seems very strong, it remains necessary to move forward with caution. Another methodological issue is that phylogenetic software always organizes data in a single tree. Consequently, even if the researcher includes data not genetically related, the software will organize this into a single tree. This problem is compensated by the retention index (RI) and the delta score, which are indicators of whether or not the tree represents the evolutionary history of most of its constituent motifs. A third shortcoming of phylogenetic reconstruction methods is their dependence on the structure of the tree, and thus in the choice of the root – i.e. what is considered the earliest split. Estimating phylogenies and ancestral states is not a trivial problem and the necessary precautions need to be taken.

Table 4. Reconstructed motifs with a probability of >75%. Dark gray rows: calculation of Markov k-state 1 parameter; light grey rows: calculation of Markov k-state 1 parameter. Migration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motif</th>
<th>Migrations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B60</td>
<td>96.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I99</td>
<td>98.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I100</td>
<td>98.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I108</td>
<td>98.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I115</td>
<td>98.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>98.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I115A</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>97.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M50</td>
<td>81.65</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>81.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For a motif to be inferred to have continuity from the first migrations out of Africa, it must be able to be reconstructed at the root of the tree, whether the tree is rooted on Bantu or Eastern Africa. Indeed, a different rooting changes the structure of the tree and consequently the likelihood for a particular motif to be reconstructed at the root. The possibility of migration from Eurasia back into Africa could also potentially interfere with the data. In order to compensate for this, the relevant motif should also exhibit continuity through clades in the South Amerindian areas and Melanesia. In contrast to a distribution analysis, the reconstruction of historical presence or absence of motifs is probabilistic and depends on the evolutionary history of the majority of them. The reconstruction must be conclusive with the two likelihood models implemented in Mesquite. Likelihoods under a Markov k-state 1 parameter model and under an Asymmetrical Markov k-state 2 parameter model are compared in Table 3. The reconstruction must also exhibit more than a seventy-five percent probability in the assessments in Table 4. Besides, every feature must be confirmed by using at least another method used in comparative mythology.

**Reconstruction**

From the calculations in Table 4, four motifs can be reconstructed as likely to have existed and spread with the earliest migrations out of Africa:

Table 5. Four motifs reconstructable to the earliest migrations from Africa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motif</th>
<th>Migrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I100</td>
<td>The Pleiades are a group of girls or women (with children).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I108</td>
<td>The Pleiades are one anthropomorphic person, not several persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I115</td>
<td>Orion and the Pleiades are described in context of one and the same tale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I115A</td>
<td>Orion and the Pleiades are opposed as a man or men and a woman or women. Usually Orion is male.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reconstruction of these four motifs is consistent with earlier studies. For example, Brian Hayden & Suzanne Villeneuve state:

the Pleiades are almost always viewed as a group of individuals and are one of the most
frequently mentioned star clusters [in the world]. […] Their importance cross-culturally strongly suggests that they would have been similarly notable in the past. (Hayden & Villeneuve 2011: 342.)

Mentioning two Australian tribes, Edwin N. Fallaize also notes that “The almost unvarying association of the Pleiades with women among different races is remarkable” (1922: 64). According to Yuri Berezkin, the identification of Orion and the Pleiades with characters of different sex, Orion often appearing in the role of men or groups of men, and the Pleiades as a woman or group of women, is widespread (Figure 9), and, in any case, is more popular than the opposite variant, in which the Pleiades pursue Orion. Moreover, the sexual opposition between the Pleiades and Orion, although it occurs on different continents, is absent in the main part of Eurasia: the irregular distribution of the image of Orion as a man, and the Pleiades as women can be considered as an argument that likely emerged among pre-migration populations in Africa (Berezkin 2017: 20-24).

**Orion Mythology as a Test**

To test these results, the database of Berezkin has been used to study all the motifs linked to Orion, listed in Table 6:

**Table 6. Motifs connected with Orion in Berezkin’s database.**

1. B42H The game of the Cosmic Hunt tale is identified with Orion’s Belt.
2. B42h1 In the Cosmic Hunt, an arrow pierced the animals of Orion’s Belt.
3. B42N The constellation Orion or Orion’s Belt is identified with only one male person, usually with a warrior or hunter.
4. B42R The three stars of Orion’s Belt are three persons or animals who pursue each other.
5. I95A Orion is a balance, scales.
6. I95B Orion is a shoulder-yoke.
7. I95C Orion is a staff.
8. I110A Orion (rare: another constellation) is a plough, associated with breaking ground.
9. I110B Orion’s Belt is (three) mowers or agricultural tools related to mowing and harvesting.

10. I115 Orion and the Pleiades are described in the context of one and the same tale.

11. I115A Orion and the Pleiades are opposed as a man or men and a woman or women. Usually Orion is male.

12. I130 Orion, the Pleiades, Ursa Major or Ursa Minor is a hunting or fishing net.
These 12 motifs have been converted into a binary dataset (uncertainty with question mark), and, given the low number of motifs used, only areas with more than four motifs (1/3 of the totality) have been retained. The consensus tree in Figure 10 (1000 trees, method SPR, RI: 0.6) is artificially rooted in Southwest Africa. To compare the tree of Figure 10 with the tree of Figure 4, it is possible to reduce the two matrices (Pleiades and Orion) to the cultural areas where both are attested – i.e. Western Europe, Tibet / Northeastern India, Malaysia / Indonesia, the Balkans, Central Europe, Baltoscandia, the Caucasus / Asia minor, Southern Siberia, the Great Southwest. Using PAUP 4.0a152, two bio Neighbor-Joining trees based on the Pleiades (RI: 0.536), shown in Figure 11a) and on Orion (RI: 0.591) in Figure 11b) datasets were constructed: only the cultural areas common to the two corpus were retained. The proximity of the two trees is obvious, only one area varies position across the two trees.

The motifs reconstructed both at the root of the tree (Figure 10) and on the basis of the Great Southwest (from the first migration to the Americas?) are B42H (probability at the root of the tree: Mk1: 97.96%; Asymm, 2 param.:98.24%), B42N (90.78% | 81.90 %), I115 (75.38% | 73.49%) and I115A (97.96% | 97.72 %). When taking into account the whole of Berezkin’s database, these motifs, with the exception of B42H, have been found in at least two of the four Sub-Saharan areas (i.e. Southwestern Africa, the Bantu Area, the Western Area, the Eastern Area) and in Australia. These findings support a Sub-Saharan origin of the motif of Orion as a man following the Pleiades as a woman.

**The Pleiades–Orion Opposition**
The opposition between Orion and the Pleiades brings us back to one of the intuitions of Lévi-Strauss (1964). He proposed the existence of a significant worldwide correlation and opposition between Orion and the Pleiades, both in terms of the simultaneous presence or absence of the constellations and in terms of the discontinuous and well-articulated system of Orion as opposed to the continuous and inarticulate set of stars of the Pleiades. Following this second opposition, the couple Orion–Pleiades becomes a significant expression of seasonal alternation (summer / winter, dry / rainy season, work / leisure, abundance / scarcity, etc.). Is it possible to test Lévi-Strauss’ hypothesis? Such structural opposition requires correlation within an individual culture, which means the analysis would have to assess co-occurrence of contrast. The problem is that the opposition between a single Orion and a plural Pleiades can take many forms: the constellation of the Pleiades can represent several men, several women, several children, several birds, etc.; the constellation of Orion can represent a single man, a single stick, etc. It is therefore impossible to correlate precisely the evolution of the two opposing terms on the whole tree, because they can take different values: this structural opposition must be reconstructed at each node. It is therefore impossible to answer this question given the current state of the database. However, the facts that the opposition of Orion as male and the Pleiades as female is not universal (Berezkin 2017: 23) and that the motif is not reconstructed at the root of the northern Amerindian clade (see below) speaks against such a structural opposition.

**Diffusion of the First Narratives and Founder Effects**
If the reconstructed motifs I100, I108, I115 and I115A existed at the time of the exit from Africa, it is likely that they were carried by the men during those first migrations. Under these conditions, it should be possible to reconstruct a tree similar to the one in Figure 4 on the basis of only these four motifs. The results obtained using Mesquite are insufficient for such a reconstruction due to the small number of items used (only four motifs!) To solve this problem, a majority-rule consensus tree was constructed using a heuristic search, implemented in PAUP 4.0a152 (parsimony; Swofford 2002). Figure 12 shows the results of applying this method to the full dataset yielding a consensus of 35 trees with an RI of 0.588, which is high enough to suggest a good proportion of vertical transmission, and a delta score of 0.40. Figure 13 shows the results of this method applied to the adjusted dataset (i.e. only I100, I108, I115 and I115A), yielding a
consensus of 9 trees: the RI increases to 0.889 while the delta score decreases to 0.20. These results suggest the existence of a primitive group of traits transmitted *en bloc* in connection with the initial migrations out of Africa with a low amount of homoplasy.

Figure 12. Parsimony tree (heuristic search) based on Orion motifs in the database of Yuri Berezkin based on cultural areas.

The tree in Figure 13, rooted on Eastern Africa, is not exactly identical to that in Figure 12. The differences could be explained by the small number of traits used to construct it, which makes it less reliable. According to the tree in Figure 13, the first migration, shortly after the migration out of Africa, would have spread the proto-folklore of the Pleiades along the Southern Asian coast as far as South America as well as along the southern Asian coast. The second migration, in its turn, presumably spread from northern Eurasia and diffused into North America, possibly in multiple waves with a serial founder effect. A serial founder effect hypothesis could explain this diffusion of the Palaeolithic mythology generally with respect to the topology of the tree and what we know about the earliest human migrations (see also d’Huy 2017c). According to this hypothesis, at each step of geographical expansion, populations may carry only a subset of the mythological diversity from previous migrations along with new motifs or myths, increasing the mythological differentiation between them and from the previous settlement (for an empirical analysis of a mythological founder effect and an earlier formulation of the hypothesis, see d’Huy 2013d).

Figure 13. Parsimony tree (heuristic search) based on the adjusted dataset of Orion motifs in the database of Yuri Berezkin: cultural areas.

**A Reconstruction of Variation in Spread**

In order to test the reliability of the results and of the structure of the tree in Figure 4, and the reliability of an inherited opposition between the Pleiades and Orion, a reconstruction of the patterns present at several nodes/steps following the migration from Africa is developed here. This reconstruction is then compared with the results obtained by other comparative methods.

People who lived somewhere in Southeast Asia contributed to the mythology of both very early Australian and Melanesian and – today essentially southern – Amerindians. This diffusion was already mathematically demonstrated by using comparative and phylogenetic tools, e.g. for the motifs of the
sky-woman and the mysterious housekeeper originating in this area (similar conclusions about this folktale have been drawn using different approaches in Hatt 1949: 101–102, 107; Berezkin 2013: 178–179; d’Huy 2016d), or by using multivariated statistics (Korotayev et al. 2011). The possibility that some of these features may have earlier been established in Africa as well and subsequently disappeared under innovations cannot be overlooked, yet this remains difficult to either corroborate or refute. The most parsimonious hypothesis nevertheless remains an origin of such motifs subsequent to the initial migrations out of Africa.

In Table 4, the four motifs reconstructed for the earliest migrations from Africa in Table 5 are complemented by two additional motifs reconstructable with a probability higher than 75%, at the root of the two Amerindian clusters in Figure 4 (south Amerindian cluster: the Great Southwest, Chaco, Guyana + Malaysia; and the north Amerindian cluster: the Coast Plateau, California, the Great Plains): B60 (Children come into conflict with their parents who do not pay them enough attention, condemn their sexual behavior, do not give them enough food, clothes, etc; children abandon their parents, become birds, bats, atmospheric phenomena, or stars (usually the Pleiades)), and I99 (The Pleiades are a group of boys, lads, men, or a group of different people but predominantly males). This implies that these motifs probably existed before the first settlement in the Americas.

I115A (Orion and the Pleiades are opposed as a man or men and a woman or women. Usually Orion is male) has only be reconstructed at the root of the south Amerindian cluster. This may be due to a cultural survival of the first settlement in the Americas, replaced in North America by other people and other motifs. This would indicate that the opposition of the Pleiades = several people versus Orion = one person is not logical (or should be found reconstructed at the base of North American cultural areas) but probably inherited.

According to William B. Gibbon (1972: 243), “the two motifs […] – dancing [note: people] and the women – must have been part of one original legend, which began in the Old World and was perpetuated in the New.” A motif very close to the dancing motif – B59 (A group of people (usually children, brothers or sisters) play, dance, ascend to the sky and turn into Pleiades or other compact constellation) – has not been reconstructed because it is not present in the cultural areas retained for the Americas. This shows a limitation of the method, which requires an extensive corpus, but it does not refute it. However, the motif of the dancers is even closer to the Dancing children myth (B60); the large distribution area of this myth, from North to South America, suggests a significant time depth (Lankford 2007: 175, 180). According to Lévi-Strauss, the tradition relating to an astronomical triad composed of two minor terms symmetrically framing a major term, the one ascribing the origin of the Pleiades to seven characters who ascend into the sky and are, more often than not, greedy or hungry children are “two independent transformations which presumably emerged from the same basic material” (Lévi-Strauss 1968: 39). The reconstructed motifs corresponding to the first settlement of Americas seem to be corroborated by other analyses, which make it possible to corroborate the overall structure of the tree, raising the question of whether it is possible to do this at the level of other nodes.

As discussed above, certain motifs seem to have arrived in North America with a later migration, doubtless Palaeolithic, coming from Northern Eurasia. Such a migration has been shown to be relevant to the history of a number of mythic motifs in earlier studies using different independent approaches, for instance concerning Polyphemus’ narratives (areological approach: Berezkin 2007a; multivariated statistics’ approach: Korotayev et al. 2011; phylogenetic approach: d’Huy 2012b; 2013a; 2015b). Many previously reconstructed motifs probably arrived twice or more into the Americas, in different forms, as it has seems to have been the case for other families of myths, such as the Cosmic Hunt (Berezkin 2006; 2012; d’Huy 2016c) or the motif of the flood and the separation of the earth from the sky (d’Huy 2017a).

In the case of Berezkin’s database, motif M50 (A man (usually Coyote) tries to join a group of persons who are or become stars
(usually the Pleiades) but suffers a reversal. He pursues the stars to have sexual contact or to be reintegrated with members of his family) is only reconstructed on the basis of the northern Amerindian cluster. To my knowledge, no structural or areological study was interested in the distribution of this motif at the global level, which prevents a corroboration of this reconstruction. This result also does not corroborate or refute previous results. Motif I115A is not reconstructed for this migration.

Conclusion

In summary, computational phylogenetic methods are powerful tools to study the evolution of mythology. They supplement traditional comparative methods, can measure the phylogenetic message and its uncertainty (retention index, bootstrap, delta-score), test different evolutionary models (transmission by distance versus inherited motifs), the existence of a package or myths or motifs that have spread en bloc, and allow the result to be tested in a scientific and rigorous manner. Additionally, phylogenetic methods allow the statistical reconstruction of ancient states of mythology.

The study described here shows that the motifs connected with the Pleiades and the stars are more frequently inherited than borrowed from close neighbours. A core tradition of motifs can be statistically reconstructed as spreading at the time of the migrations out of Africa, at the same time as other set of motifs (e.g. myths of: the origin of humanity from underground, the serpent, matriarchy, the origin of fire, the Milky Way, Orion, etc.). This core tradition remains very stable, yet also integrates peripheral motifs that were more easily exchanged and borrowed.

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Notes

1. Additionally, most of the texts are published in translation and no one (even people who easily read in 30 or 50 languages) can read in 1000 languages.

2. Their study is further made problematic by reliance on the Aarne–Thompson–Uther tale-type index for constructing their data-set, which is not a suitable resource for such investigations (Berezkin 2015; d’Huy et al. 2017), making their conclusions conditional on the representativeness of that data.

3. Motif I108 may seem to be mutually exclusive of the other motifs in identifying the Pleiades as a singular rather than plural entity. Nevertheless, this can be easily accounted for. It is extremely unlikely that a unique culture was at the origin of each diffusion. More likely, there was a pre-existing socially structured mythology within a given geographical area that would be diffused in conjunction with the migrations. Such a general mythology does not not preclude the existence of opposing beliefs embedded in the same symbolic system: for instance, the general idea that the Pleiades is female versus Orion as male can take the form of the Pleiades as either many people or only one person. Broadly speaking, the search for an origin of human mythology is not incompatible with the idea of an original diversity, but this diversity, which was probably significant within an area the size of Africa, was inevitably reduced by the phenomenon of bottlenecks.

4. However, note that the motif I99 (The Pleiades are a group of boys, lads, men, or a group of different people but predominantly males) has also been reconstructed using the Asymmetrical Markov k-state parameter model that may be the most suitable model for this motif (see Table 3). Yet the reconstruction is not corroborated by the Mk1 method, and this reconstruction could be invalid.

Works Cited


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The Ecology of ‘Eddic’ and ‘Skaldic’ Poetry
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Abstract: Scholars have traditionally reflected on the Old Norse cultural area’s poetic output on the basis of a binary classification of the poetry into two types: the categories are labelled as ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’. This paper explores the formation of the dichotomy and how the application of these categories in scholarship may obscure rather than clarify the nature of Old Norse poetry.

The Winter 2015/2016 issue of RMN Newsletter focused on the relationship of poetic forms and especially metres in relation to their ‘ecology’, or the environment of language, genres, ethnopoetics, other metres and broader environments of practice in which they exist and evolve. When we consider the ‘ecology’ of the Old Norse poetic metres, the fundamental division we make as scholars between poetry deemed ‘eddic’ or ‘skaldic’ is applicable in a broad sense to the surviving Old Norse verse. Nevertheless, there is a sizeable proportion of the poetic corpus that cannot be reconciled with this neat dichotomy. The usefulness of the terms and bipartite division can thus be called into question.

The terms ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’ are used in scholarship both to describe two types of Old Norse prosody and, more broadly, as two types of poetry differing from each other in style and content. In addition to some Old Norse poetry not conforming to the eddic/skaldic dichotomy, another of the difficulties with the constructs ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’ and the application of the terms in scholarship, lies in the lack of separation between metre and content in the use of the terms. It is implicitly understood in scholarship that the simple alliterative metres we refer to as ‘eddic metres’ and eddic poetry are different things from each other, for example. This difference is sometimes reflected in encyclopaedic handbooks; Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia (1993), for instance, has four relevant entries: “Eddic Meters”, “Eddic Poetry”, “Skaldic Metres”, “Skaldic Verse”. However, it is seldom that this difference between metre and poetry is acknowledged in the terminology used in scholarship, nor are the categories clearly defined. This leaves us without the terminology to distinguish between, for example, poetry preserved in eddic metre and that has eddic content, and on the other hand, poetry that has eddic metre but skaldic content. In such situations, the content rather than the metre of the verse tends to guide which appellation, eddic or skaldic, is applied to the poetry, but this decision is in many cases far from clear cut.

There are thus two reasons highlighted here to reconsider the eddic/skaldic dichotomy. Firstly, and as will be illustrated below, that some poetry cannot be reconciled with eddic/skaldic dichotomy should cause us to reconsider the applicability of the dichotomy to the corpus at a basic level. Are these analytical terms even useful for scholarship? Secondly, this lack of precision in defining and using the categories and terminology ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’ in analysis causes potential haziness in the identification of eddic and skaldic verse, if we continue to accept the usefulness of the classification of poetry into two types. Both of these issues are important, because whether poetry is deemed eddic or skaldic by scholars has an impact on the questions we pose to our material, such as the role of poetry in the genre divisions of prose, and it influences what material we might select for an examination of a specific corpus. An example of this is the recent book by Seiichi Suzuki, The Meters of Old Norse Eddic Poetry (2014), in which Suzuki examines the eddic metres (those descending from common Germanic metre, discussed further below) only with reference to poems contained in a particular manuscript anthology, the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda. The poems in this anthology have mythological and heroic content set in the ancient past, but there exists an abundance of poetry with ‘skaldic content’ (typically historically contextualised court poetry and praise of kings) also composed in eddic metres. In the case of Suzuki’s volume, preservation context trumps metre in the determination of a corpus, even in a volume specifically about metre. In addition, when, for example, we think
of verse as skaldic as opposed to eddic, we have different expectations about the background of the verses and orient our research accordingly. We might try to determine the authorship of skaldic verse, its time of composition, historical value and original context. On the other hand, questions of authorship, exact datability and historical value are not usually deemed relevant for most eddic poetry, which we tend to think of as anonymous via traditionality, timeless and as preserving folk rather than historical narratives.

The purpose of this article is to confront the eddic/skaldic divide with its ecology in mind. Firstly, I will discuss the constructions of the categories eddic and skaldic as used in contemporary scholarship. Then, I will use several case studies to examine how the metres functioned in Old Norse society with relation not only to one another, but also to the contexts in which they survive.

The Emic and Etic Categorisation of Old Norse Poetry
The division ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’ is not used in Old Norse texts themselves; rather, they are terms used in popular discourse and scholarship most often as binary analytical categories through which scholars access the Old Norse poetic system. This at once alerts us that ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’ are etic as opposed to emic terms. An etic approach describes observable behaviour from a standpoint outside a particular linguistic or cultural system, such as definitions and terms constructed by scholars to describe a phenomenon they observe; by contrast, an emic approach is built from perspectives and characteristics internal to the system itself and emic terms are terms used by people within that system: how behaviour functions within the system and how it relates to and contrasts with other linguistically and culturally significant behaviour. An etic analysis may include a range of behaviour that is not culturally significant, but that nevertheless provides the researcher with an entry point into the system being studied and a starting point for analysis, even if the final result must be informed by emic units. Since eddic and skaldic are etic terms, their usage must be informed by examples we find of the metres and styles of the extant poetry if the categories they refer to are to be considered valid categories for analysis.

Dan Ben-Amos’ (1976) discussion of ethnic genres, the genre system as experienced by members of the culture (emic), and analytic categories, those established by scholars (etic), has been a useful addition to scholarship on the eddic/skaldic divide (begun by Harris 1975; refreshed by Thorvaldsen 2006: 35–48). Despite the obvious attraction for modern scholars of attempting to adopt a genre system and a terminological vocabulary based on ethnic genres, it is not always easy to separate ethnic genres from analytical categories, nor is it possible to extract an ethnic genre system that we can be sure was actually experienced as we might assume by those engaged with Old Norse oral and written literature in the medieval period.

‘Eddic’
The denotation ‘eddic’ usually refers to poetry that is in or is associated with the anthology of poetry found in the Poetic Edda, the 13th-century Icelandic manuscript (Gks 2365 4to) of mythological and heroic poetry in the metres fornyrðislag, málaháttr and ljóðaháttr or variants thereof. The name ‘Edda’ initially appeared as the title of Snorri Sturluson’s textbook of poetics known as Snorra Edda ['Snorri’s Edda'] or the Prose Edda. The name ‘Edda’ in this case is derived from a passage in one of the manuscripts of the text in which it is so titled.1 In 1643, Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson got hold of the manuscript now known as the Poetic Edda. He and his seventeenth century contemporaries were well aware of Snorri’s work and had posited the existence of an earlier manuscript containing the poems Snorri drew upon. The discovery of Gks 2365 4to seemed to confirm this and the title Edda was duly conferred on the manuscript collection of poems in acknowledgment of this supposed connection with Snorri Edda.2 What the name Edda actually means is a topic of much discussion: suggestions include ‘grandmother’ (in which meaning edda appears in the poem Rígsþula), ‘poetics’ (as derived from óðr in its meaning ‘poem; poetry’), or as a derivation from the name Oddi, the farm on which Snorri grew up (Stefán Einarsson 1957: 15). Anthony Faulkes (in a revised version of his 1977 article), argues that edda is coined from Latin
edó in the sense of composing poetry. We do not know the meaning in the background of the name ‘Edda’, but there is no reason to believe it was used for a vernacular category of poetry. Moreover, the adjectival derivative ‘eddic’ and its equivalents in other languages is a modern development and unambiguously an etic term.

‘Skaldic’
The term ‘skaldic’ indicates that the poetry under this heading is to be associated with a skáld [‘poet’], a medieval, Nordic poet, who is normally named and often referred to as a ‘court poet’. Bjarne Fidjestøl makes the following point:

In modern use, skaldic poetry is defined primarily as Old Norse poetry distinct from eddic poetry. This distinction is not known in Old Norse, however, where the word skáld may be used indiscriminately of authors of both genres. Since eddic poetry is anonymous, there was little need for the word skáld in this context, and therefore it naturally would be used more commonly of authors of skaldic verse. (Fidjestøl 1993a: 592.)

The chief skaldic metre is dróttkvætt, in which five sixths of skaldic poetry is preserved. It is worth noting that the by-name skáld (the earlier form of skáld) appears in runic poetry from the Viking Age. The title ‘skáld’ appears mainly in relation to either rune-carvers or the commissioners of monuments, five times in the runic corpus for four men: Grím (U 951) and Pórbiǫrn (U 29, U 532) in Uppland, Sweden, another Pórbiǫrn in Rogaland, Norway (N 239), and an Uddr in Sweden (Vg 4) who may not have been the carver of the stone (see Larsson 2007: 405). It is possible that these men gained this by-name because they were especially talented poets, and it has been assumed by Jansson that this demonstrates the presence of professional poets in Sweden in the Viking Age (Jansson 1976: 134). Problematically, none of these inscriptions have anything poetic about them, so there is nothing to point with certainty to ‘skáld’ in this context meaning poet (cf. Jesch 2001: 6n.2; Larsson 2007: 405). The presence of ‘skáld’ on runic inscriptions alone can thus testify neither to a poetic milieu nor to a wider connection between runic inscriptions and skaldic poetry in Eastern Scandinavia, although in a manuscript context after the period in which these inscriptions were made, it is possible that the existence of a named individual, a skáld, may be a potential delineating factor between eddic and skaldic poetry. Overall, the denotation of skald/skáld are relatively unambiguous in contrast to ‘Edda’. The evidence speaks against this term for ‘poet’ denoting a poet of specifically ‘skaldic’ poetry as conceived today. The term ‘skaldic’ is a modern adjective derived from the Old Norse word for ‘poet’, and thus an etic term.

Concerns about a Binary Corpus
In scholarship, the two etic categories of ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’ have become a primary distinction for approaching Old Norse poetry, effectively dividing it into two corpora – ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’ – that tend to be analysed in isolation from one another. This has influenced the location and division of the poetic corpus in handbooks and reference works, questions posed in scholarship, editorial technique and not least publication decisions concerning the poetic texts and manuscripts containing them. Scholars have made several publication decisions about the corpus that have had an impact on how we view the divide between eddic and skaldic poetry. These are etic divisions, devised by scholars to provide an entry point into the primary sources. One aspect of this is how poems are grouped for publication and the basis for these decisions. It has long been common in reference works on Old Norse poetry to comment on the differences between eddic and skaldic poetry and to devote a chapter to each separately. Likewise, it has been common to publish edited texts of the poetry separately rather than in mixed eddic/skaldic compendia. In part, this has to do with the origin of each term ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’, and the manuscript preservation in anthology form of the core poems that make up the eddic corpus. If we consider what the terms ‘eddic’ and ‘skaldic’ imply, we begin to see the difficulty in analysing the two groups of poetry in binary opposition to one another. Below I will abstract how these analytical categories are constructed before turning to the problems with this distinction.

The Modern Division of ‘Eddic’ and ‘Skaldic’

Unknown to medieval sources, a dichotomy between Eddaic and skaldic poetry has been established mainly through peculiarities of
the transmission process. Actually, there are no precise criteria on which to base the drawing of such a line of demarcation. Nevertheless, skaldic poetry is distinguished from Eddaic poetry because of formal features as well as content. (Szokody 2002: 982.)

In The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook, Szokody points out that we have no definite criteria by which to distinguish eddic and skaldic poetry as analytical categories, and no medieval precedent, but we do it anyway. In keeping with the binary nature of the terms eddic and skaldic, the two types of poetry are often described in dichotomous terms with various characteristics that are ascribed to each, and these traits used to differentiate between the two groups (cf. Frank 1985: 159; Gade 2002: 856). The typical view has been, to quote Jón Helgason, that the two kinds of poetry “adskiller sig alligevel i det hele og store tydelig fra hinanden, baade med hensyn til indhold og form” [‘nevertheless clearly differ from one another, both with consideration of content and form’], despite being contemporaneous and composed by the same men (1934: 55). These distinguishing characteristics can be divided into three main groups: metre, content and style. In encyclopaedic handbooks, it is thus the case that often both eddic and skaldic receive two entries each, one describing their metres and one concerned with the type of poetry more generally (discussed below under the headings ‘content and historical context’ and ‘style’, respectively).4

**Metre**

In scholarship since at least the 19th century, the metres of Old Norse verse are split into two types: eddic metres, and skaldic metres. The metre of the poem subsequently has been used by scholars as one of several bases on which to categorise poems as eddic or skaldic, as exemplified by Anne Holtsmark’s comment that “Skaldediktning kan defineres som vn. poesi diktet i de skaldiske versemal” (1970) [‘skaldic poetry can be defined as West Nordic poetry composed in the skaldic verse-forms’]. However, since skaldic poetry can easily be found composed in metres defined as ‘eddic,’ we can immediately problematize this: When is an eddic metre of the eddic type of poetry, and when is it skaldic? In scholarship, the solution to this question is often presented by also including considerations of content and style alongside metre (two criteria discussed further below), although in some cases this also fails to resolve matters.

We can easily observe that there are both important similarities and differences between eddic and skaldic metres, but two central points that are generally accepted can be taken as a point of departure: that 1) skaldic metres developed from eddic metres, and 2) this development into skaldic metre from eddic resulted in increasing complexity.5 On this basis, we can describe eddic metres as relatively simple, and the skaldic as relatively complex.

The three eddic metres, fornyrdislag, málaháttr and ljóðaháttr,6 likely represent to a large extent the common Germanic alliterative metre, as it evolved in Old Norse. They are related to the metrical forms found in the Old High German Hildebrandslied and Old English poetry such as Beowulf.7 Eddic metres have neither regular internal rhyme (hendingar) nor end rhyme, as variously found in skaldic metres. Eddic metre is accentual, and tends to be in freer measures, in which stresses are counted, not syllables or line-endings, although alliteration is regular.8

Skaldic forms, on the other hand, count syllables and are peculiar to the Old Norse area (in particular to Norway and Iceland, although see below for other Scandinavian contexts). Skaldic metres are more complex and particular than eddic, and a named poet is often credited for the manipulation of the form, as opposed to the anonymity of the extant eddic poetry. Skaldic metre is stricter than eddic metre in terms of the number of syllables in each metrical position. The most popular metre of skaldic poetry is dróttkvætt, which literally means ‘court metre’, reflecting the common use of the metre for praise poetry presented at a royal court. This meter has a six-position line normally realized with one syllable per position (allowing for the ‘resolution’ of light syllables into a single position), with variants possible.9

Both eddic and skaldic poems are stanzaic, although the older eddic poetry can be in rather looser strophe form, with strophes of varying lengths.10 Since this earlier eddic metre is not strictly divided into stanzas, the regular stanzaic form found in eddic poetry, which developed
into an eight-line strophe with a deep caesura after the fourth line (see e.g. Kristján Árnason 2006), likely developed under the influence of the arrangement of skaldic metres (Fidjestøl 1993a), which was divided into strophes from the beginning (Lie 1967). Although a certain chronological change can be detected, it is worth noting that eddic and skaldic metres existed alongside each other, and, as mentioned, poetry in skaldic style could be composed in fornyrðislag or other eddic metres. Metre is thus not the only criterion that is used to distinguish between eddic and skaldic poetry, and, all things considered, is arguably one of the least important; most of the difference identifiable between the two kinds of poetry lies in the subject matter of the verse and the context of the preservation of the verse.

Content and Historical Context
Both the content taken up by Old Norse poetry and its historical context have also been used by scholars to help define what we might consider either eddic or skaldic. To some extent the division made by distinguishing eddic and skaldic content or historical context corresponds with that made by dividing eddic and skaldic metres, although this is far from absolute; this lack of correspondence is one of the chief difficulties in drawing an absolute divide between eddic and skaldic as overarching categories.

The themes of poetry determined by scholarship as having eddic content are drawn from the remote past, from mythology or from legends of long-dead heroes, as well as riddles, proverbs and aphorisms. Eddic poetry is often considered traditional folk poetry – or, more correctly, traditional metrical texts that circulate socially. We could say that it therefore does not include any personal, occasional or topical poetry. Almost no poetry with this kind of ‘eddic’ content is attributed to a named poet or given a firm historical context.

In contrast, the majority of the poetry deemed skaldic is attributed to named poets. Skaldic poetry reflects the perspective of a poet, his relationships and personal experiences, which are the same features that appear to underlie attributions of authorship and persistence of verses and/or contextualising information. Attributions of verse very often emphasise the skill of the skaldic poet and the social and financial benefits reaped by that skill. The themes of poetry with what could be termed ‘skaldic content’ are typically more or less contemporaneous to events they describe or in relation to which they are said to be composed, often praising leaders who are alive or only recently dead:

Much of the skaldic poetry is panegyric, composed in praise of a monarch. Among the oldest poems are some describing pictures, mostly on decorated shields. There are further lyrical strophes, love songs, battle songs and other occasional verse from everyday life. (Pórleifur Hauksson: 2002: 473.)

Hence the emphasis on court poetry in discussion of skaldic content. The complexity of dróttkvætt, the metre often used for skaldic poetry, elevates its status through the skill it demands of the composer. It was also considered a superior form because of its association with the court and social elite, and some topics were even beneath a skaldic poet. Nor is mythology solely the province of eddic poetry. For example, skaldic poetry frequently uses the mythological and heroic background related by eddic poetry as a basis for its poetic circumlocutions (kennings, discussed below), and there is at least one skaldic praise poem to Þórr (see Lindow 1985: 25–27).

Style
Stylistically, eddic and skaldic verse is usually characterised by its terseness, and for its complexity in vocabulary (e.g. Fidjestøl 1993a: 592). Eddic poetry favours economy of expression (see e.g. Hallberg 1993: 150), and the word order of eddic poetry approaches prose, relating content in a fairly straightforward style. Analysis of the complexity of skaldic diction has been appealing to scholars, and as such discussions of skaldic style tend to centre on the ideals of skaldic poetry as praise poetry connected to the court.

Skaldic style as familiar from court poetry is characterised by complex word order and by the use of heiti (words that function as synonyms or equivalents) and kennningar [‘kennings’] (poetic circumlocutions consisting of compounds in which a base-word is modified by a determinant, where one or both of the compound elements are most often heiti). Heiti and kennings are also found in
eddic poetry, but to a much lesser degree. As a result, one could say that ‘obscurity’ is a defining feature of the Old Norse courtly skaldic tradition (Mundal & Jaeger 2015). Due to this obscurity, skaldic diction had to be learnt to be understood, whereas the diction of eddic poetry is simpler and formulaic. The cultivation of an understanding of skaldic diction is one of the didactic aims of Snorri Sturluson’s 13th century Edda:

En þetta er nú at segja ungum skálðum þeim er gírnask a t nema mál skálðskapar ok heyja sér orð þjóða með fornum heitum eða gírnask þeir at kunna skilja þat er hulit er kvæði: þá skíli hann þessa bôk til fróðleiks ok skemtunar. (Faulkes 1998: 5.)

[... ] these things have now to be told to young poets who desire to learn the language of poetry and to furnish themselves with a wide vocabulary using traditional terms; or else they desire to be able to understand what is expressed obscurely. Then let such a one take this book as scholarly enquiry and entertainment. (Faulkes 1995: 64.)

The ability to unknot, and indeed to construct, poetic obscurity was something that a court poet would need in order to compose skaldic poems. The audience of skaldic poetry would also need an appreciation of obscurity to be able to understand poems they heard, or at least to discern that what was said was opaque.

The Publication of Eddic and Skaldic Poetry
The poetry that is best known for being ‘eddic’ survives in the anthology of Gks 2365 4to, the Codex Regius manuscript of the Poetic Edda from the 13th century, as discussed above. This anthology of mythological and heroic poems, all in eddic metres, provides an obvious point of departure for the contents of modern volumes of eddic poetry. Nevertheless, editors take remarkable liberties with what is included in these editions of eddic poetry, changing not only the order in which the poems are presented in comparison to the manuscript, but also with the addition of extra texts from outside this manuscript anthology. The 4th edition of the Poetic Edda by Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn (1962), for example, admits to being the poems contained in the Codex Regius manuscript, according to the volume’s subtitle. However, included in the edition are a number of poems found in other manuscripts or works (Baldr’s draumar, Ríþulþa, Hyndluljóð, Grottasongr, The Battle of the Goths and the Huns, and Hildebrand’s Death-Song) as an appendix, and a second appendix provides eddic stanzas from Snorra Edda and Volsunga saga. The editorial decision to include material extraneous to the Codex Regius manuscript immediately broadens the interpretation of what constitutes eddic poetry without any further reflection, since these supplementary poems are termed eddic only because they are similar in their mythological and heroic interests to the poems in the anthology.

Eddic stanzas and poems excerpted from the fornalðarsögur [‘Sagas of Ancient Times’] (sg. fornalðarsaga) are known as the eddica minora. These poems or sequences of prosimetric stanzas were collected and published in 1903 by Andreas Heusler and Wilhelm Ranisch under the title Edda Minora: Dichtungen eddischer Art aus den Fornaldar- sögur und anderen Prosawerken [‘The Minor Edda: Poetry of the Eddic Type from the Fornaldarsögur and other Prose Works’]. Like the material appended to Neckel and Kuhn’s edition, the poetry here is also deemed eddic because of the similarity in metre (usually eddic metres) and content (heroic) to the eddic poetry in the anthology of the Poetic Edda. If we indeed view these groups as stylistically analogous, all of these poems are given the eddic label. However, Rudolf Simek and Hermann Pálsson suggest that the eddica minora lie in-between eddic and skaldic poetry (1987: 64). This is likely because, firstly, many of the eddic stanzas found in the fornalðarsögur are used prosimetrically (quoted in a prose saga), although it could be pointed out that some of the poems in the Poetic Edda are also prosimetric in that verses are interspersed with prose and/or the poems have a prose framework. Secondly, the eddic stanzas are used situationally in the same way as skaldic verse, for example in dialogue presented as spontaneous in the story, and situational poetry is associated more closely with skaldic verse. Furthermore, so-called ‘death songs’ (typically long poems in eddic metre about their life stories) found in fornalðarsögur are attributed as poems composed by mythic characters in the manner of skalds. Texts of whole poems
uninterrupted by prose, if they ever existed, are few (death songs offer one exception here), which is also often the case with skaldic poems (see below). The Poetic Edda, on the other hand, contains whole poems. It should be noted however that it is the prose context rather than the metre, style or content of the stanza itself that informs the reader whether or not it is situational; therefore, there is no reason to consider the fornaldrarsögur stanzas to be anything other than eddic.

Finally, we can consider the lack of anthologies of skaldic material. There is no evidence for an anthology of skaldic poetry similar to that found for eddic poetry in the Middle Ages (Poole 1991: 3). Edited anthologies of skaldic poetry are thus purely based on skaldic poetry that has been extracted from the prosimetric circumstances of its preservation, and collected together for publication (discussed in Goeres 2013). Indeed, often the longer skaldic poem as a whole is a reconstruction of fragments woven together by an editor (Poole 1991: 3–6). Hitherto, the most influential volumes of skaldic poetry have been those edited by Finnur Jónsson (1912–1915), although these are about to be replaced by the edition of the project “Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages”. Confusingly, both of these collections include the eddic poetry of the fornaldrarsögur, rather than only skaldic poetry in eddic metres. The editorial procedure for skaldic volumes therefore seems to be that more or less all poetry, bar that found in the Poetic Edda, is edited under the heading of skaldic poetry; skaldic poetry is implicitly defined as what eddic poetry is not.

**Runic Inscriptions in Ecological Context**

In my discussion of the modern construction of the eddic/skaldic binary in scholarship, I began to suggest how the two categories are hardly mutually exclusive and begin to crumble – one could even say merge – upon closer inspection, especially, for example, in the publication of the ‘skaldic’ corpus. This is still the case when we scrutinize the ecology of Old Norse poetry with specific texts in mind. It must also be said however that there are certain instances in which the eddic and skaldic binary extracted from scholarly literature can apparently be observed, such as in prosimetric sagas; these will also be discussed and problematized below. Firstly, however, we will turn to verse in a runic context. The categories that scholarship has developed have largely been based on manuscript material. A look at verse in a runic environment shows that the eddic and skaldic binary is, from an etic perspective, notably destabilised in this context, and from an emic perspective, a culturally irrelevant binary. Runic inscriptions containing verse give us another window into Old Norse poetic practices. Rune stones and other items inscribed with runes provide evidence for the ecology of poetry in Scandinavia (as opposed to Iceland), and are of particular value for the poetic record of Eastern Scandinavia, since whereas the poetry available to us in manuscripts is Icelandic or Norwegian, versified runic inscriptions are found in a mainland Scandinavian context, particularly in Sweden.

Almost all poetry in runes is in what we describe as eddic forms; nevertheless, it is clear from the corpus that the form and content of runic verse exist in a noticeably different relationship to the eddic/skaldic binary described above and possibly from that to be found in some manuscript contexts. In manuscripts, for example, we expect to see what is typically delineated as eddic or skaldic poetry associated with a certain type of content (e.g. praise poetry in skaldic metre), and with the saga subgenre when verse is preserved in a prosimetric context (e.g. eddic poetry in fornaldrarsögur). Runic inscriptions tend to violate this expectation:

> it is appropriate to make a distinction between the content and the form of the verses. Their content resembles skaldic poetry in being mainly praise-poetry, whereas their form has much more in common with eddic poetry [...] It is very rare to find carved in runes such intricate, skaldic-like stanzas as the professional poets from Norway and Iceland produced. With a few exceptions, the most prominent one being the Karlevi stone on Öland, Sweden (Öl 1; DR 411), which has a complete stanza in the favourite metre of the skalds, dróttkvætt, the runic verses are generally in the far less complicated metre known as fornyrðislag. (Larsson 2007: 404)

The majority of the verse found in runic inscriptions is in simple, alliterative metre, with only a few inscriptions in skaldic dróttkvætt extant. Indeed, due to the relative
simplicity of the metre of runic inscriptions, it can sometimes be hard to detect whether runic verse is indeed metrical or simply formalised alliterative prose. As a result of this simplicity, often the metre of runic inscriptions is now identified as simply being “eddic or Germanic” in view of the presence of assonance and alliteration, rather than as a specific or identifiable Norse type, even if skaldic-style content may in some cases also indicate an inscription’s status as poetry. If we were to survey the metrical runic inscriptions on their own terms, we would likely not be able to establish the eddic/skaldic binary used by scholars to classify them. 

The Karlevi and Rök Stones
One particularly important function of Scandinavian rune-stones is commemoration. Most of these commemorative inscriptions that could be considered metrical have what Patrik Larsson (2007) describes above as ‘eddic form’, with the exception of that on the Karlevi Stone (Ö1, DR 411). The inscription with its dróttkvætt stanza is thought to have been carved around the year 1000 and likely originated in an oral setting. (Jesch 2001: 9; Larsson 2007: 408). Both skaldic metre and content typical of skaldic poetry (as discussed above), are combined in the stanza, packed full of kennings and broken-up word order, to fulfil a commemorative function. The importance of the Karlevi Stone can hardly be underestimated. However, from the perspective of the wider corpus of runic poetry, to accord it “pioneer status” (Larsson 2007: 408) as the first dróttkvætt stanza of its kind (to be written in runes), is hardly correct, since it represents the exception rather than the rule. True that it is the only written record of skaldic commemoration in a time when that was still an oral genre; nevertheless, those poetic commemorative monuments that followed the Karlevi Stone are in simple, alliterative ‘eddic’ metre, rather than in dróttkvætt.

One example of a stanza in a metre more typical of commemorative monuments is the equally well-known Rök Stone (Ög 136) from the first half of the 9th century, which, amongst its carefully crafted prose, contains a stanza in the metre fornyrðislag about Þjóðríkr. This Þjóðríkr mentioned in the inscription is generally identified with Theodoric the Great, the Gothic king of the early 6th century. He is described as skati Mæringa ['prince of the Mæringar'], a piece of information that may have a counterpart in the Old English poem Deor (most recently, see Harris 2009). The runic stanza is full of allusions to legends and assumes background knowledge on the part of the reader that is now unfortunately lost. This stanza has somewhat the same style and content as those found in the fornaldarsögur, set in Scandinavia’s legendary past, and, when compared with the discussion of metre, style and content above, the inscription has eddic style and content in addition to what we might call eddic form, although Gade points out that, metrically, the inscription seems to record the beginnings of the development of the skaldic metre kvíðuháttr, which counts syllables (Gade 2002: 859). The Karlevi and Rök Stones both demonstrate the resistance of the runic corpus to admit a classical eddic/skaldic binary. The Karlevi Stone has an atypical use of dróttkvætt metre for a commemorative message; the similar extant inscriptions are in eddic form. The Rök Stone, on the other hand, has eddic forms to commemorate a legendary figure.

The Ribe Healing Stick
Fornyrðislag was a popular metre for folk charms and incantations, and we can take the Ribe healing stick (ca. 1300) from North Jutland as an example. Here we find, in normalised form:

Jörð bið ek varða ok upphimin
Sól ok Sancta[m] Mariu ok sjálfa[ñ] Guð dróttin
At hann lé mér læknis hönd ok líf tungu
At lyf binda þar bota þarf.
Ór baki ok þr þrjósti,
Ór líki ok þr lími,
Ór augum ok þr eyrum,
Ór öllu því þar ílt kann í at koma.
Svarðr heitir steinn, hann stendr í hafi úti,
ðar liggja a því nú náudir.
Þar skulu hvergi sætar sofa eða varmer vaka fyrir (=álri) en þú
Þessa bót þóþr, þar ek orð at kveða rýndi.
Amen ok 
Þat sé.
(McKinnell & Simek 2004: 142, adapted to show the metrical sections; cf. Moltke 1985: 494.)
I bid the earth ensure, and the heaven above,
Sun and Saint Mary, and God the Lord Himself,
That he lend me a healer's hands, and a lively tongue
To bind the Trembler where cures are needed.

From back and from breast, from body and from limb, from eyes and from ears, from every place where evil can enter.

A stone is called ‘black’, it stands out in the ocean.

On it lie nine nauðir.

They must never sleep sweet nor wake warm before you receive a cure for this, where I have found out runes to speak words. Amen and so be it.

(McKinnell & Simek 2004: 142, adapted to show the metrical sections.)

Here, the charm begins in the eddic metre fornyrðislag and dissolves by the end into alliterative prose. Objects could also be inscribed with charms in dróttkvætt: a copper box from Sigtuna bears an inscription from the early 11th century, the second half of which is given by Jansson (1967: 135) as:

Fugl velva slæit falvan,
fann’k gauk a nas auka.

The bird tore the pale thief
I saw how the corpse-cuckoo swelled

This is a dróttkvætt curse on anyone who steals the box. Why might dróttkvætt have been chosen here? There are no typical skaldic connotations here (nor in the first half of the inscription, also in dróttkvætt, for which see Jansson 1967: 59), and the example serves to demonstrate that the subject matter of dróttkvætt is not always the praise of kings. From these two examples of charms, we can see that the preference for eddic or skaldic metres is not absolute, and that skaldic metres can be used for both commemorative messages and charms, otherwise both more commonly associated with eddic metres.

Bryggen Inscription 145
On the Bryggen inscription 145 from around 1248, we find a stanza of a love poem in dróttkvætt and carved in runes. In normalised form:

Fell til fríðrar þeææu
fårlegar mér árla

Perspectives on Runic Verse
If we were to examine the runic corpus without knowledge of poetic material preserved in manuscripts, we would not be able to devise the eddic/skaldic dichotomy from its corpus. Metrically, we could observe the differences between dróttkvætt and fornyrðislag. The division of the inscriptions content-wise into a dichotomy would be impossible. The runic class of evidence for poetry simply does not provide any evidence for the skaldic/eddic dichotomy. The eddic and skaldic categories in scholarship were developed without considering the runic material, which reflects different cultural practices than were recorded in manuscript contexts.

Manuscript Case Studies
Eddic and skaldic metres are not distinguished between in medieval emic analyses of metres. Neither the earliest, Háttalykill ['Key to Verse Forms'] (a 12th century metrical treatise in verse), nor Háttatal ['List of Verse Forms'] (the final section of Snorri’s Edda that illustrates a series of verse forms with a prose commentary), mention any distinction of the kind, though both eddic and skaldic metres, as
we term them, are included. The discussion below explores the ecology of Old Norse poetry and verse forms in manuscript contexts.

Verses in Saga Prose
The first aspect of medieval expectations of poetry has already been touched upon: the use of either eddic or skaldic verse in prose contexts to form prosimetra.21 Often, this prose context is Icelandic saga prose, and this is the preservation context of a great deal of Old Norse poetry. The metre of the verse in the prose is not bound to a particular poetic genre, and fornyrðislag could be used for court poetry, epic, riddles and charm verses (as could dróttkvætt). Nevertheless, certain saga genres seem to prefer either eddic or skaldic verse forms, as we would classify the metres, so we could ask whether these verse forms might be categories we can inductively identify.

Violation of the metrical choice in saga subgenres, employing skaldic metre in a genre which typically contains eddic verse forms or vice-versa, indicates to us that this may be used for narrative effect. The prosimetric fornaldar-sóguð, for example, tend to contain eddic verse forms (see Leslie 2013: Leslie-Jacobsen 2016), while the Íslendingasóguð ['sagas of Icelanders'] and konungasóguð ['sagas of kings'] tend to contain skaldic verse forms. One text displaying this is the fornaldarsaga Áns saga bogsveigis ['The Saga of Án Bowbender']. The five stanzas of the saga are spoken by the character Án. In fornaldar-sóguð, stanzas spoken by characters are typically in eddic metres. In this saga however, the first stanza is a dans stanza, the first stanza of a rímur, a type of narrative poetry arising in the first half of the 14th century (see Jorgensen 1993), and because of their later date, usually excluded from the discussion of the eddic/skaldic divide. The second stanza is in ljóðaháttr, the third is skaldic fornyrðislag recited in the presence of a king, the fourth and fifth simpler stanzas in fornyrðislag, the saga thus accommodating stanzas in a variety of both metre and style. (Leslie 2013: 401–407.) In the contemporary sagas (samtíðarsóguð), where the dialogue is in skaldic dróttkvætt, poetry in fornyrðislag is often spoken in dreams (Quinn 1987), although Stefn í Einarsson also points out a dream stanza in dróttkvætt with potentially magical associations that is recited alternately by two men (1951). This indicates not only the importance of metre for literary effect but also indicates that the borders of the use of metre are broad, and the generic expectations of the prosimetric sagas flexible. These examples may also disabuse us of the idea of content suitable for eddic or skaldic metres in a saga context.

Verses in Snorri Sturluson’s Edda
We can consider Snorri’s use of verse in his Edda as reflecting emic perceptions of contemporary poetic practices and offering emic analyses of poetic language and form (although it ought to be pointed out that since this is a unique text, it may not necessarily reflect medieval genre conventions). As mentioned above, eddic and skaldic metres are not distinguished between in the list of verse forms in Háttatal, although the eddic metres are grouped together towards the end of the work. At a glance, there seems to be a clear separation of what we term eddic and skaldic poetry in the section of the work known as Gylfaginning ['The fooling of Gylfi'] and Skáldskaparmál ['The language of poetry']. Gylfaginning, which relates mythological prehistory, uses prosimetric stanzas in eddic metres as evidence for the characters’ assertions. The majority of these are drawn from a limited number of poems also recorded in the Poetic Edda, since the content and style of some of the poetry in the Poetic Edda relates to mythology and the poetry may also have seemed ancient and timeless already by Snorri’s time.22 Skáldskaparmál focuses on poetic diction, and draws examples mainly from poetry in skaldic verse forms, since this is the art form that uses the complex style the section is trying to teach. Nevertheless, Skáldskaparmál simultaneously illustrates the artificiality of the eddic/skaldic divide, since it also includes several eddic stanzas (reviewed in Frog 2009a). Háttatal likewise uses skaldic stanzas to compose a praise poem of 102 stanzas exemplifying at the same time close to 100 different verse forms, regardless of whether the metres are eddic or skaldic. The distinction between the prosimetric employment of a narrow subset of poetry in eddic forms in Gylfaginning and mostly skaldic in Skáldskaparmál and Háttatal has aligned with categories of poetry that today we are inclined to group as eddic and skaldic, and indeed Snorra
Edda is a major source for the development of the binary model. Under scrutiny, however, the modern binary model seems to be more of a projection onto this work than having been organized through a perception of all poetry belonging to one of two categories per se.

Emic Hierarchies of Verse Forms
The third method of discerning the medieval ecology of eddic and skaldic verse forms that I will discuss is to examine situations where characters react to one form or another in narrative. The choice between using either eddic or skaldic metre was in part socially determined by convention and by the status of the respective metres or style of verse. This means that how appropriate each verse form was felt to be developed not only in relation to the full spectrum of their respective uses in Old Norse society, but also in the relation of fornyrðislag and dróttkvætt to one another. The associations and values that a poetic system develops according to its application in a culture has been theorised by John Miles Foley under the moniker of ‘word-power’ (1995).

Although the metres were not bound to a particular genre and fornyrðislag in particular was associated with a wide range of genres and applications, from court poetry to epic, riddles and charms, eddic and skaldic verse certainly had different cultural connotations, and in Foley’s terminology, the ‘word-power’ of a metre is dependent on its cultural activity.

Although the eddic metre fornyrðislag could be used for skaldic poetry, the skaldic metre dróttkvætt seems to have had a superior social status in most contexts, and in some contexts also greater word-power. This is demonstrated by two stanzas by King Haraldr harðráði,23 who, having realised he has left his armour aboard his ship before the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, composes a verse in fornyrðislag relating this fact, and then says, þetta er illa kveðit ok mun verða at gera aðra vísu betri [‘that is badly composed and I will now make another, better verse’]. The king then composes a rather obscure skaldic stanza:

Svá segja menn, at Haraldr konungr
Sigurðarson kvað vísu þessa:
Framm göngum vær
í fylkingu
brynjulausir
und blár eggjar.
Hjalmar skinna.
Hefkat ek mína.
Nú liggr skruð várt
at skipum niðri.

Emma hét bryńja hans. Hon var síð, svá at hon tók á mitt bein honum, ok svá sterk, at aldri hafði vápn á fest. - Þá mælti Haraldr konungr Sigurðarson: ‘Þetta er illa kveðit, ok mun verða at gera aðra vísu betri.’ Þá kvæð hann þetta:

Krjúpum vær fyr vápnna,
valteigs, brókun eigi,
svá bauð Hildr, at hjaldri,
haldorð, í bug skjaldar.
Hott bauð mik, þars moettusk, (the o with a hook and an accent over)
menskorð bera forðum,
hlakkar íss ok hausar,
hjalmstofn í gný malm.

(Haraldr’s saga Sigurðarsonar 1951: 187–188.)

It is said that King Harald Sigurdsson composed this stanza at the time:

We go forward
Into battle
Without armour
Against blue blades.
Helmets glitter.
My coat of mail
And all our armour
Are at the ships.

His coat of mail was called Emma; it was so long that it reached below his knee, and so strong that no weapon could pierce it. King Harald then said, ‘That was a poor verse; I will have to make a better one.’ He composed another stanza.

We never kneel in battle
Before the storm of weapons
And crouch behind our shields;
So the noble lady told me.
She told me once to carry
My head high in battle
Where swords seek to shatter
The skulls of doomed warriors.

(King Harald’s Saga 1966: 150–151.)

Both fornyrðislag and dróttkvætt are used in poetry by skalds, so the king’s switch from one to another is not a switch from what we might consider an ‘eddic’ to a ‘skaldic’ composition. Rather, if the king wishes to demonstrate his command of poetry whilst doing so, he must instead compose a dróttkvætt stanza, by nature
more obscure than direct, rather than a fornyróislag stanza, which was less complicated and thus potentially less prestigious. This can be taken to mean that skaldic metre was more highly esteemed than eddic (at least in that context).

Expectation of verse form need not align with the eddic/skaldic binary model; social conventions concerning verse form were not simply unspoken expectations in certain situations, as several saga episodes bear witness to. In the episode about King Haraldr above, the skaldic verse form was preferred because it was more prestigious. In Gunnlaugs saga, it is clear that there is a level of expectation about which skaldic verse form to use when Gunnlaugr criticises Hrafn for having composed a flokkr rather than drápa about a king:

‘hvi ortir þú flokk um konunginn?’ segir hann;  
‘eða þótti þér hann eigi drápunnar verða?’

(Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu 1957: 22.)

‘why do you compose a flokkr about the king,’ he says, ‘or doesn’t he seem to you worthy of a drápa?’

The difference between a drápa and a flokkr is that a flokkr lacks the embellishment of a series of refrains (each called a stef) found in a drápa. The saga episode should be read against the background of Gunnlaugr composing very well-received flokkar himself on several occasions in the saga, but for jarls rather than kings. Thus, the higher status king should be lauded with the superior verse form of the drápa rather than the flokkr fit for his subordinates. That the flokkr and drápa are both in dróttkvætt makes no difference here to the acceptability of the verse; rather, this example shows than emic categories are not purely based on the eddic/skaldic divide and that the ecology of the verse forms encompasses a complex set of relations that are likely not possible for us to unravel in their entirety.

A similar example can be found in Óláfs saga helga in Heimskringla, in which Þórarinn loftunga offends King Knút by offering him a flokkr, scathingly described by Knút as a dreplinigr, and has to recompose his flokkr into a drápa to make amends (Ólafs saga Helga 2002: 307–310). Note that these verse forms in the drápa and flokkr are in the same metre (dróttkvætt). In addition to the prose contexts of verse, we must also pay attention to the verse form when considering the ecology of eddic and skaldic verse, since it is the verse forms and their relation to each other rather than metre that is here dictated by social custom, and it is noticed when norms surrounding the contextual use of such poetry are broken.

Skaldic Poems on the Margins

The division of eddic and skaldic poetry by metre, style and content can be problematized by a brief look at case studies that show that the interplay of metre, style and content in some poems break down these neat divisions.24

Three poems, Eiríksmál [‘The Lay of Eiríkr’] (anonymous, a panegyrical poem in honour of Eiríkr blóðøx – Eric Bloodaxe), Eyvindr Skáldspillir’s Hákonarmál [‘The Lay of Hákon’] (a 10th-century panegyric to King Hákon góði), and Þorbjörn hornklofi’s Haraldskvæði [‘Poem about Haraldr’] (also known as Hrafnsmál [‘The Lay of the Raven’], now reconstructed from various stanzas from the 9th century about life in King Haraldr’s court) straddle the borders of typical eddic and skaldic divisions and appear in a mixed style. These poems are composed in eddic metres but have what could be considered mixed eddic-skaldic content. If we are to describe them in terms of our eddic/skaldic binary, they are particularly pushed towards skaldic classification by their content as panegyrics, but towards eddic poetry in terms of their eddic verse forms. A particular point of interest in these three poems is their use of ljóðaháttr, the metre characteristic of eddic didactic poems (Quinn 1994: 76), and not otherwise found in any context that could be defined as skaldic, in addition to other eddic metres.

Haraldskvæði has the typical skaldic trait of being by a named poet and celebrates a contemporary prince, yet mixes the straightforward expressions of eddic poetry and the complex diction of the skalds. Furthermore, the poem is in the eddic metres málaháttr and ljóðaháttr and its frame-setting resembles some eddic poems, as it is a dialogue between a raven and a Valkyrie (Turville-Petre 1953: 38–39). Edith Marold comments of Eiríksmál that:
The poem is one of the “eddic poems,” the others being Hákonarmál and Haraldskvæði. It differs in several respects from the skaldic panegyrics. The metrical form of the stanzas (fornyrðislag and ljóðaháttur) is typical of eddic poetry, as is the scenic presentation of the events in dialogue. The vocabulary and style also distinguish the poem from skaldic poetry. (Marold 1993a: 161.)

According to Hollander, Eiríksmál, Hákonarmál and Haraldskvæði thus “by definition [...] emphatically are not skaldic” (1945: 19 fn. 25; see also Quinn 1992: 117–119; Thorvaldsen 2006: 276–279). Although according to Fidjestøl (1993b: 669), the “vivid descriptions, grim irony, and terse composition” make Haraldskvæði “a masterpiece of skaldic poetry”. These are some of the particularly ambiguous cases where eddic metre intersects with skaldic content as defined by the eddic/skaldic binary in a complicated manner, with eddic metre and a mixture of skaldic and eddic content and style. This difficulty in using the customary terms as real categories in scholarship shows that these etic terms and divisions do not conform to an emic presentation of the corpus.

Since, as discussed above, poems are usually categorised as eddic or skaldic on the basis of their content, Eiríksmál, Hákonarmál and Haraldskvæði are particularly hard to classify. Nevertheless, all three poems harbour with ease in the skaldic rather than the eddic port when these terms are used as absolutes. The quantity in the corpus of skaldic content intersecting with eddic form seems to have given scholars the liberty for cases that do not conform to be classed as skaldic anyway. Such cases could be viewed as the exceptions (or fuzzy borderline cases) that prove the general rule, rather than being categorised separately on the basis of their generic ambiguities as we perceive them (there is nothing to suggest that their contemporaries would have perceived them as ambiguous in any way).

We can conclude from Eiríksmál, Hákonarmál, and Haraldskvæði that, as far as an etic use of terms is concerned, similar poetry must have eddic metre but both skaldic style and content to be defined comfortably by scholars as a skaldic poem. Haraldskvæði has eddic metre, skaldic content and both an eddic and skaldic style; Eiríksmál has eddic metre, skaldic content but eddic style; Hákonarmál has eddic metre, skaldic content and a style influenced by Eiríksmál in the eddic direction. These mixtures of eddic and skaldic traits in the style and content features of poetry are the factors hindering their easy classification as skaldic. In terms of the ecology of poetry, Eiríksmál, Hákonarmál and Haraldskvæði demonstrate that the eddic/skaldic binary is wholly inadequate to define or explain the choice of verse form in relation to content. These poems are a strong indication that, at least in 9th–10th century Norway, the eddic/skaldic binary does not apply.

Perspectives on the Manuscript Case Studies

The examples discussed above exemplify the need to consider not only the metre, style, and content of the poetry, but also the literary and historical context in which it is preserved. Much poetry, of both the eddic and skaldic kinds (however defined), survives in prose contexts used prosimetrically (see Harris 1997), and the genre expectations of these prose contexts can influence in which direction we might be inclined to lean when distributing poetry to eddic or skaldic corpora. On the other hand, the existence of the heavy inclinations of certain saga subgenres towards use of poetry in what we would term either eddic or skaldic style may indicate that saga prose contexts may reflect one medieval understanding of the classification of poetry that to some degree, but far from perfectly, corresponds to a division in Old Norse poetry, although this is by no means to say that the prose contexts of eddic and skaldic poetry support only two classes of poetry in a black and white divide. Eddic and skaldic as modern categories are not reflected in the primary sources.

Conclusion

By discussing how the metre, content, historical context and style of Old Norse verse are often understood today, I established how the terms eddic and skaldic are defined and are applied in modern scholarship as mutually exclusive concepts. I then demonstrated that the poetic corpus itself does not support the etic division of Old Norse poetry into eddic and skaldic, and that, from an emic perspective, such a categorisation of the corpus seems neither possible nor desirable. Our perception
and categorization of medieval Icelandic poetry is filtered through manuscripts and under the agendas of patrons, authors, redactors and a developing system of conventions. The conventions and agendas of the manuscript tradition have both influenced and limited our understanding of the underlying oral traditions, including those factors linked to the ecology of eddic and skaldic poetry.

Eddic and skaldic are vague and overlapping terms that can be useful and practical for discussion in order to orient ourselves, but using these terms to define or divide a corpus is misleading. They are modern constructs that we define, and by defining the eddic and skaldic, we enclose the concepts in borders. If we must use the terms, we have to admit that poems can be eddic and skaldic and that their borders are indeterminate, so as not to bisect the Old Norse poetic corpus artificially.


Notes
1. The manuscript is DG 11 4to, University Library Carolina Rediviva in Uppsala, from the first quarter of the 14th century, most recently edited by Heimir Pálsson (2012). ‘Edda’ is found at the beginning of the work in its first title, which begins Bók þessi heitir Edda (Heimir Pálsson 2012: 6) [‘This book is called Edda’]. No further comment on the origin or relevance of the name is given.
2. The Poetic Edda was initially known as Sæmundr Edda, since the work was first attributed to Sæmundr inn fróði, famous in the 17th century for his learning. This name is no longer used and the attribution discredited.
3. For an overview of the discussion surrounding the meaning of the name Edda, see Faulkes 1977.
4. This is the case in, for example, in Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder (1956–1978), which articles on eddic poetry, skaldic poetry and Old Norse verses forms, and Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia (1993).
5. For brief overviews of the key divisions between eddic and skaldic, see Hollander 1945: 1–2, 18; Turville-Petre 1976: xii–xvii; Gade 1995: 1–2.
7. Ljóðaháttr is however a uniquely Nordic form (Gade 2002: 861).
8. The metrical norms for the lines were established by Eduard Sievers (1893); for an overview of the eddic metres, see Holtsmark 1958: 482; Lie 1967; Russom 1993.
10. This early strophe form, loose though it may be, is certainly present; Gade (2002: 859) points out that the stanza on the Rök stone (discussed below), “consists of four lines, divided into two syntactically independent units, [which] shows that, as early as the beginning of the 9th century, Old Nordic poetry must have been stanzaic rather than stichic like West Germanic alliterative poetry”.
11. The term ‘content’ has been used in relation to eddic and skaldic poetry by e.g. Szokody 2002.
12. An exception could be Merliniáspæi [‘The Prophecy of Merlin’], a 13th century rendition of Merlin’s prophecies by the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson. The poem is composed in fornyrðislag stanzas and is modelled upon the poem Völsunga [‘The Seeress’ Prophecy’] (which, as well as being a prophecy, can be considered an epitome of eddic poetry in metre, style and content). Nevertheless, this poem is a translation of the Propheciae Merlini [‘The Prophecies of Merlin’] rather than being purely a product of the vernacular tradition, and it contains battle descriptions “in the stereotyped skaldic style” (Marold 1993b). These factors make it rather atypical.
13. An example of this can be found in Sneglu-Halla Pátr (pp. 263–295), in which a skáld considers composing a poem about two craftsmen to be beneath him. This episode is analysed by Clunies Ross (2005: 115–116).
14. Although there is a lacuna in the manuscript.
15. See for example the metrical concordance of the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages http://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/db.php?id=19&if=defaul&table=metre.
16. For the commemorative function of rune-stones, see Sawyer 2000.
17. For a discussion of the form kvöðuháttur see Gade 2002: 863.
18. Nauðir could be translated as ‘needs’, ‘afflictions’.
19. For a brief overview of dröstkvætt’s association with magic, see Stefán Einarsson 1957: 44–45.
20. The medieval rune inscriptions from Bergen on small slips of wood evidence many genres of text, including versified romance. We can take for example the simple alliterative line from Bergen Unn þá mér, ann [ek] þér! [‘Love me, I love you’], inscription N B645 (Larsson 2007: 416).
21. For an overview of Old Norse prosimetra generally, see Harris 1997, and for eddic prosimetra see Leslie 2013.
22. On the two skaldic stanzas in Gylfaginning, see Lindow 1977.
23. See also Frod 2009b: 227, discussing the same example with relation to Foley’s concept of word-power.
25. Caught at a similarly troubling intersection of the eddic and skaldic forms is Dærrgaljóð, whose metre and subject matter are eddic but are given a precise historical context typical of the skaldic form (see Friis-Jensen 1987: 45).
Work Cited

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What to Call the Poetic Form – Kalevala-Meter or Kalevalaic Verse, regivärs, Runosong, the Finnic Tetrameter, Finnic Alliterative Verse or Something Else?

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When writing about traditional Finnic (also called Balto-Finnic) oral poetry, everyone who is embedded in its long history of research encounters the same problem of what term to use for it. Several partly overlapping terms are in current use. The different terms are sometimes inconsistent, especially across different languages, contexts, approaches or even genres of poetry addressed. Each is also burdened with its own associations or connotations that in some cases are seen as quite controversial. These issues are not exclusive to Finnic traditions. Research on early Germanic poetries, for example, faces similar issues when referring collectively to the historically related Old English, Old High German, Old Norse and Old Saxon poetic forms – although the research discourse has at least developed vocabulary for it. Although the present discussion concerns Finnic poetries, many of the problems addressed have more general relevance, at least by analogy, such as the burdening of terminology with links to nationalism, the inconsistency of terms across languages, and the ways that terms may foreground certain aspects of a poetic form while marginalizing others. The present review and discussion may thus offer food for thought to scholars working with other traditions where the choice of terms is also problematic.

Concern here is centrally with the terms used in scholarship; the vernacular, local or emic terms (i.e. words used within local singing cultures) remain outside of discussion, except insofar as these have been adapted to use by scholars. A problem of terminology addressed here is related to the fact that the poetic form is used with a variety of genres, which prevents simply referring to its many variations through an associated genre label, as is done with Finnic lament poetry (on which, see Stepanova 2014) and with European or Scandinavian ballads. Generally speaking, scholarly terms group into four broad categories: a) terms derived from the title of the Elias Lönnrot’s national epic Kalevala; b) terms derived or developed from emic vocabulary; c) descriptive designations of the poetic form; and any of these may be complemented by d) a term for the ethnic group with which the poetry is identified. In order to make this discussion accessible to readers less familiar with Finnic oral poetries, we give short introductions to the current terminological situation, poetry, its meter and the forms it takes before turning to terminology in detail.

The aim of this article is to offer an overview of the terminological situation in English and Finnish languages, referring also to the terms in Estonian. This discussion makes no pretence of being comprehensive or of reviewing the history of terminology and its debate. The problematics of terms and the choice of which term to use are commonplaces of research on these traditions. However, the situation discussed here often only appears as a long footnote, explaining the situation in a very general way. Indeed, it seems the discussion on these terms has been largely limited to such footnotes and short definitions of the terms used. The present review is an attempt to gather some of these threads and consider them together, reviewing them in a more organized and developed way than has
been done previously. Bringing them into critical focus opens a discussion in which other scholars may respond. Returning to these terms and concepts is important because the ways we understand the networks, interaction and hybrid variations of different poetic forms also affects our ability to discuss the history of those forms. This context also offers a valuable possibility to reflect on the limits of a poetic phenomenon that has taken, as Anna-Leena Siikala (1994; 2000; 2012) has noted, many local, historical, and genre- or performance-dependent forms. These aspects of the tradition will here be considered in relation to how the phenomenon of the poetic system is defined and described.

**Background and Basic Terms Today**

In recent decades, the subject of terminology for this poetry has been discussed, for example, by Pertti Anttonen (1994: 137), Anna-Leena Siikala and Sinikka Vakimo (1994: 11), Jaan Ross and Ilse Lehiste (2001: 7), Tiu Jaago (2008: 199), Pekka Huttu-Hiltunen (2008; 2010), Seppo Knuuttila, Ulla Piela and Lotte Tarkka (2010: 8), Outi Pulkkinen (2010: 13, 51), Siikala (2012: 24); and most recently Mari Sarv (2015: 6–7). The review offered here has in part been precipitated and motivated by lively discussions (predominantly in Finnish) on such terminology held under a short blog-post (Kallio K et al. 2015a) and a Facebook thread (Kallio K et al. 2015b). We are very grateful for all those who were kind enough to elaborate on the theme and to open new views on different scholarly and popular contexts of use. These views will be included here alongside conventionally published research.

The problems of terminology concern national, linguistic or ethnic implications and associations of alternative terms and phrases. Different terms also vary in formal implications for what they do or do not include, such as referring narrowly to formal metrics of a line, more often the verse form or poetic form, or extending broadly to whole poetic or poetic-musical systems. Difference in the scope of relevance can also be significant, such as whether they primarily describe only a local or regional poetic form, the poetic form of certain genres, or the poetic form in a single language or a group of languages. Discussion is further complicated by the fact that terminology has evolved within each language of discussion rather than being uniform across them, even if they may impact each other and terms get adapted from one language into another.

The most commonly used terms for the poetry in current Finnish research are **kalevalamittainen runo(us)** [‘Kalevala-meter poem (poetry)’ or ‘Kalevala-metric poem (poetry)’] and **runolaulu** [‘runo-song, runosong’]. In Estonian, the term **regilaul** [‘regi-song’] is the most common, alongside **regivärs**, which is more or less synonymous to it. Other possible terms in Finnish include **vanha (suomalainen) runo(us)** [‘old (Finnish) poem (poetry)’], **itämerensuomalainen runous** [‘Finnic poetry’], and **kalevalainen runo(us)** [‘kalevalaic poem (poetry)’], in older or popular use also **muinaisruno(us)** [‘ancient poem (poetry)’], or simply (**vanha**) **kansanrunous** [‘(old) folk poetry/folklore’]. The last of these is a broader term that may include other folklore genres as well, and a relative of the Estonian term (**vana** **rahvaluule**) [‘(old) folk poetry’]. In English language scholarship, terms based on **Kalevala** predominate (**Kalevala-metric poetry, Kalevala poetry, kalevalaic poetry**) alongside terms that implicitly identify the tradition as cultural heritage, such as **old / common Finnish / Finno-Karelian / Estonian/Finnic folk / oral poetry**. Especially when discussing musicological features, terms based on the Finnish and Karelian emic term **runo** (e.g. **runo-poetry, runo-song/runosong**) or its etymological translation (e.g. **rune-songs, runic poetry**) are common. Corresponding terminology has equally evolved in other languages where scholarship has long-standing establishment, especially Russian and German, which will not be reviewed here.

No fewer terms circulate to refer to the meter of this poetic form. In Finnish, it is primarily called **kalevalamitta** [‘Kalevala-meter’] or **nelipolvinen trokee** [‘trochaic tetrameter’, with specific quantity rules] today, both of which have been carried into Estonian and English-language scholarship. Description-based terms such as **vanhan suomalaisen runon mitta** [‘the meter of old Finnish poetry’] have also been popular, and during recent year the terms **runolaulumitta** [‘runo-song meter’] and
kahdeksantavumitta ['octosyllabic meter'] have been introduced. In particular contexts, the term runomitta ['runo-meter'] has been used, although, in modern Finnish language, it refers to any poetic meter (just as runo refers to any poem in any meter).

In Estonian, the meter can be called regilaualu värsimõõt ['meter of regilaual'], regivärsimõõt ['regivärsi-meter' or 'measure of regivärs'] and kalevalamõõt ['Kalevala-meter'], although the last one is mostly used today with reference to the rule-based ideal meter (e.g. in Põldmäe 1978; Sarv 2008). In English, rune/runic meter has been used less prominently overall, but runo meter or runo-song meter and Finnic trochaic tetrameter are increasingly used. When Estonian terms are used to refer to the meter in English, this is normally a phrase ‘regilaual meter’ or ‘meter of regilaual’; regivärs may also be treated as a term for the textual aspect of the tradition rather than as a synonym of regilaual as a term for the poetic-musical tradition. Each of the possible terms carries its own connotations owing to its history of use or associations (e.g. with the national epic Kalevala), and the terms also tend to be used in slightly different contexts.

Today, researchers tend to use the different terms rather flexibly and in a relaxed manner, often as synonyms. This presupposes a common knowledge of different backgrounds and scholarly loads of each term, or perhaps a degree of ambivalence to, or lack of concern about, those loads. At the same time, flexible and synonymic use reflects an acceptance of the fact that there exists no exclusive and ideal solution. Here, we wish to keep in sight the fact that the choice of terms and the operation of their loads is highly context-dependent, and therefore, quite naturally, we make no attempt to dictate or recommend what terms should or should not be used.

**A Shared Finnic Linguistic Heritage**

A key factor in the problems of terminology is that the poetic form is shared across language groups that identify themselves with distinct cultural and national identities. Varieties of the poetic form are found in all Finnic languages except for Livonian and Vepsian, which are at the peripheries of the language area (Kuusi 1994: 47). In addition to features of meter and poetic syntax, there are traces of a historically shared formulaic idiom as well as of historically shared metaphors, images, motifs and complex narratives with which the poetry was used (Harvilahti 2015: 311–315). This is unsurprising when, in an oral culture, meter is perceived and communicated through language (see Frog 2015: 84–87). The poetic system is considered to have been carried as a form of heritage from a period of common language, so-called Proto-Finnic. It has been estimated to have been in use for perhaps two millennia or even longer, but it presumably dates at least as far back as the breakup of Proto-Finnic into separate languages around the beginning of the Viking Age or ca. AD 800 (on which see Kallio P 2014) since it is unlikely to have spread across languages and cultures thereafter.

The poetic system is used with such a remarkable range of genres that it seems to have been a predominant mode of metered poetic expression (used alongside a distinct poetic system for ritual and non-ritual laments). Whatever its actual origins and dating, the poetic system is infused with the quality of ‘heritage’ linked to language. Language has been viewed as iconic of ethnic identity, which in its turn, for nearly two hundred years, has been shaped and constructed (or with small minorities even suppressed) through nationalism. As a consequence, discussions of the meter, its forms and the terms used to describe it become bound up with ethnic and national identities.

The research history has constructed major divisions of the poetry traditions especially into northern and southern groupings that have shaped the thinking in research. An early major grouping mainly follows linguistic affinity that blur into national or regional and ethnic groupings of ‘Finnish’, ‘Karelian’ and ‘Ingrian’ on the one hand and of ‘Estonian’ and ‘Seto’ on the other. This major division is reflected in the publications of corpora. Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot (SKVR) ['Old Songs of the Finnish People'], of which parts I–XIV (1908–1948; 33 volumes) are organized by geographical regions of Finland, Karelia (and additional regions where Karelian is spoken) and Ingría, with part XV (1997, 1 volume) of additional early unpublished texts. The digitization as the SKVR-database remain within this linguistically and geographically defined structure. A similar
structuring is apparent in the publications of songs from Estonia and Setomaa, such as the *Vana kannel* ['Old Harp'] series (Hurt 1875–1886, with the project resumed in the 1950s) and *Monumenta Estoniae antiquae* ['Monuments of Ancient Estonia'] series. The Eesti regilaulude andmebaas – Estonian Runic Songs’ Database (ERA-database) has evolved following the same basis of linguistic and geographical splitting of the Finnic traditions into northern and southern parts.

Speaking of a simple division between northern and southern areas has not been consistent over time. As research underwent a shift in emphasis from tradition as text to tradition as performance and practice, northern and southern Finnic tradition areas were reconceived on those grounds. Traditions in Ingria and southern regions of Karelia were regrouped with traditions of Estonia as (predominantly) women’s singing traditions of agricultural village-centered communities, dancing and other performative practices linked to singing, the so-called ‘lyric-epic’ narrative form, and so forth (e.g. Virtanen 1987; Siikala 1990). Both ways of looking at the north–south division continue to be used according to a researcher’s focus: researchers with emphasis on performance practices will discuss the boundaries according to one set of criteria while research with emphasis on mythology or poem-types will use another.

Simplified divisions minimize actual variation, often with the implication of an ideal for a broad area. For example, Finland and Karelia to the Karelian Isthmus are often treated as a single area for which an ideal of poetic form is generalized, marginalizing regional differences as deviations from that idea. Although grouped with Finland and Karelia, traditions of Ingria have also long been recognized as distinct to the point that the relevant volumes of *SKVR* are even organized on different principles. The region is relatively small, but Ingria’s treatment as a coherent tradition area blurs ethnic and linguistic distinctions between Ižorians, a population with a long history in the region whose language is close to Karelian, so-called Ingrian-Finns, descended from populations that came from parts of Finland and Karelia some centuries before, and the often-marginalized Votes, who are linguistically closest to North Estonians but whose traditions were not as well documented. In some areas, differences between the traditions of these groups blur or are ambiguous, but there were also differences in songs and practices that remained distinct (e.g. Salminen 1929). Much as Ingria has been set apart for the northern group, Seto singing traditions of Southeast Estonia and Russia have been treated as distinct from traditions throughout the rest of Estonia, both for differences in form and content and also for differences in ethnic identity, connected with Orthodox religion and strong Russian rather than German influences (e.g. Hurt 1904–1907). Nevertheless, especially in Finnish and English-language scholarship, ‘Estonian’ has often been used inclusively of Seto, while ‘Finnish’ has been used as inclusive speakers of other Finnic languages in regions of Karelia and all of Ingria that have never been within the borders of Finland, divesting these groups and their tradition of independent value and identity (see also Kalkun 2011; Haapoja et al. 2017).

The north–south division is important because it created groupings within which the scholarly perception of variation was often minimized. The early division between northern and southern groups became linked to questions of whether the more regular northern form or the more flexible southern form was more archaic (e.g. Kuusi & Tedre 1979; 1987). The archival infrastructures and methodologies for approaching these traditions emerged in the environment that produced the so-called Historical-Geographic Method, which was oriented to historical reconstruction of song types as well as evolvement of tradition in more general terms (Frog 2013a). It was not that scholars were unaware of variation – on the contrary, they were often quite sensitive to it for methodological reasons – but the abstracted extremes were what was important because one of those extremes was presumed to be more archaic and the continuum of variation to the other extreme would most likely reflect a trajectory of spread and/or process of evolution.6 Recognizing the splitting of the tradition and the differences in where that split occurs is significant here because some terms that might be used to refer collectively to the
common Finnic tradition have also been used only for northern or southern forms.

**Metrical Form**

This poetic system is governed by *conventions* that are customarily abstracted into ideal images of the meter. In oral poetry, “exceptions or irregularities” are almost inevitable “in the actual lines occurring in versification practice” (Sarv 2015a: 8). What we might call ‘metricality’ or the ‘well-formedness of verses’ operates as a perceived quality of text within a continuous flow of performance or other oral discourse. This fact allows lines to be perceived as ‘better’ or ‘worse’ rather than in terms of a black and white distinction between metrically ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ (Frog 2014a). In this poetry, all of the organizing principles associated with the meter can be conceived as open to varying degrees of flex, beginning from the rhythmic (which may also be melodic) structuring of the mode of expression, and which may also vary locally in relation to genre and context of communication. That is why scholars may speak of tendencies or constraints rather than rules of the poetic meters.


Because the problematics of certain terms are linked to giving emphasis or priority to certain regional forms of the poetic system, it is necessary to offer a somewhat more developed overview of the poetic form here in order to make discussion accessible to non-specialist readers. Viena, the northern region of Karelia, is where meter appears most strict. This region is also where those types of vernacular mythology and religion that were of greatest interest to collectors during 19th-century Romanticism were most vital. As a result, Viena became the most extensively studied region of traditional Finnic oral poetry, followed by Ingria and Setomaa owing to the richness of their singing traditions. The more regular form of the meter in Viena was made still more regular in Lönnrot’s *Kalevala* and other literary works; this is the form of the poetry best known internationally. The poetic form in Ingria, on the Gulf of Finland, is somewhat more flexibly handled although it seems that mostly linguistic change has been compensated to accommodate metrical form; the poetic form changes outward from Northeast Estonia, while in Setomaa, the poetic form is at the far extreme from what is found in Viena. It is nevertheless possible to find nearly flawless examples of the stricter poetic form in all regions (even if with different proportions of formal line-types), and also to find poems in looser forms, so discussion of regional forms inevitably requires generalizations that marginalize the varieties and ranges of variation within each region. Today, rather than a simple binary division between strict and loose forms, variation is seen on continuums that progress from the White Sea to Southeast Estonia and from inland regions to coastal and island areas. The prevailing view is that the historical poetic form was stricter and that variations in different languages and dialect areas are outcomes of adaptations in relation to language change and in some regions also to contacts with singing traditions in other languages (see especially Sarv 2008a; 2011b). The stricter form thus provides a practical frame of reference for introducing the forms in other regions that increase in flexibility to the south through Ingria and Estonia and to the west through Finland.

A basic line of verse has eight positions organized in four feet with metrical stress on the first position in each foot. The stricter form of the meter is syllabic with a trochaic rhythm: each foot pairs one metrically stressed and one unstressed syllable normally yielding an eight-syllable line, although the first foot is flexible and may contain as many as four syllables. In the dialects of Russian Karelia and Eastern Finland, a line normally consists of 2–4 words. A convention of ‘right justification’,7 which Sadeniemi (1951: 36) called the Gesetz der Wannmühle [‘law of winnowing’],3 inlines
longer words to be placed at the end of the line and excludes lines from ending in a monosyllable. The poetry is stichic, which means that lines simply follow one another in series rather than being regularly organized in couplets or stanzas. Verses are characterized by alliteration: two or more words in a line would normally begin with the same sound. Strong alliteration was preferred, which means the first vowel is also the same, even when following an alliterating consonant (e.g. sortu sormin lainehille ['sank with his fingers into the waves']). Weak alliteration, or alliteration of the onset consonant only, is also used, but clear preference is given to pairing of phonetically closer vowels (Krikmann 2015). Although alliteration is a characteristic feature of this poetry, it is not metricalized: it is not connected with metrical positions and lines could also be without it (e.g. Sadeniemi 1956: 88; Leino 1986: 134); where line-internal alliteration is lacking, alternative phonic patterns, such as repeating consonants across lines, are sometimes used to weave verses into the acoustic texture of a poem (Frog & Stepanova 2011: 200–201). Verses are equally characterized by semantic and grammatical parallelism, not necessary in every line, but parallelism is fundamental to the poetic system (Steinitz 1934; Kuusi 1952; Metslang 1978; Saarinen 2017; Sarv 2015b; 2017). Parallelism is closely linked to alliteration (Steinitz 1934: 182–183, Sarv 2000: 93–105; 2017), and quite notably the frequency or prominence of alliteration and parallelism varied according to genre (Kuusi 1953; Sarv 1999: 132–137).

A distinctive feature of the meter is its conventions for the placement of long and short stressed syllables. In Finnic languages, the first syllable of a word or part of a compound word always receives lexical stress. In poems, compounds are treated metrically as separate words. Apart from the first foot, long stressed syllables should be placed only on the lifts of the meter, whereas short stressed syllables should only on the falls, yielding what has been called a ‘broken verse’, the placement of unstressed syllables is free (see Leino 1986; 1994). This feature generally takes precedence over the right justification of long words (Kuusi 1952). However, it was also a feature that was allowed at least some flexibility.

As Mari Sarv (2015: 6) stresses, the “meter of oral poetry is subject to variation and should not be treated as a static and petrified phenomenon.” Meter and language are in a symbiotic relationship (e.g. Foley 1996: esp. 28; Leino 1986). The most significant factors affecting the evolution of the poetic form were changes that shortened words, affecting how they worked in the meter and the number of words that could be in a line (Sarv 1997, 2000: 32–45; 2008a: 63–90), and intense contacts with languages and their poetic systems organized on different metrical principles (Sarv 2011b). Viena was long considered as the most conservative region and thus as preserving the most archaic poetic form, but traditions had clearly evolved in that region as well (Kuusi 1994; Siikala 2002b; Leino 1986: 136). Flexibility increased to the south on and around the Karelian Isthmus and into Ingria, where two light syllables could sometimes fill a single position in the second foot, with variation increasing on a continuum through Estonia as the number of feet admitting syllabic flexibility rises and a line could have six to twelve syllables in its eight positions. In the southeastern regions, the percentage of ‘broken’ lines dwindles to a small percentage, where verses were more often accentually structured, simply aligning lexical stress with metrical stress. (See Sadeniemi 1951; Lauerma 2004; Sarv 2008a; 2015).

Western areas also exhibit significant increases in flexibility on both sides of the Gulf of Finland, including a weakening of conventions for the placement of long and short stressed syllables (Leino 2002 [1975]; Laitinen 2006; Sarv 2008a; 2011b; 2015). As in southeastern Estonia, these changes in the poetic form are linked to changes in language, especially the reduction of syllables and syllabic length, which was particularly prominent in languages south of the Gulf of Finland (e.g. Laakso 2001; Viitso 2003). Impacts on syllabic quantity rules in both Western Finland and the Western regions of Estonia may have also been impacted by centuries of intense contact with Swedish language traditions (Sarv 2011; cf. Laitinen 2006: 38). In sung performance, especially in Ingria and Estonia, shortened words of spoken language were sometimes augmented
to affect the length of a syllable, the number of syllables or to allow one syllable to do the work of two so that verses would conform to metrical or musical templates (Lauerma 2004: 24–65; Sarv 2015a: 10). Thus, even in the Finno-Karelian tradition areas, there were significant regional differences in the poetic form.

The poetic form evolved in different ways in relation to changes in language, but, metrically, “similarities are much greater than the differences” in the Finnic tradition as a whole (Leino 1986: 129). Differences predominantly concern the tendencies in the placement of long and short syllables, the number of feet in which multiple syllables can appear, and the degree that those feet can be flexed. The differences in the poetic form can, on the whole, be viewed in terms of the degree to which different conventions of meter hold and in what hierarchies, considered in relation to the linguistic registers and modes of performance of the poetry’s use. Even if similarities may outweigh the differences at the broadest level, each regional variation can with equal justification be approached as a distinct poetic system with its own metrical conventions that differ to varying degrees from those of other regions. It might also be reiterated that northern and southern groupings are built on linguistic grounds linked to nationalist agendas or on grounds of performance practices that are more relevant to social use of the poetry than poetic form. The poetic form in Ingria and on the Karelian Isthmus might better group formally with that of Northeast Estonia than with regions to the north and Northeast Estonian traditions might be better grouped with those of Ingria – the regional forms have simply never been analysed areally in that way.

The problems of terminology result from a practical need for relevant terms of different referential scope on the one hand and how terms relate to variation and difference on the other. The degree of difference between the poetic forms in different language areas makes it necessary to distinguish them in certain analyses, while in others it can be equally important to be able to talk collectively about all of these related poetic forms. Whatever term is used, the broader the scope of tradition areas to which it refers, the more that certain features are likely to be projected as hegemonic while others are marginalized.

**Terms Referring to Kalevala**

Of all of the possible terms, variations of ‘Kalevala/kalevalaic poetry/meter’ are the most well known and widely recognizable internationally. These terms reference the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*, which many more people have heard of than Finnic oral poetry. However, it is exactly this reference that makes such terms awkward from some points of view. The potential awkwardness arises from a variety of associations and connotations linked to *Kalevala*. Another issue is that these terms have often been used only to refer to the North Finnic forms of the tradition.

*Kalevala* is a product of national Romanticism. It was compiled and composed by Elias Lönnrot (1835; 1849) out of literally hundreds of variants of oral songs from different regions and language areas. He and others had collected songs, riddles, proverbs, incantations and numerous other genres from the local oral cultures. The richest body of poems used as the basis for Lönnrot’s epic were collected from Russian Karelia, territories that had been separated by the Swedish–Russian border until Finland changed hands and became a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire in the beginning of the 19th century. *Kalevala* later played an essential part in creating the Finnish nation-state. (See Piela et al. 2008.) In addition to the nation-building of ‘Finland’, there was also discussion of establishing a ‘Greater Finland’ (Suur-Suomi) consisting also of parts of Russian Karelia, sometimes also Ingria and Estonia. Researchers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries tended to talk about all Finnic groups – Finnish, Karelian, Votic, Ingrian, and sometimes even Estonian – as ‘Finnish’, which was often seen as a neutral term even if it is ideologically encoded. The priority of ‘Finnish’ identity was also asserted by Finnish researchers in otherwise neutral linguistic terms for Uralic languages like ‘Finno-Ugric’.

Especially between the World Wars, some researchers, politicians and activists presented ideas that all the Finnic peoples should form one nation-state and, in the popular discussions of the 1930s in particular, interpretations of terms like
‘kalevalaic poetry’ or ‘Kalevala poetry’ were often bluntly nationalistic (Piela et al. 2008). Of course, St. Petersburg had been founded in the middle of the Finnic cultural areas in the early 18th century, which made the proposal of a ‘Greater Finnish’ nation somewhat problematic. The idea met with immediate objections both within and from outside of Finland. During the Second World War, the Finnish army actually conquered, for a short time, some areas of Russian Karelia. The idea of ‘Greater Finland’ has not been taken seriously since that time, but for some scholars, terms referring to Kalévala still echo the idea of a Greater Finnish Nation.

Today, the making of the national epic can be seen as a process of cultural appropriation: oral traditions of Karelians and Izhorians were taken and branded as ‘Finnish’. In fact, the mythology and poetry of Karelia and Ingria are currently, by association, commonly referred to as ‘Finnish’ both in Finland and more widely in the Western world. In Finland, this tendency is rooted in nationalist discourse; internationally, this tendency is in large part because ‘Finland’ is a nation-state on the mental map of Westerners, most of whom have never heard of ‘Karelia’ or ‘Ingria’ (see also Ahola et al. 2014: 487). For a Finnish researcher, Kalévala is burdened with this history, which, by association, gets carried by terms derived from Kalévala. Yet, in Finnish popular use, the nationalist resonance is often received positively, acknowledging great oral and literary works as well as local and national (positive) identities.

As modernization progressed in (then Soviet) Karelia, Kalévala was ‘appropriated back’ by Russian Karelians as a Карело-финский [‘Karelo-Finnish’] epic. Both Lönnrot’s epic and the associated oral poetry traditions are addressed as ‘Karelo-Finnish’ from the perspective of Russian scholarship more generally (where ‘Karelia’ provides a meaningful frame of reference). Thus, in spite of the political burden on the Finnish side, Kalévala and terms for Karelian oral poetry derived from the epic’s title seem to be positive from the perspective of Karelians and in Russian scholarship.

The southern forms of the poetic tradition were associated with building Estonian national ethnic identities. The situation was particularly complex because, from the beginning of the 20th century, the Finns were seen as a sort of ‘big brother’ lending help and support to the Estonians, and Finnish culture was esteemed in contrast to the variety of German influences that had accompanied modernization. One consequence of the authoritative position of Finnish research was the unconditional acceptance of the ‘rules’ of the northern metrical form. Regional variations in traditions of Estonia were recognized, but performers would sometimes be described as making ‘mistakes’ and texts published in schoolbooks were edited to conform to the ideal rules. (See Sarv 2008b.) Especially among Finnish scholars, use of Kalevala-based terms for this poetry can thus be seen as cultural appropriation or (when done by Estonian scholars) transfer, or as linking to a ‘Greater Finland’ ideology. However, such views are dependent on a number of associations which must be seen as significant, particularly: a) the association of the term with the epic Kalevala; b) the association of Kalevala with (Finnish) nationalism; and c) the association of Estonian oral poetry with (Estonian) ethnic identity and/or nationalism. On the one hand, such associations have been critically reevaluated in different contexts, unpacking their political loads. On the other hand, transnational scientific communities evolving in the wake of globalization seem to have relaxed the significance and role of nationalism in research at the level of individual scholars. It is thus unsurprising that many contemporary researchers in Estonia think it is fine to use these Kalevala-based terms also for the Finnic poetry traditions as a whole (see Kallio K et al. 2015b; Jaago 2008). However, this issue is far from being uncontroversial (see Sarv 2015a: 6).

Another issue raised for these terms is that it is considered anachronistic to refer to folk poetry through a derivative, modern epic, and potentially misleading. Although Kalevala is a great work of literature, it is a lousy metaphor for oral poetry. Lönnrot composed new narrative structures, regularised the poetic language, and even ‘improved’ the metricality of verses. He constructed an epic of 22,795 lines out of oral songs that rarely exceeded 350
verses.\textsuperscript{18} It has also quite appropriately been noted that terms relating to *Kalevala* bear strong literary associations: *Kalevala* is usually performed as readings or recitals unknown to traditional oral cultures. Moreover, for several decades after the publication of *Kalevala*, Lönnrot’s epic was understood and studied as a source of original folk poetry, despite the fact that Lönnrot clearly stated his position as the compiler in the preface of the book (1835; 1849). The long history of treating *Kalevala* as oral tradition, still widely encountered among non-specialists both in Finland and abroad, made it important for researchers to assert the distance and distinction of the oral poetry from *Kalevala* as a literary work. Many scholars have felt that these Kalevala-based terms suggest this earlier interpretive paradigm – i.e. that the oral poems are derivative of *Kalevala* rather than vice versa – which has been seen as more problematic for the terminology than its burden of associations with nationalism.

The term *kalevalamittainen runo(us)* [‘Kalevala-metric poem/poetry’] was apparently coined during the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in order to have a neutral word for both the oral poetry and *Kalevala*. At least for many contemporary Finnish researchers, this term feels more neutral and technical than ‘kalevalaic’ or ‘Kalevala poetry’ because it names the oral poetry through its meter in an easily recognisable way (Kallio K et al. 2015a & b). On the other hand, the impression of ‘Kalevala-metric poetry’ as opposed to ‘kalevalaic poetry’ can be the opposite in English. In the former, ‘Kalevala’ is a noun that specifies the epic in a construction equivalent to the phrase ‘poetry in the meter of *Kalevala*’, which can easily sound derivative (and could equally describe Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha*). In contrast, ‘kalevalaic’ is an adjectival derivative that may more neutrally indicate ‘like or related to *Kalevala*’, analogous to corresponding terms such as ‘Homerian’ and ‘eddic’/‘eddaic’ (similarly named from a work called *Edda* by the medieval Icelandor Snorri Sturluson). These latter terms did originate with a sense of ‘derivative of’ but today, at least in scientific discourse, they are generally understood as categories of traditional poetry that happen to be best known through the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* or poetry preserved in the *Eddas*. In any case, it is sometimes felt that no terms referring to *Kalevala* are sufficiently neutral owing to the heavy literary, National-Romantic or nationalistic undertones of Lönnrot’s epic. Other researchers, however, feel that the current use of the terms relating to *Kalevala* has been made possible by a long and critical research history of the national, National-Romantic and nationalistic trends in the history of folklore studies and of history writing (see e.g. Wilson 1976; Sihvo 1973; Bendix 1997; Valk 2004; 2005; Anttonen 2005; Tarkka 2013): in other words, each time the *Kalevala* and terms related to it have been deconstructed, they could be rebuilt with less of this load, and this has been done so many times that – even if no terms are ever wholly neutral – they can be reasonably applied in scientific discussion.

A practical issue in using terms derived from *Kalevala* for the whole of this poetic tradition is its customary scope of reference and connotations for the poetic form itself. Within the scholarly construction of this poetry into northern and southern branches, Kalevala-terms have often been used to refer only to the northern / North Finnic forms (e.g. Leino 1986: 129). In practice, the context of discussion tends to eliminate any confusion regarding which way the term is being used. On the other hand, extending this term’s scope only provides a general term for the broader poetic tradition at the expense of a term for the northern / North Finnic forms, for which it is also practical to have a term. Of course, the relevance of differentiating these branches is dependent on the investigation. If concern is exclusively for formal principles of the poetry, the northern–southern division appears as an artificial, political construct, while actual variation in poetic form seems to progress more fluidly from region to region, as does variation in many singing practices, for which a different northern–southern division is relevant. Conversely, the distinction is relevant for research on epic, incantations and mythology because the North Finnic branch of the tradition exhibits distinct and shared systems of poetry at the textual level that seem to be rooted in historical innovations (Frog 2013b). Although songs, verses and symbolism
also passed through networks of communities across thresholds of linguistic difference, innovations in the northern branch extended to basic symbols and metaphors in the poetry (Ahola et al. 2018: 281–283). When terminology for the poetic form is bound up with, or even used for, the broader poetic system and poems, knowledge and practices associated with it, the northern–southern division can be significant.

A more serious issue, however, is that terms referring to Kalevala often carry a normative frame of interpretation. The term ‘Kalevala-meter’ tends to refer to the most regular, strict forms of this poetry and any description of the ‘Kalevala-meter’ will normally be in those terms. However, this form of the poetry is found mostly in Russian and Finnish Karelia. It is both used and further regularized by Lönrot in Kalevala and tends to be still more ideally represented in metrical descriptions, but this form is not accurately representative of, for example, the poetic form in southwestern Finland. The terms referring to Kalevala implicitly valorize the northern Kalevala-meter, of which forms in Ingria, Estonia and even other parts of Finland become viewed as derivatives. Thus, not only have these Kalevala-based terms been used to refer to northern forms of the common tradition but they also suggest a particular, hegemonic frame of reference for viewing the poetry. Thus, some scholars feel that ‘Kalevala-meter’ is a useful term for the idealized abstraction of the poetic form as a frame of reference for considering different local and regional variations of the tradition, but should not be used as a general term for these traditions as such (see also Sarv 2015a: 6–7).

In sum, terms related to Kalevala have the advantage of recognisability, especially internationally. However, they also carry a lot of historical baggage that compromise their usability in the eyes of some researchers. If Kalevala-based terms are used to refer to all Finnic traditions, we lose the benefit of use for the North Finnic forms of the tradition. In addition, Kalevala-based terms suggest a frame of reference for evaluating different forms in relation to an ideal, which may implicitly devalue and marginalize regional variants.

**Regilaul and regivärss**

Whereas scholarship on northern forms of the tradition evolved a terminology referring to Kalevala, Estonian scholarship has used the terms regilaul [‘regi-song’] and regivärss [‘regi-poem/song’]. Both terms derive from emic vocabulary for local oral traditions and have been adopted for public and academic use first by Fr. R. Kreutzwald in the 1840s (Laugaste 1980: 1619). Estonian regi and its Finnish and Karelian cognate reki mean ‘sleigh, sledge’, but the element regi- in these compounds derives from a Low German term for secular or dance songs (SSA III: 63, s.v. ‘rekilaulu’). The original emic terms for värss in the cognate regivärss were virsid and versid, which have common root with Finnish word virsi ‘poem’, ‘song’, not with latin verse. Regilaul and regivärss are now established and considered unproblematic in Estonian. In recent decades, they have also begun to be used also in English language scholarship, where ‘regivärss meter’ and ‘regilaul meter’ are also both used when making explicit reference to the meter. For a Finnish reader, however, regilaul is easily confused with Finnish rekilaulu: rekilaulu seems to be a loan adaptation of Estonian regivärss (SSA III: 63, s.v. ‘rekilaulu’), but now refers to a certain type of rhymed stanza that is very far from the common Finnic unrhymed, non-stanzaic tetrameter (Asplund 2006). This makes the Estonian term problematic in a Finnish language context, although it works fine in English and Estonian.

Regilaul and regivärss can operate as generally inclusive terms in Estonian for Estonian, Finnish, Karelian and Ingrian traditions, although Seto songs are perceived as different and most often called Seto leelo [‘songs’]. In English, the words’ scope has been structured in scope to refer to Estonian and Seto forms of the poetic tradition in contrast to those designated through terms derived from Kalevala (cf. Sarv 2015a). In this respect, these terms carry many of the same issues as Kalevala-terms regarding the scope of reference, although they are more neutral in their other connotations.
**Terms Based on runo**

Many terms linked to this poetry and especially its northern forms incorporate the Finnish and Karelian word *runo*. *Runo* was an emic term for ‘traditional poem, song’ as well as having an archaic meaning of ‘performer of poetry; sorcerer (tietäjä)’, with rare use in a Karelian dialect to refer to a (stringed) musical instrument. From the 17th century on, *runo* appears to have been used to denote the traditional Finnish poem in Latin (*runa*, *runo*), but was mainly used in various compounds for the same in Finnish (*runo-nuotti* [lit. ‘runo-note’, ‘runo-melody’]) and Swedish (*Runewijsor* [lit. ‘runo-songs’]) (see Melander 1928–1941 I: 11–14; Niinimäki 2007: 307; Siikala 2012: 24). During the 18th century, the plain term *runo* mostly refers to poems in traditional Finnish meter (although in the literary uses of the 17th and 18th centuries, it was common to add rhymes to such verses, on which see Kallio K 2015). Terms based on *runo* lack the sort of baggage of Kalevala-terms, but, like most Finnish terms relating to old oral traditions, they have accumulated new meanings across the centuries. *Runo* is now the modern Finnish word for ‘poem’ in any poetic meter. Already in the first Finnish hymnal (1583), Jacobus Finno used the term *runo* and *runoja* indiscriminately of pagan, Biblical and Christian poets (Lehtonen 1916: 199–200). In 1642, the first Finnish Bible mostly uses other terms (*wirsii*, *weisu*, *laulu*), but, in the apocryphal book of Tobias also *runo* is used for Hebraic poems (VKK Biblia B1-Tob-e:0-501a20; VKK FinnoVk-e-3a, 5a.). In oral language, *virsii* [‘poem, song’] denoted a poem or song in the traditional alliterative meter, but it was then taken to refer to Lutheran hymns, which is how it is understood in contemporary language today. The term *runo* does have a connection to traditional local terms, but it also has a history of four hundred years in the discourse surrounding the tradition and in various literary uses.

The adaptation of *runo* into Estonian has been relatively straightforward, but adaptations of *runo* into other languages come with a different set of problematic associations. *Runo* does not belong to a common Finnic vocabulary and was borrowed from Finnish into Estonian, presumably in connection with the discourse surrounding *Kalevala* and related publications. As such, it is used to refer to traditional poems and has been used in Estonian scholarship to refer to the common Finnic form (e.g. Tedre 2015 [1989/1996]) and also more specifically to Northern Finnic forms (e.g. Särg 2005: 13). Difficulties arise in English and other Germanic languages where it has been common to translate *runo* etymologically. The word *runo* derives from an early Germanic loan, relating it to Old Norse *rín* [‘unit of mythic knowledge, charm; letter of the runic alphabet’] (the word *runo* was also sometimes used in 17th-century literary Finnish for the runic alphabet: VKK As1667b-A2a). It has thus been translated into English as ‘rune’ or ‘runic’ and with corresponding terms in other Germanic languages, but these translations have been gradually devalued because of their misleading primary association with the Scandinavian runic alphabet and, by extension, with Old Norse poetry. Quite recently, the Finnish and Karelian term *runo* has been taken directly into discussions in English, which alleviates this issue.

In Finnish scholarship of recent years, the terms *runolaulu* [‘runo-song’] and *runolaulaja* [‘runo-singer’] have been favoured as neutral and viable terms for addressing the Finnic alliterative poetry tradition. These terms have spread into both Estonian and English use. In Finland, the term *runolaulu* [‘poem-song’] is popular especially among researchers and performers who want to emphasise the oral, performed and musical character of traditional oral poetry (e.g. Laitinen 2006; Heinonen 2007; Huttu-Hiltunen 2008; Pulkkinen 2010; Haapoja 2013; see also Lippus 1995). *Laulu*, a common Finnish word for ‘song’ (Est. *laul*), has referred and still refers to the aural, musical quality of the poem, although it does not specify the metrical system being used. Foregrounding the performative nature of the poetry has been an important counterpoint to the long history of viewing the poetry as literary text, a paradigm that some feel is embedded in Kalevala-based terms. The Finnish term *runolaulumitta* [‘runo-song meter’] is a recent innovation in the same vein, used mostly by those emphasising the musical or performance aspect of the tradition (e.g. Huttu-Hiltunen 2010; Pulkkinen 2010).
family of runolaulu-based terms have been thought to hold promise for breaking away from the limitations of many other terms discussed above – or at least from their baggage of associations and implications.

The term runo(n)laulu [‘runo-song’] has been used here and there in literary contexts to mean the traditional Finnish poetry from the first dictionary with Finnish words onward (Schroderus 1941, 40: “Poema. Dicht. die Erdichtung. Runoin laulu.”). Antti Lizelius, vicar in western Finland, used the term runolaulu when narrating the ancient pagan history of his parish Mynämäki in 1780. However, the terms runo(n)laulu or runo(n)laulaja are not found in the 18th century dictionary by Christian Ganander (1997), nor in the poems of SKVR-corpus of Finnic oral poetry – except for one short manuscript by Elias Lönnrot without any contextual or geographical information. Nevertheless, in the contextual information of the SKVR, edited in early 20th century, both the terms runo(n)laulaja and runo(n)laulu are used, and in the newspapers at least from 1823 on, the terms are common. On the other hand, the term runoniekka [‘poet, versifier’] appears both in the 19th century dictionary and in some oral-like verses and contextualizing information in SKVR (Ganander 1997: 813, #21650; SKVR V1, 813; XII1 6876; XIII1 9000). It may be that runo(n)laulaja [‘singer of runos’] was a term coined by 18th and 19th century scholars to refer to the singer of a traditional poems.

Runolaulu has a long scholarly history, and it might also have been a vernacular (emic) term. Nevertheless, as the term has, during recent decades, been spreading into more commonplace popular uses (in contemporary newspapers, for example, runo(n)laulu is used for any kind of poetry that is performed as song), the term often needs some sort of qualification to distinguish reference to traditional alliterative oral poetry in the tetrameter (e.g. ‘Kalevala-metric’ or ‘traditional Finnic’ runolaulu). However, these issues are limited to Finnish language use. The ambiguities are escaped in Estonian, where the term runo was borrowed early in connection with the traditional poetry, but at present it is not clear that the use of the term in Estonian will be extended to the common Finnic tradition or mainly to refer more narrowly to Finnish, Karelian and Ingrian traditions. The rather new English translation of this term as ‘runo-song/runosong’, which retains rather than translates the first part of the compound, is quite specific and clear. The term is readily applied to the common Finnic tradition as a viable means of avoiding any political or ideological connotations of terms based on Kalevala. (See Knuuttila et al. 2010; Sarv 2015a; Siikala & Vakimo 1994; see also Kallio K et al. 2015a–b.)

One criticism against the terms with explicit reference to ‘song’ or ‘singing’ is that there were also genres performed primarily within conversational speech (e.g. proverbs) or recitation (e.g. some incantations and poems for children). Terms referencing ‘song’ or ‘singing’ thus bring particular forms of the tradition into focus with a consequence of marginalizing others. Pekka Huttu-Hiltunen (e.g. 2015) has been a vocal advocate for the terms runolaulu and its equivalent ‘runosong’. He has recently called on a quotation from Karl Reichl that “singing makes the rule” of meter, arguing that even if some forms of the poetry were not sung, the poetic form has been fundamentally structured by singing practice also for these genres. It is justifiable to claim that, as far as we know, the major part of this traditional Finnic poetry was used as sung poetry, although the interactions of different performance modes on meter remains uncertain. We should also be cautious about oversimplifying these relationships just as we should be cautious about presuming the meter to operate more consistently across genres than it necessarily did. For example, alliteration in metrical proverbs, which were commonly used in conversational discourse, tends to occur at the beginning rather than at the end of the line and, unlike in longer poetic genres, is preferred on particular syntactic elements (Leino 1970: 132–137, 186). Metrical features operate in distinct ways in this genre, presumably connected with how proverbs are used.

Connecting runo with ‘song’ and ‘singing’ carries connotations for how the resulting terms are understood in our cultures today. In a technical sense, it is accurate to say that “[o]ral poetry is as a rule sung poetry” (Reichl 2012: 9). However, the potentially monotonous repeating rhythmic intonational patterns of much ‘sung’ oral poetry does not necessarily
align with the what is called ‘singing’ in many Western languages today, where even melodically rich rap is not called ‘singing’ (or even ‘chanting’). Terms based on runo offer valuable alternatives to terms already discussed, but they are not without their own connotations that incline towards generalizations with a different emphasis.

**Description-Based Terms**

Another possible means of designating this collective Finnic tradition is to use or coin a general descriptive term based on the identification of characteristic features of the poetry. Features that have been or may be used include terms for the linguistic area, language or language group, such as ‘Finnic’, ‘Estonian’, ‘Karelian’, ‘Ingrian’, ‘Finnish’, ‘Northwest Estonian’, ‘Seto’, etc. Such terms may point to the traditional or shared nature of the poetry as ‘traditional’, ‘common’, ‘folk’, identify its medium of transmission as ‘oral’, or indicate its presumed age as ‘old’ or ‘ancient’. Such terms may also distinguish one or more metrical or poetic features, such as ‘tetrametric’, ‘trochaic’ or ‘alliterative’. These terms, like ‘Kalevala-meter’ or ‘kalevalaic’, qualify a noun for a general phenomenon such as ‘poetry’, ‘poem’, ‘meter’ (or ‘tetrameter’), (song/singing) ‘culture’, and so on. Like other terms here, these ways of talking about the poetry are based on bringing certain features into primary focus as opposed to others.

**Language and Geography**

The descriptor ‘Finnic’ appears uncontroversial: the poetic system is generally accepted as a common Finnic linguistic heritage even if it is not attested in all Finnic languages. Such a descriptor can be calibrated to a particular study according to language or cultural group (e.g. ‘Karelian’, ‘Seto’), dialect or dialect group (e.g. ‘Viena Karelian’, ‘Saaremaa Estonian’, ‘Western Finnish’), or according to geographical space (e.g. ‘Ingrian’ / ‘of Ingria’). Such descriptors only become potentially controversial where they generalize from one national or ethnic group to encompass and thereby marginalize others, such as using ‘Finnish’ as inclusive of Karelian and Izorian (a language of Ingria).

**‘Folk’, ‘Traditional’, ‘Oral’**

Descriptors referring to the traditional or shared nature of the poetic system each carry their own connotations and associations (e.g. ‘folk’, ‘traditional’) and ambiguities (e.g. ‘common’, ‘shared’), which also extend to the many connotations of ‘oral’ as a medium of social transmission. Actually, in Finnish and Estonian, the general terms kansiaperinne [Fi. ‘folklore, folk tradition’], kansankuulu [Fi. ‘folksong’], rahvalaul [Est. ‘folksong’], rahvaluule [Est. ‘folk poetry’] and so forth are rather common, and often used in combination with various adjectives mentioned above. There have been long international discussions on such terms and concepts and the loads they carry (see e.g. Dundes 1980; Finnegan 2003). In Finnish and Estonian, the use of terms incorporating the element ‘folk’ retain established, although also problematized, positions in scientific discourse (see e.g. Laitinen 2013). The debate surrounding the term ‘folk’ has left it quite marked especially in English, in which some scholars now tend to avoid it and prefer terms like ‘traditional’, ‘vernacular’ and ‘oral’. Nevertheless, the discussions on these terms have made them all viable for describing the Finnic poetry addressed here.


Somewhat more problematic are terms designating the age of the phenomena (‘old’, ‘ancient’, ‘archaic’). The attribute ‘ancient’ in particular easily gets associated with the most declamatory interpretations of a great national past, carrying much of the same baggage as terms derived from Kalevala above. The same is true of referring to the poetry as ‘inherited’, which is comparable to calling the poetry ‘Finnic’ but characterizes it as heritage with all that that implies.

Denoting the age of the poems connects to an earlier emphasis on tracing and reconstructing their origins within a discourse of authenticity and heritage construction (see also Bendix 1998; Valk 2005). There was a radical paradigm shift in the second half of the 20th century that rejected the investigation of diachronic continuity to focus on the living tradition and its variation which had until then been marginalized and devalued (see e.g. Honko 2000). The new focus brought valid
methodological criticisms but also stigmatized diachronic investigation with great scepticism concerning any claims about the history of traditions prior to empirical evidence (see also Frog 2013a). The earliest sources are from the 16th century and the evidence remains very limited until the 19th century (see Sarajas 1956; Häkkinen 2013). Variation is fundamental to oral tradition and has even been considered a defining characteristic (e.g. Honko 2013 [1991]: 36). In local cultures, new poems, themes, and variations of these were continuously being created: some themes and formulas have deep historical roots while others were contemporary creations. Thus, very little can be said about exactly what genres, poems, themes, verses and songs were in use even five hundred years ago, and what little can be said remains in quite general terms (e.g. Siikala 2002a; Frog 2013b; Ahola et al. 2018). Referring to these traditions through their great age is thus neither unproblematic nor neutral. Even if there is general scholarly consensus that the poetic system has been in use for a millennium or more, many scholars feel that attributions of great age remain highly controversial and identified with outdated approaches. The controversy is exacerbated by the tendency to confl ate ideas about age of the poetic system or certain poetic themes with the age of individual poems themselves.

In Finnish scholarship, some terms referring to the age of the poetry have a long-established place in the discourse (e.g. Häkkinen 2013). In fact, a scholarly distinction is often made between ‘old folk poetry/poems’ (poems in Kalevala-meter) and ‘new folk songs’ (rhymed and stanzaic songs). This is based on what we know of the history of alliterative and rhymed poetries in Finnic languages. It seems probable that the Finnic poetic form in focus here was the commonly used poetic medium in the Finnic cultural areas where it was documented up until the 18th century, and in many places well into the 19th century. Rhymed songs are thought to have been developed in various oral and literary forms on the basis of mostly German, Scandinavian and Russian models beginning from not later than the 16th or 17th century. (See Leino 1986; Asplund 1997; 2006; Rüütel 2012 [1969]; Kallio K 2015.) Within the discussion of folklore research, terms of relative age are therefore well understood. However, the difference between them is not always easily recognized in popular use.

These terms also have value-laden tones in ‘old’—‘new’ oppositions. These descriptions confer both aesthetic and ideological priority and weight to the ‘old’ poems (see also Saarlo 2008), which correlate with ‘inherited’ as opposed to ‘borrowed’ traditions. These value-laden oppositions have in fact had a negative impact in a long line of definitions of the poetic phenomenon. At the end of the 18th century, when the professor of rhetoric Henrik Gabriel Porthan defined the poetic limits and most important areas of Finnish traditional poetry, he founded the beginning of a long history of learned interest in mythological and heroic epic in classical Kalevala-meter. This valorization of certain poetic forms and genres meant that others were regarded as more recent or commonplace and thus did not receive much attention either in the collection of folklore or in research. As a consequence, scholarly models of metrics and poetries have neglected the lyrical, personal, improvisatory or everyday poetic genres, and the non-canonical poetic forms near or even outside the limits of the tetrameter proper have similarly been dismissed or ignored. In recent decades, several researchers have deconstructed the historical context of the relative valorization of particular genres and poetic forms (e.g. Gröndahl 1997; Timonen 2004; Jaago 2008; Sarv 2008a; Kalkun 2011; Stepanova 2014). Nevertheless, terms distinguishing the poetic form according to its age or explicitly as a common heritage seem still to be bound up with quite subtle loads.

Metrical or Poetic Features
Simply calling the poems or poetic system ‘Finnic traditional poetry’ or ‘old Finnic folk poetry’ may be viable and effective, but these terms also remain ambiguous. However pervasive this poetic system may have been, it seems to have existed alongside the distinct system associated with laments that was equally organized on principles of alliteration and parallelism although lacking a periodic meter. Even though rhymed poetries do not share the same age extending to a common Finnic heritage, these have also been acculturated across the centuries. Terms such
as ‘traditional’, ‘folk’, ‘old’, and so forth are no less applicable to them. The ambiguity of terms like ‘Finnic traditional poetry’ can be resolved through reference to one or more features of the poetic form.

There are several features of the poetry that might be foregrounded in developing terms to refer to it. The most conservative form of the meter has been described as trochaic or syllabic. If trochaic is understood as the alternation between strong and weak verse positions and syllabic is considered not as a single syllable per position but in terms of clear conventions (‘rules’) for how syllables fill verse positions (as reflected in performance), then being trochaic and syllabic are almost the only common features uniting the local forms of this meter across the whole tradition area. However, it has already been stressed above that these characteristics are not generally representative of the broader Finnic tradition. Conventions governing the placement of long and short stressed syllables are generally distinctive of the poetic form, but a single, practical term for this metrical feature is lacking and the conventions also exhibit great variation across different singing areas. Organizing principles of alliteration and parallelism are both shared by the poetics of lament poetry. Referring to the poetry as ‘alliterative’ is quite common and highlights a key characteristic for someone not familiar with it. Although alliteration does not distinguish this poetry from lament poetry per se, it presents a neutral formal distinction from many other poetries that might equally be described as ‘traditional’ and ‘old’. ‘Alliterative’ is a widely used term in labelling the poetic form, presumably in part owing to international use of metrical features in labelling poetic forms. However, this term can also be seen as problematic in its connotations: calling the poetic form ‘alliterative’, especially in combination with metrical terms (e.g. ‘alliterative tetrameter’), suggests that alliteration is metrical, which, technically, it is not; alliteration has no formal link to the metrical template nor is it required in every line. Parallelism is not technically a metrical feature nor is it usually incorporated into a term for the poetry but rather appended to it (e.g. ‘characterized by parallelism’). The most general feature which sets this poetry apart from lament is the tetrameter, which seems neutral both as a technical designation and because it can be generally considered an organizing principle at the base of the many diverse forms of this poetry. However, at least in the North Finnic areas, most rhymed poetry from rekilaulu and tsastuska to ballads, metrical literary poetry, modern rock and rap is also tetrametric, so this term is also not without ambiguity. Of the various compositional features, only ‘alliterative’ and ‘tetrametric’ seem generally representative, although neither is unambiguous alone. Used in combination to describe poetry in the tetrameter as alliterative, but leads to the inference that alliteration is a metrical feature, and thus their combination may be viewed as misrepresentative.

Referring to the poetry through its metrical features has the advantage of being more neutral than other ways reviewed above. In addition, when these features are combined with the linguistic distinction as ‘Finnic’, terms like ‘folk’, ‘traditional’, ‘old’, ‘inherited’, ‘oral’ and so forth all become unnecessary because there is only one ‘Finnic alliterative tetrameter’ in the sense of a tetrametrical form characterized by alliteration shared among Finnic groups. The linguistic descriptor remains relevant to distinguish it from the corresponding ‘alliterative tetrameter’ of Germanic languages, where, however, alliteration is metrical, highlighting the problem that the same term for the Finnic poetic form sounds technically inaccurate. In English, the terms ‘alliterative tetrameter’, where alliteration is a qualifier of the metrical descriptor, might be inverted to ‘tetrametric alliterative poetry’, where the tetrameter qualifies the alliterative poetry and, technically, avoids the implication that alliteration is metrical per se. The problem that people may infer alliteration as metrical in any term linking ‘alliterative’ and ‘tetrameter/-metric’ is unavoidable, but ‘Finnic tetrametric alliterative poetry’ is otherwise unambiguous and potentially effective. In contrast to other terms, however, its technically neutral is offset by being long, sterile and cumbersome, poorly suited for engaging students, enthusiasts and scholars not specialized in working with the poetry. Alternately, ‘common Finnic tetrameter’ can equally be effective when technical
ambiguity is ignored and ‘common’ is understood as a euphemistic reference to a common linguistic heritage as opposed to poetic forms that have spread later.

Overview
The Finnic poetry discussed here is both a distinct, shared phenomenon found across Finnic groups and it also takes a great variety of different forms. There is as yet no single, generally agreed term for designating the tradition as a whole, and it has not been the purpose here to propose any one term above others. Instead, the aim here has been to offer a general overview of the variety of terms and the issues associated with them. This has been done in a way that makes the issues of terminology accessible on an international level with the hope of stimulating more concentrated attention to this issue. This overview has highlighted that the question of terminology is not conducive to a single hegemonic answer; it seems to be dependent on language, context or situation, and also on national scholarships.

Terms derived from Kalevala carry huge amounts of baggage especially for Finnish scholars. These terms have the advantage of both international and popular recognisability, but they also tend to be suggestive of quite a specific, regionally-centered form of the tradition and an ideal, rule-based conception of the meter (especially in discussions of metrics). They are also associated first and foremost with texts over performance, and especially in popular use lead to mistakenly viewing Lonnrot’s Kalevala as the exemplar of the traditional poetic form. Kalevala based terms have often been used with reference only to the North Finnic forms of the tradition, exclusive of the traditions of Estonia, particularly among Finnish scholars for whom the extended use of the term is politically and ideologically charged. The term has come to be used to refer an ideal model rather than a real tradition in its variability because, through the long history of its use, it was so often connected to normative descriptions of the Kalevala-meter in scholarly and also educational discourse.

The Estonian terms regilaulu and regivärss, widely used in scholarly as well as in common language, are more neutral terms used mostly to denote specifically Estonian tradition, in Estonian and in English, but they are problematic in Finnish because the cognate rekilaulu refers to a quite different form of poetry. In Estonian this is also a feasible term for any branch of or the whole Finnic tradition, together with the reference to different languages or language group. Setos prefer to use their own emic term leelo about Seto tradition, accepting though that as a part of common Finnic tradition it may be called regilaal as well.

The older Finnish term runolaulu and its Estonian (runolaalu) and English (runsong/runosong) adaptations have gained more popularity in recent years. Like Estonian regilaalu, these terms point to the poetical-musical tradition as a whole, not segregating texts, melodies and performance. Yet, these terms sometimes turn out to be problematic for describing genres using same poetics that were not sung, like incantations or short forms of folklore. Runolaulu also suffers from recent ambiguity in Finnish (‘song performance of any poem’), but its adaptations into English and Estonian are semantically clearer. Like the terms referring to Kalevala, runsong is sometimes used to denote only the Northern branch of the poetic tradition as an extension of its derivation from Finnish tradition and its promotion by Finnish scholars. Thus, the vernacular terms deriving from either Estonian or Finnish/Karelian language and scholarly tradition tend to associate with the specific poetic tradition it comes from (regilaal in Estonian and runsong or Kalevala-metric poetry in Northern Finnic traditions), but with the clear reference to a group in question they can be used for a tradition as a whole or for a more specific branches of it.

One point of contention in terminology is whether terms structured by the division of the tradition into northern and southern forms along the North Finnic linguistic divide should be used at all. The variation in inclusive and exclusive scope of different terms by language foregrounds ways of thinking about Finnic traditions that are rooted in 19th-century constructions of ‘Finnish’ and ‘Estonian’ linguistic-ethnic identities as foundations for nationalism. This is quite a serious issue with regard to the analysis of meter, melody and especially other formal aspects of the tradition.
and is also relevant to performance practices. For research in these areas, splitting the tradition in two seems a potentially arbitrary modern construct with a misleading terminological implication that there are two, fundamentally different forms or branches of the poetry. Linguistic and national boundaries were clearly permeable and it has never been shown to what degree either of these have structured differences in local traditions. On the other hand, for research with emphasis on language and text or what is performed, and especially research with a diachronic emphasis, there is a relevance and historical validity in distinguishing traditions of the North Finnic language groups. Such a distinction then provides a frame for considering local and regional variation according to contacts, even if the distinction may nevertheless be misleading in terms of poetic form per se. The inference that this distinction validates treating all other tradition areas as a coherent group is problematic if only because it homogenizes the traditions of different branches of Finnic language each comparable to North Finnic. This is like saying Old Norse / Scandinavian forms of Old Germanic poetry constitute a valid category so Old English, Old High German and Old Saxon poetries collectively form a second category. For some research there can be a practical advantage to using Kalevala-based terms for North Finnic traditions, regilaul as a complementary term for traditions of Estonia and Setomaa, and runolaualrunolaaulrunosong for all of them together. Those advantages do not, however, extend to discussions of the poetic form per se, and use of any collective term for non-North-Finnic traditions remains problematic.

A number of descriptive terms are also available, and these help to neutralize implicit thinking according to national, ethnic or linguistic boundaries by making such qualifications conscious and explicit specifications within the broader tradition. Terms relating to the age of the poetry or identifying it as heritage carry similar baggage to Kalevala-based terms. Adjectives like ‘traditional’, ‘oral’ and ‘folk’ each have their own connotations although these have been deconstructed to an extent that they now tend to be viable in the languages considered. The linguistic designation ‘Finnic’ seems to be neutral while the metrical descriptions as ‘tetrametric’ and ‘alliterative’ both seem to be generally representative and neutral. ‘Finnic tetrametric alliterative poetry’ forms a potentially viable term in English, but the clumsy cascade of syllables limits its utility, and there remains the unavoidable problem that alliteration will be inferred as metrical. ‘Common Finnic tetrameter’ is more manageable, but not technically without ambiguity.

There seems to be no simple answer concerning which term to use when wishing to refer to this Finnic poetic tradition as a whole. Nevertheless, the consolidation of discussions surrounding the different potential terms in the present review may, perhaps, offer a more substantial frame of reference for reflecting on the topic by not only considering their pros and cons of individual terms, but by looking at various alternatives together. We might also observe that technical ambiguities or inaccuracies and loads of potentially problematic connotations come into focus under detailed scrutiny, but as any phrasal unit becomes established in terminology, its meaning shifts from interpretation of its parts as a composition to a label for what we agree it refers to. Deconstructing and reconstructing potential terminology and its historical or other baggage reshapes the terminology itself. Ultimately, the question of which term to use in a given language has less to do with its semantics and connotations when placed under a magnifying glass than with social consensus, agreed usage in the relevant discourse environment. A reality of terminology is that it changes over time, and it is precisely that we are now in the midst of such changes, renegotiating terms that all seem open to question, that we felt the present discussion was needed.

Notes
1. In German language scholarship, the term altgermanisch (‘old German’) seems to have evolved in the 19th century under the aegis of National Romanticism, and Eduard Sievers’ Altgermanische Metrik (1893) [‘Old German Meter’] was probably a catalyst in its spread. This term became a collective term referencing a common linguistic-cultural heritage for medieval and Iron Age Germanic languages and the people who spoke them. It is now quite well established. The translation of this term is widely used in English to collectively reference the
meter and poetics, but ‘Old Germanic’ sounds dated and imprecise; also used are ‘early Germanic’, just ‘Germanic’ or any of these combined with ‘alliterative’, and so forth. Joseph Harris’ recent title “Older Germanic Poetry” (2012, emphasis added) is symptomatic of a need to reconsider and perhaps rebuild the relevant terminology.


3. On the historically spread ballad form, see e.g. Vargyas 1983; Colbert 1986. Referring to a family of poetic forms through a genre category presents its own sets of problems which are no less complex, but they may vary considerably from one such poetic form to the next and many of those problems are distinct from issues addressed here.

4. The dominant view is that the poetic form derives from a common Finnic heritage (see e.g. Korhonen 1987; 1994; Kuusi 1994; Leino 1994; Heliniski 1998: 44–45; Rüütel 1998; Siikala 2012: 438–441). Although some scholars may be sceptical about construing the age of the poetic form, there are currently no substantial arguments for a dating after the breakup of Proto-Finnic.


6. For example, Oskar Loorits (1932: 91) considered the Estonian traditions to represent a more archaic poetic on the implicit basis of an idea of cultural evolution from less to greater structure; in contrast, Matti Sadeniemi (1951: 147–149) took the opposite view that the more regular form of the meter is more archaic, and that this has changed especially in Setomaa in relation to historical changes in the language. The question of reconstruction was also a question of heritage, and which nation possessed the more ‘authentic’ poetry.


8. This term has become the basis of reference as viskurilaki ['winnower’s law'] in Finnish (Kuusi 1952: 242–248) and simplified as winnowing in English (Leino 1986: 133–134).

9. The final syllable sometimes appears as an expletive or vocable to accommodate some sort of variation, but this is rare, especially in epic. Right justification is not restricted to metered poetry: all else being equal, a longer or heavier word will often follow a lighter one as in expressions like death and taxes or rhyme and reason. The difference in kallevalaic poetry is that word length becomes a more significant determinant on word order than conventions of syntax, so word order appears more variable than unmetered discourse. (See further Sadeniemi 1951: 28–39.)

10. Nigel Fabb (2009: 163) implies that this complex constraint is unusual generally for poetry.

11. Description as a ‘broken verse’ is linked to Matti Sadeniemi’s (1951: 27–39) theory of a mandatory caesura between the second and third feet of the line on analogy to Germanic alliterative verse: ‘broken verses’ have words spanning these positions. However, such verses are so common in Karelia that there is no reason to consider a caesura at all (Leino 1986: 133–134; Frog & Stepanova 2011: 201). They may instead be better viewed as a type of variation that creates aesthetic tension in performance (e.g. Niemi 2016: 29–30).

12. The meter was connected to local forms of speech (Korhonen 1994; Leino 1994; Sarv 2008a). In spoken and dictated forms of poems, the words were often closer to local dialect and, respectively, the lines could easily be shorter or the periodic structure of lines might dissolve, whereas in sung performance, the lines were typically full, their periodic structure more strict, and linguistic forms more archaic (Saarinen 1988: 198–199; Lauerma 2004: 24).

13. Additional differences, such as the percentage of lines with alliteration and type of alliteration may be a more incidental outcome of language change, for example allowing more words with the potential to alliteration within a line.

14. Such ethnocentrism in labelling language families belongs to the era when the term for ‘Indo-European’ in German scholarship was indogermanisch ['Indo-Germanic']. All Finnic groups have been identified, at least at the level of terminology, as essentially ‘Finnish’ through the earlier term for Finnic languages and peoples, ‘Balto-Finnic’ or ‘ Baltic Finnic’ based on Lat. Fennicus, or simply ‘ Baltic Finnish’, and their equivalents Finnish itämerensuomalainen, and Estonian läänerkesoombolane meaning literally ‘ Baltic Sea Finnish’ (Fi. suoma-laainen, Est. soomlane ['Finnish']). The current simplified English form Finnic is possible because it remains distinct from Finnish, which is not the case with Finnish and Estonian terms today.

15. On traditional Finnic poetry and cultural appropriation, see Wilson 1976; see also Haapoja 2013; Hill 2007; Haapoja et al. 2017; this topic is a concern of the current Kone Foundation project ‘Omiscutajuus, kieli ja kulttuuriperintö: Kansanrunous lainen, Est. soomlane ['Finnish']). Within the framework of Romanticism, such appropriation was part of the general view that das Volk preserved parts of an archaic heritage, and that some ethnic groups preserved this heritage for others of the same language (= ethnic) family. Such claims on traditions were thus by no means exclusive to ‘Fins’; all of the Scandinavian nations laid claim to the mythology, epics and sagas discovered among the Icelanders – as indeed did the Germans and even the British; the common heritage of Germanic religion was largely appropriated from Iceland.

16. The anti-Romantic-Nationalist attitude that became established in the West in the aftermath of World War II did not penetrate Eastern Europe. Kalevala is thus not burdened by this more general discourse in Russian Karelia or in Russia more generally.

18. In Matti Kuusi’s (1949) study of more than 700 examples and fragments of the so-called epic Sampo-Cycle (documented with varying aims and degrees of accuracy) around which Lönnrot organized his Kalevala, only eight examples exceeded 400 lines, and only an additional eight were 251–400 lines (Kuusi 1949: 22).

19. The sense of ‘poem, song’ seems to have been general through Finnish and Karelian dialect area but was not found in the Värmeland Finnish dialect of Central Sweden; the sense of ‘poet, versifier’ is found in the preface to the first Finnish Hymnal; it is found as a parallel term for laulaja in traditional poetry in Karelia and Ingrā; and in the form runoi in Värmeland Finnish meaning ‘performer of traditional poetry, sorcerer (tieitäjä)’ alongside the verb runoa [‘to perform sorcery, cast spell a spell, curse’] (SKES IV: 863–865, s.v. ‘runo’; Toivonen 1944: 189–190; SSA III: 104, s.v. ‘runo’; KKS, s.v. ‘runo’; Lehtonen 2016).

20. On uses of runo for a musical instrument with examples, see KKS, s.v. ‘runo’; cf. also s.v. ‘kieli [lit. ‘tongue, language’], which has the meaning ‘strings (of a musical instrument)’ although only indicated for different dialects than this use of runo. The history of these semantic and whether these meanings of runo and kieli are independent or related developments requires detailed investigation.

21. This notion is based on the searches in the corpus of the old literary Finnish language (especially the subcorpus Varia); see also Laitinen 2006: 52.

22. The Finnish form corresponds to a Proto-Scandinavian *rūna or earlier form (LägLoS III: 178, s.v. ‘runo’). This word seems to have belonged to a common Germanic and Celtic religious vocabulary linked to (secret) council and communication or knowledge that in Germanic came to be used also for the Germanic script or runic (furthark) alphabet. The etymology of word has a long history of debate, recently reviewed by Bernard Mees; forms of the word are attested as Old Norse rūn, Gothic rūna [‘secret, mystery; plan, council’], Old High German rūna [‘council, confidential advice’]; in Celtic: Old Irish rūn [‘hidden, occult, mystery, privacy, intimacy, enchantment, charm, virtue, attribute, nature’] with adjectival derivatives in Old Irish, Middle Welsh and potentially preserved in onomastics more widely; Latvian runa [‘speech, speaking, talking’] is treated as independently derived from Proto-Indo-European (Mees 2014: 527, 520–531 and works there cited). Germanic *rūnō was also used as a (feminine) agentive noun in compounds and may have already been archaic when documented, attested as: Jordanes’ use of halliurunae [‘death-sorceress’] which he translates magae [‘sorceress, witch’] (Getica, ch. 24); Old English helerūna [‘death-sorceress’], būhrūnan i burgrūnān [‘Furies; Parcas’], in only one manuscript leodrūna [‘song-sorceress’], the hapax legomenon heahrūn [‘high-sorceress, seeress’]; Old High German, only in glosses, lidrūna [‘song-sorceress, witch’], tōtrūnā [‘death-sorceress’], and a non-agentive use of hellirūnā [‘nercromancy’] with a masculine derivative hellirūnārī [‘nercromancer’]. (See Flowers 1986: 150–153; Macleod & Mees 2006: 5; BTASD, s.vv. ‘būhrūnan’, ‘heahrūn’, ‘hellirūnā’, ‘leodrūnā’.)

23. Collectors did use these terms in their field notes to refer to singers and songs.

24. The forms runolaulu/laulaja are used mostly before 1920s, forms with the genitive –n runonlauulu/ laulaja after that. The contemporary scholarly use has returned to the 19th century form, possibly because of the elevated, romantic and nationalistic uses of the early 20th century. See SKVR-database (www.skvr.fi), searches runolaulu* and runonlau*; The National Library’s digital collections, newspapers (https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/search? language=en), searches runolaulu* and runonlauu*.

25. Huttu-Hiltunen quoted this statement in an oral conference presentation (Huttu-Hiltunen 2015 in the works cited) with reference to a corresponding oral presentation by Reichi: the wording may not be precise.

26. Leino’s study of alliteration in proverbs requires reassessment both in terms of the specific parameters whereby a proverb is qualified as metrical, and also to assess whether proverb s embedded within poems of the meter are more metrically consistent and in what tradition regions.

27. At least in the North Finnic branch of the tradition, local (emic) metapragmatic descriptions of sung performance and singing competitions seem to valorize the number of songs and their length with concerns for text organization; descriptions seem to attend to volume and clarity but aesthetic evaluations of voice quality and melody of ‘singing’ are generally lacking, or veiled in metaphor (see e.g. the discussions in Timonen 2000; Siikala 2002b: 33–38; Tarkka 2013: 148–156).

28. Attempts have been made to interpret Novgorod birch bark inscription #292 (apparently a verbal charm in a Finnic idiom) as the earliest example of a Finnic metrical text, but this is highly problematic (Laakso 1999; Frog 2014b: 443–444).

29. See e.g. Harvilahit 1992; 2004; Siikala 2002a; Merilai 2006; Kalkun 2011. Some types of folklore might even move in and out of the poetic form over time, on which see e.g. Kuusi 1954; Rauoma 1964; 1968.

30. Heikki Laitinen’s (2006) proposal of kahdeksantavumitta [‘octosyllabiv meter’] as a term for the metrical form faces a similar issue of non-specificity, even if it may work effectively as a term when its referent is contextually transparent.

31. Some Germanic metricists would object to description as a tetrameter since the meter in most languages allows hypermetric lines with a fifth foot.

Works Cited

Abbreviations


Literature


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Frog, “Linguistic Multiforms in Kalevalaic Epic: Toward a Typology”: Some Comments from an Editorial Perspective

Clive Tolley, University of Turku

Frog’s article in the previous volume of *RMN Newsletter* offers a detailed analysis of so-called multiforms in some traditional Finnish and Karelian verse; a multiform, to put it crudely, is a formulaic chunk of text that recurs across variants and redactions. Frog considers these units from a structural and variational perspective, and highlights a good many fundamental points about the nature of certain aspects of the verse they occur in. My concern here, however, is not in the least focussed on critiquing or commenting on the scholarly contribution Frog makes; instead, it relates to presentation, and Frog’s article merely serves as a spring-board for some observations on this topic.

In the earlier part of the article, Frog deliberately takes a provocative approach to presenting some examples of oral poetry from the Finnish-Karelian tradition. Recognising the distinction between oral and written verse (but without, in the present context, considering how this distinction operates in other traditions such as the Old Norse – something he will no doubt be considering in further publications), he decides to present five variants of one poem, *The Singing Competition*, in a manner to which scholars of (ostensibly) written, literary texts, such as classical or Germanic verse, are accustomed, with just one variant being presented as the main text, the others being reduced to notes in the apparatus. The effect of doing this is to show that in certain respects old manuscript poems may be more similar in their development and realisation to oral poems than is sometimes appreciated, and hence to suggest that a greater element of orality may underlie such poems than the tradition of 19th-century scholarship and its successors have argued. This is all to the good.

Unfortunately, moving beyond these basic points into the detail of the poems, and the point of the discussion (the multiforms), for me the presentation just does not work. The multiform and all it entails, and more widely oral poetry in general with its many variants, do not lend themselves to being confined within this sort of straitjacket. As Frog notes, the variants cannot be read without an archaeological excavation and reconstruction from the notes, or else a resort to the *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot*. Hence it becomes impossible to perceive how the variants really differ from each other and how they are related. Among the chief problems with presenting one text with variants noted merely in the apparatus is that it privileges one form over others; this may sometimes be appropriate for medieval manuscripts, though it often is not, but it does not suit oral poetry, and implies a hierarchical valorisation such as may have suited the politics of the 19th century, but is scarcely appropriate today. All this is obvious and well established.

Frog has taken the deliberately question-raising, and challenging, approach of presenting oral poems as if they were medieval manuscript versions, which as it were cedes the ground to the well-established editorial tradition of presenting classical texts. I would argue it is high time, on the contrary, for this antiquated mode of presentation of classical and medieval texts to be brought up to date and made to adhere to something that would also be more fitting for oral poems. Again, this call is hardly trail-blazing; a number of texts have been edited and presented in a manner which obviates the weaknesses of the classical textual-apparatus approach. Yet it is astounding how many editions stick rigidly to the well-worn but outdated pattern.

One of the main reasons for this is the adherence to presentation in traditional printed book form. There is still a place for the physical book. But that place should be shrinking faster than it is, since digital presentation can offer so much more. Often, however, even digital presentation merely mirrors what takes place in a printed book, and fails to realise the potential of the new medium.
My immediate thought – taking into account, in a modest way, the possibilities offered by a digital presentation – when attempting to disentangle the multiforms, the smaller variants, the scenes and other overlapping structural elements of Frog’s cited example of verse was that these elements could be colour-coded. Reading the article, however, soon revealed just what levels of complexity need to be brought into the discussion, ranging from small-scale alliteration and case endings up to quite large chunks of text. Any system of colour-coding, even with the addition of features such as italics, bold etc., would just leave something more reminiscent of a neon-flushed scene of the hoardings of Las Vegas than an edited text.

Also, and more fundamentally, using features such as colour in this way hard-wires them into the text as presented. In a printed text, everything is hard-wired into the presentation, and the same, unfortunately, applies to many digital presentations which simply ape the printed. What digital media offer, however, is the possibility to make a sharp distinction between content and structure – and making such a distinction is, it should be quite clear, an essential prerequisite to engaging with, and analysing, materials in a scholarly way. Some structural elements may be perceived by the singer of a poem, but most are the constructs or percepts of the scholar; either way, it is essential to distinguish them from content.

There is a well-established method of carrying out this task. SGML (standard generalised mark-up language), with its more sophisticated successor XML (extended mark-up language) and the derivative HTML (hypertext mark-up language, used for coding web pages), has been around for a good while now. Essentially, structure is marked using tags: we might have e.g. `<bold>put this in bold</bold>`, and any number of these tags can be inserted. The beauty of mark-up language is that structure is discrete from form – it forms a collection of metadata: how the tagged material is presented is defined elsewhere, and can be changed, so e.g. everything tagged bold could appear as red, or not be marked at all, according to what is needed in particular circumstances. Thus, in terms of multiforms, an extant body of tagged text could be made to show all examples of, let us say, multiform type 1 (however defined), but not highlight e.g. individual formulae (which could be selected for viewing on a subsequent occasion if desired, without changing anything other than the definition of how specific tags are to appear). If we turn to something like ancient Germanic verse, we can free ourselves from matters like the forced presentation of the verse in lines, which is not original but which contrasts, in the original manuscripts, with Latin verse, which was often set out as verse – a distinction that is lost in the printed edition, which must always make an irrevocable choice: the verse can then be set out as it appears in the manuscript, or divided into traditional half-lines, providing this feature is tagged. Of course, the level of complexity, such as is discussed in Frog’s article, means that extensive multi-layered tagging is necessary (indeed, as the example on p. 79 of Frog’s article shows, down to the inflectional level), but these simple examples illustrate the principles involved.

All this is rather old hat, and it feels almost embarrassing to set it out. Yet I think it is necessary. In my twenty-odd years of working professionally on the preparation of academic texts for publication, one thing that has astonished me is the slow pace of change towards taking advantages of the use of mark-up language in a digital context – though, as noted, a few large-scale projects have exploited the potential. I have raised this matter on a few occasions, without receiving much more than a bewildered and not specially enthusiastic response. One retort is “we don’t have the resources for that”. This seems on a par with having arrived on a tour of scriptoria around 1500 and suggesting that the future lay with the new technology of printing, allowing, among other things, for swift and cheap reproduction and dissemination of learning, only to be told “we aren’t set up for that, so we’ll just carry on copying out a few copies a year by hand” – with the result, we might imagine, of a world in which printing was only taken up for popular romances and eschewed by the elite of the scholarly world. The basics of XML can be learnt in a few days, and should be as much a part of the job for those engaged
in areas where it is (or should be) relevant as being able to use a computer. Producing the definition file for the tags and realising their implementation are, however, more complex: but ‘not having the resources’ is ultimately a matter of their not having been asked for in the first place, and their importance within a forward-looking project not having been emphasised. At least in some fields, enough people able to implement the more programming-oriented side of things are found in research teams to obviate the need to search for outside ‘resources’, but such personnel should anyway be found in university computing departments or publishing houses (but publishing houses also need to go a lot further to develop away from the unthinking attachment solely to the printed page). For those without access to such resources, it’s far from impossible to learn the necessary skills. Even if it proves impossible to implement from the outset a full-scale realisation of the potential offered by the use of mark-up language, the tags would would remain for future digital implementation without additional work later and would in the mean time still function for printing: I spend a good deal of time tagging authors’ documents, which involves an analysis of what is actually intended structurally among a random plethora of formatting, as part of the process of typesetting. I reiterate, however, that the opportunities implicit in mark-up language will only be seized to any significant extent when scholars realise their significance and incorporate a demand for their implementation in project-funding applications.

Of course, tagging with XML for anything as complex as the sort of elements presented by Frog takes time and effort, and may seem tedious. Many aspects of research take time and effort and seem tedious, but a vision of what the effort affords ought to be sufficient to motivate the activity. In the case of the discussion of multiforms offered by Frog, the discursive analysis would still be necessary, but a fully tagged corpus of texts would immediately offer primary material that could be searched and assessed in terms of the many elements he presents, rather than the reader having to rely on a few small examples presented in a very limited traditional apparatus-bound format. Detailed tagging enforces a fully disciplined approach: every instance of every element has to be tagged, and this forces the researcher to constantly assess their analysis of the text and the elements it contains, and update it as necessary. Once tagged, endless opportunities for further analysis open up: for example, to pick a simple example, a formula or multiform could be tracked against dialect, or date of performance, or both, as long as these elements are tagged, even if such an analysis was not specifically initially envisaged. Naturally, further research on a corpus of tagged texts would reveal inadequacies in the initial perception of the structural elements, so the basis of analysis would itself naturally be revised: this is characteristic of advancing research, but once a text is tagged, it is obviously a comparatively small matter to revise certain elements, without the need to revise the bulk of the tagging.

The analytical advantages of having a fully tagged text are considerable, perhaps inestimable. Once the appropriate programming is in place – and this is indeed a specialist operation requiring professional input, and therefore needs accounting for in project management – a plethora of presentation and analytical opportunities opens up; we could imagine, for example, a graphical mock three-dimension screen representation of variants along the axes of time and place, with particular multiforms, and elements within those multiforms, highlighted in appropriate manners. It is way past the time to realise that producing digital editions should not mean producing a 19th-century-style apparatus-bound presentation of a text, exactly as in a printed book, and then shoving it onto the internet: yes, there has been progress, but even examples of texts edited with mark-up language do not always go as far as could be envisaged, and more widely, most of the potential seems to me unrecognised most of the time – rather than this being a merely technical issue, it is for the creative scholarly imagination to set the bounds of the agenda here. Frog’s essay should act as a wake-up call, illustrating, through its detailed presentation of the many complex layers and elements of textual structural analysis, just why we should no longer be bound to 19th-century models of text editing.
Ignis fatuus is a ghostly light seen by people who travel when it is dark. According to a wide-spread scientific theory, ghostly lights that appear in moist places may be caused by the spontaneous combustion of gases emitted from rotting organic matter. However, people once lacked such scientific knowledge, and so developed certain beliefs about the phenomenon of these ghostly lights. Thus, in traditional beliefs, these lights were considered otherworldly manifestations, opening them to the formation of a peculiar mythic image discussed here as ignis fatuus.

Beliefs about ignis fatuus [Latin ‘foolish fire’] are found worldwide (motif Ghost-like lights E530.1 in Thompson 1955–1958). Distinct terms for this phenomenon are found in many languages, including Latvian (malduguns ['misleading fire'], Polish (ogniki ['lights.DIM']), świeciki ['candlesticks'], świecki ['candles.DIM'], błędne ogniki ['wandering lights.DIM']), Russian (блуждающие огни ['wandering lights'], болотные огни ['swamp lights'], бесовские огни ['devil’s lights']), German (Irlicht ['false light'], Sumpflicht ['swamp light']), British English (will-o’-wisp, corpse candle, jack-o’-lantern, friar’s lantern), American English (spook-lights, ghost-lights), French (le feu follet ['foolish fire']), Italian (fuoco fatuo ['foolish fire']), and so on. These are only a few examples of a rich body of traditions surrounding the concept of ignis fatuus.

Lithuanian terms for it will be introduced and discussed below. The Lithuanian Folklore Archive contains nearly 500 belief legends about ignis fatuus from the 19th century to the mid-20th century. However, ideas about this entity continue to be recorded from inhabitants of rural areas. These sources provide the primary material for the present discussion.

The beliefs about ignis fatuus form a very broad topic and many of its aspects require further research. In order to introduce the Lithuanian material, this paper briefly presents forms of ignis fatuus, explanations of its origin, its relationship to the human environment, and its connection to the otherworld as reflected in Lithuanian traditions. Thereafter the analysis narrows its focus to discuss more thoroughly belief legends in which ignis fatuus is treated as a surveyor’s soul. The analysis raises questions concerning why people of such a profession must suffer as ignes fatui, and how this relates to the postmortem image of the soul: the places of souls’ presence, and the paths they wander. Although the phenomenon is conventional in the legend tradition, this paper considers how it appears to have developed at the interface of the belief tradition with historical processes and thus may reflect a social tension from an earlier period.

**Lithuanian ignis fatuus Traditions in Overview**

In Lithuanian folk belief, this ghost-light figure is a being known as žiburinis, a noun derived from the Lithuanian word žiburys ['a light; lantern'], and thus referring to the entity’s radiance. Sometimes it is called klystžvakė ['wandering candle'] or simply žvakutė ['candle.DIM'] or liepsnelė ['flame.DIM'].

The time when ignis fatuus appears is usually restricted to periods when it is dark. The lights are most commonly visible at twilight or at night when the source of the illumination is clearly distinguished from dark surroundings. Sometimes it is associated with a mythic time, such as midnight. Observers of this phenomenon sometimes point out that the lights appear in the autumn. It is possible that such belief extends from natural conditions: natural emissions producing these lights are more common during the autumn period than in other seasons. In addition, autumn is a time when days become shorter and a period of darkness begins to prevail. According to isolated accounts, ignes fatui are candle-like
souls that wander during the new moon, or appear more often before rain. Sometimes the emergence of an ignis fatuus is treated as an ill omen: it appears before war.

These nocturnal creatures, visible from afar, usually walk in frightful places – i.e. spaces that according to folk beliefs belong to the dead. Most often, a traveller sees ignes fatui emerging from a cemetery and they follow him, or they may recede when approached. Sometimes it is stressed that the location is a graveyard for victims of a plague or a cemetery where suicides used to be buried. A traveller may also meet a wandering light at a place where someone committed suicide. The ignis fatuus may be seen when a traveller leaves a village or he may simply encounter it on the public road. Nevertheless, there are many variants in which the lights are observed when walking around houses, while the majority of variants situate the sighting of the ghostly light over bogs, swamps, and marshes.

The appearance of ignis fatuus can be described in terms of its form, sound and manner of movement. Descriptions of the light’s form exhibit certain regular traits that may be grouped into three basic form-types:

1. Oblong: a candle or a group of candles (two, three, or five candles), a candle with a human form, a flame or a candle of human height, as tall as a man, a form with a black pole for a body and a flame where the head should be, a green light, a red light, small blue flames, a light like a lantern.

2. Round: a ball of fire, a man in a ball of fire, a form like a hat with two stars on it, a light like the circle of a spinning wheel, a form like a bubble with a light burning inside.

3. Anthropomorphic: a luminous human skeleton, a man with flames coming out from his ribs, a person with a lantern walking around fields.

The association of ignis fatuus with locations of the dead and its associated anthropomorphic forms correlate the image with a soul. Such an image of the soul expresses the idea of the origin of human life as fire. The close connection of life and fire or light is also found in beliefs about a burning candle that reflects a human lifespan and beliefs about a falling star marking someone’s life coming to an end (Racėnaitė 2011: 179–181).

Ignes fatui is mischievous spirits of the dead make up the other part of narratives. The visible wandering light is treated as a soul that cannot leave this world owing to certain circumstances. Usually these are souls of the unbaptized people who demand to be prayed for or to be baptized. One such category of unbaptized souls is that of spirits of children born out of wedlock that were subsequently killed (usually by way of strangulation). That is why a person who meets an ignis fatuus often tries to perform Christian religious actions in order to liberate the wandering soul and to protect himself from its negative influence. Seeing a ghostly light, a man may make the sign of the cross and offer thanks three times, or may say ‘Praised be Jesus Christ’. Interestingly, such actions are not fully Christian: when baptizing an ignis fatuus, the person cannot say ‘Amen’. According to folk beliefs, the souls of unjust individuals, suicides and people who have been murdered also wander through the human environment. It was believed that such souls must perform penance in this way.
There are also some texts where two varieties of ignes fatuorum are distinguished. For example, one informant reports that lights from swamps will do nothing to people, while others are spirits from Hell (LTR 4057/61/).

The ignis fatuus is such a frightening entity that confrontation with it sometimes ends unhappily – even when the observer has not done anything disrespectful and simply wanted to see the light. This person usually becomes ill for a long time due to the scare he or she has experienced and he or she may even die.

People who are not afraid of an ignis fatuus and shoot at it, beat it or who perform such acts out of fear when accidentally meeting this being are often harshly punished. They may simply be burnt (in the morning people find a body that falls to ashes at the slightest touch), their skin may be badly scorched, they may be blinded or the ignis fatuus may burn their home. Thus in such cases the fiery nature of the ghostly light is revealed. However, there are many narratives that describe the ignis fatuus as a demonic spirit. Roused to anger, a soul strangles a man, breaks all his bones, squashes him to death, turns a man’s legs backwards and he dies, or breaks all his bones and pulls out his tongue.

This brief survey of ignis fatuus in Lithuanian traditions shows that this entity was imagined as mysterious and sometimes dangerous. However, there are also some cases where an ignis fatuus appears as the souls of someone of a particular profession. It is the much more specific tradition of interpreting an ignis fatuus as the soul of a surveyor that will be discussed in the following section.

A Social-Historical Context

Legends identifying the ignis fatuus as a surveyor’s soul mostly reflect memories from the era of the independent Lithuanian state (1918–1940), a period when a land reform was implemented. Consequently, a short introduction to the profession of surveyor in Lithuania at that time is relevant as a context and incitement for the rise or development of such an image of the surveyor’s soul within the long history of mythic discourse surrounding ignis fatuus.

With the declaration of the independence of Lithuania in 1918, a land reform was implemented with the goals of a) providing landless people with land, and b) parcelling out villages into grange farms in order to improve conditions for farming. Thus efforts were made to conclusively eliminate the heritage of the Wallach reform (16th century) when peasants’ land was divided into three fields (used for crop rotation).

The state organized specialists with the goal of implementing the reforms of independent Lithuania. By 1937, more than 300 surveyors worked in Lithuanian territories, enough to support the publication of a magazine where surveyors shared their professional experiences. The work of surveyors was directly connected to the regulation and management of the land’s affairs, such as the resolution of technical and juridical questions. This situation demanded a great deal of professional knowledge because when parcelling out villages into grange farms, the plot of a peasant had to be projected onto one lot instead of having several pieces of land that varied in fertility, and a peasant did not want worse than what he or she had owned before. Surveyors’ working conditions were difficult: separated from their families, they worked on fields from early spring until late autumn, all the while enduring constant tension with those whose lives their work affected. Land-surveying projects were discussed extensively at village meetings and people were very critical and concerned about mistakes. After all, a family’s prosperity depended on the land that was measured. As a result, the work of a successful surveyor not only demanded specialized technical skills but it also required a level of moral authority while demanding that an individual act as a peculiar sort of sociologist, capable of managing the interests of a community.

Ignis fatuus as a Surveyor’s Soul

With this social frame of reference, we can turn to the belief legends that interpret the ignis fatuus as a surveyor’s soul. Folklore in which an ignis fatuus is treated as a surveyor’s soul constitutes a small number of the total texts about wandering lights. Indeed, there are only twelve examples of this type, mostly from Western Lithuania.
Usually these accounts describe an *ignis fatuus* that is visible when it is dark. They explain the surveyor’s appearance as an *ignis fatuus* to be a punishment for incorrect land measurement:

One woman said:

– I have never seen an *ignis fatuus*, I would like to see one.

An *ignis fatuus* came by the window at midnight.

– Well, get up! You wanted to see me, you’ll see now.

The woman, scared, looks: a human body – a skeleton and a candle is burning inside it in the place where a heart should be. The woman caught a fright and died.

It is said that if surveyors measure land wrong, then after their deaths they have to perform penance by being the *ignes fatui*.

(According to other explanations *ignes fatui* are souls of surveyors that did not measure land according to law, for example:

People used to say that surveyors who measured land wrong, not according to the law, those souls used to walk after the death…

(LTR 3578/207/.)

Or they might say that these were the souls of unjust surveyors, specialists who were bribed:

Surveyors who measured land wrong, were bribed, these are *ignes fatui*. (LTR 4638/285/.)

That is why the appearance of an *ignis fatuus* is sometimes treated as an attempt by a soul to correct his measuring mistakes:

*Ignes fatui* are the souls of dead surveyors. At night they measure incorrect borders anew. (LTR 1167/547/.)

Wandering lights are the souls of those surveyors who, when they were alive, measured lands wrong; therefore they now measure them anew. (LTR 2633/155/.)

Even after death, the surveyor retains the equipment of his profession:

When a surveyor measures land wrong, he has to measure it anew after his death. He measures with all his instruments and goes with a candle in hand. (LTR 1418/873/.)

The presence of *ignes fatui* is tied to weather conditions:

People used to say that *ignes fatui* appeared because surveyors measured land wrong: these candles are a punishment. When the weather grows cold, the candles disappear because the surveyors don’t measure any more. (LTR 1196/221/.)

In some cases, the souls of surveyors may wander as if presenting a message about unjust land measurement:

I said: ‘Mother, *ignes fatui* are wandering here in pastures.’ Mother said: ‘They may be surveyors.’ It was true, surveyors came a few years later. A dead surveyor wanders until living surveyors come. (LTR 3561/12/.)

The profession of surveyor was characterized by the reciprocal distrust of the peasant and of surveyor. This distrust was not without reason – not all surveyors were fair and just. Perhaps a lack of faith in the surveyor’s integrity resulted in conditions that produced the image of a dishonest surveyor’s soul forced to wander the world after his death. The establishment and circulation of this image may reflect social concerns and tensions surrounding surveyors and their work.

Some locations where surveyors worked correspond to places where *ignes fatui* might be seen, but that in itself does not account for precisely why unjust surveyors have to wander as *ignes fatui* after death rather than a wider range of souls that have committed injustices.

**Boundaries and Souls**

Perhaps this association has a deeper cultural basis, particularly in light of beliefs regarding borders (boundaries) of land and their relation to the world of souls. The Lithuanian term *ežia* refers to a strip of land that forms a border or boundary between peasant plots. These were places where, according to folk belief, souls habitually resided. This is clearly reflected in texts of belief legend texts about people who want to sleep on such a boundary at night and are chased away by someone who warns them (or even strikes them). Usually this happens to people who herd at night:

You should never lie on the boundary between two fields. Once several boys rode off to herd horses at night. They hobbled the horses, left one boy to watch over the animals
and prepared to sleep. They all lay down near the boundary that separated the fields, but one boy lay down across the boundary and fell asleep. In his sleep he heard somebody shouting:

– Get up and go away!

He woke up, looked around but seeing nobody and thinking that a watchman called, he fell asleep again. [This happened three times.] When he fell asleep again, somebody hit him on his back and he retreated from the path of souls. There was a small devil. He walks along the borders and if he finds someone then he drives him away. (LTR 452/112/)

There are many beliefs about paths of souls that usually coincide with land boundaries, places where no one can enter or do certain things. For instance, people could not build their houses on boundaries because of haunting:

A man built a house on a hill by a swamp. Every night was frightful: somebody ran, rumbled with horses around the house. A brave man asked: ‘Will you stop running around?’ Somebody said: ‘Leave this place.’ They had to remove the house. A devil’s path was there. (LTR 5278/64/)

Such soul paths developed over a long period with human activities, with the changes in the landscape, and thus, the abrupt alteration of borders can disturb the souls. People usually knew about these places and tried to avoid disturbing the souls’ peace. The paths of souls naturally develop between neighbouring cemeteries. It was also believed that souls communicate with one another:

In Panevėžys volost, near Kabeliai, a strip of land, where nothing grows, runs along Priedžiai field from the chapel to Šlikai cemetery. Old people called this place a path of souls. People used to say that souls of the chapel visited souls in the cemetery. (LTR 1204/68/)

Therefore souls exist in places that in many cases coincide with the boundaries of the land. This seems to be related to archaic burial customs. According to ethnographic data from the 16th century, Lithuanians from rural areas did not have parochial cemeteries and the dead were buried on the land edges of particular villages (Balsys 2006: 237).

The relationship between the souls of the dead and boundary areas has the consequence that changes in land borders affects the places where souls existed and the paths where they walked. Changing borders may have, according to folk beliefs, belonged to the sphere of ‘higher’ powers. For instance, it was believed that “if when ploughing one breaks a boundary, he will be struck by thunder” (BsTB 11: 429, Nr. 3). Surveyor’s work not only consisted of the measurement of the lands of the living but also involved intervening in the sphere of souls. As this aspect of their duties implicitly engaged the supernatural sphere, it was therefore unsurprising that supernatural consequences could follow. From this emic perspective, becoming trapped in a liminal state of wandering between worlds may have seemed a natural consequence of an action that created a serious or permanent disruption to land boundaries. Perhaps that is why the surveyor is so severely punished.

Conclusion
In Lithuanian folklore, the ignes fatui appear as souls of the individuals who have unresolved affairs in the worldly sphere, such as the souls of unbaptized children and the souls of people whose lives met a premature end. Perhaps surprisingly, the souls of surveyors also fall into this category, doomed to wander until the mistakes they made before death are corrected.

The identification of ignes fatui as surveyors appears to be a development in the tradition that is historically rooted in social concerns and tensions linked to the land reforms of the independent Lithuanian state in the first half of the 20th century. Although one might speculate that the identification of ignes fatui with surveyors could have emerged from empirical observations of distant surveyors moving about with lanterns, this does not account for why a broader range of occupations (e.g. watchmen) have not been correspondingly linked to the tradition. The present article proposes that the traditional identification of border areas with the dead and supernatural beings may have potentially been a crucial factor in this innovation. If this view is correct, then the punishment of a surveyor’s soul – to wander as an ignis fatuis for mismeasuring land – is linked to the impact of
this work on spaces belonging to supernatural beings. The supernatural consequences may then have initially linked to violations in the supernatural sphere that echo and validate the social concerns and frustrations experienced among living communities.

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LTR – Lithuanian Folklore Archives


Literature


The Hurford Center’s 2017 Mellon Symposium “Songs for the Dead: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Lament and Elegy”

24th March 2017, Haverford College, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Oliver Hughes, Maria Mitiuriev and Katelyn St. Onge, Haverford College

The Hurford Center’s 2017 Mellon Symposium “Songs for the Dead: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Lament and Elegy” was held on March 24th at Haverford College in Haverford, Pennsylvania. Six speakers took turns giving forty-five minute talks on the concept and practice of lament across a variety of cultural experiences and interpretive angles, addressing ancient and modern Greek, Old Irish, Old Norse, and Finnic traditions. The event was organized by Kristen Mills, Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Haverford College.

The symposium began on the morning of Friday the 24th with introductory remarks by Mills welcoming the speakers. The floor then went to Casey Dué (University of Houston), presenting on the topic “Mourning Achilles: Achilles and the Captive Woman’s Lament in Iliad 19”. Dué offered a compelling interpretation of Achilles’ grief in the Iliad, which she noted was strikingly similar to that of the women of Troy and captive woman generally in Greek literary tradition. In particular, Dué drew parallels between Achilles’ mourning for the fallen Patroclus and both Andromache’s lament for Hector and Briseis’ grief in captivity. Dué argued that Achilles mourns in the style of traditional female laments not because he is feminized in the epic, but because, as the warrior with by far the greatest kleos [‘glory’], he must likewise possess the most profound grief (akhos), which tellingly may be the root of the name Achilles itself. The grief of the Trojan women, Dué asserted, came to represent the epitome of suffering and loss to the Greeks, and so it is this to which Achilles’ sorrow must be likened.

Thus Homer’s epic poetry both celebrates heroes and mourns them, and for the greatest of all heroes, only the heights of both glory and grief are appropriate.

The next speaker was Gail Holst-Warhaft (Cornell University), who spoke on “Containing Passion: The Structuring of Grief in Greek Lament”. Holst-Warhaft began with an argument which she openly acknowledged to be controversial: that lament in Greek society was and is not intended as a form of consolation or therapy for the living, nor was it an uncontrolled and spontaneous display of emotion. Rather, she argued, Greek lament was practiced primarily for the sake of society, in order to properly conclude the life of one of its deceased members and so enable the rest to continue on. Lamenters thus served as intermediaries between the worlds of the living and the dead, a potentially polluting role. For this reason, lamenters were most often professionals, drawn from the less than respectable outskirts of society. Additionally, professionals were considered fitter than relatives to perform laments because they were less likely than relatives to be overcome by emotion, a critical point. As Holst-Warhaft made clear, Greek lament was highly ritualized and focused on the containment of emotion, not indulgence in it. Indeed, excessive emotion could present a grave danger to the lamenters and trap them permanently in the world of the dead. All the more so for its controversy, Holst-Warhaft’s argument was a riveting and compelling piece.

After the first session of the symposium, the presenters and audience members alike took a brief break before the symposium resumed.
The second session was concerned with Old Irish and Old Norse lament traditions. The first talk, “‘No Feigned Grief Mine’: Emotion and Expression in the Irish Lament Traditions”, was delivered by Alexandra Bergholm of the University of Helsinki. Bergholm’s main argument was that as was true for the Ancient Greeks, the tradition of lamenting for the dead was associated with women in medieval Ireland. While she noted that it is harder for scholars of lament to research how the tradition was carried out in Ireland due to the scarcity of extant sources, Bergholm claimed that lament was a controversial art form, pointing out that medieval Irish penitentials made lamenting the dead punishable by up to fifty days on bread and water. Bergholm ended her presentation by returning to the perception of lament as a female-dominated art form in a male-dominated world. Thus, by extension, the question of how the restriction of lament served as a way to control women was introduced.

Bergholm’s paper was followed by another enlightening talk, given by Joseph Harris (Harvard University). His talk, “Beginnings and Endings in the Elegiac Poetry of the Early Medieval North”, examined a set of motifs occurring in Old Norse elegiac poetry. Special attention was given to what Harris called the “Ragnarök motif”, whereby Norse poems depict cataclysmic disasters laying waste to the world. Harris also discussed another motif present in Norse elegiac poetry, which he dubbed the “never better” motif; he likened this poetic feature to when a wife memorializes her dead husband and declares that no one will ever surpass him. Harris discussed the expression of grief in a selection of erfídrápa, a type of Norse ode, before analyzing several eddic elegies, paying careful attention to how the Guðrún poems utilize elegiac tropes. He noted the presence of the Ragnarök motif in these poems and ended his lecture by delivering two points: that elegy emerges out of profound loss, and that the conclusions of elegiac poems stylistically align with the Ragnarök motif, evoking the end of the world.

The final panel focused on the Karelian lament tradition and modern revival of lament traditions in Finland. Eila Stepanova (University of Helsinki) presented a paper entitled “The Poetry of Everlasting Grief and Separation”. Combining historical and cultural research with linguistic investigation, Stepanova provided expert insight into the special language used by traditional Karelian lamenters. The language she described was designed for poetry, filled with rhythm and repetition, and relied heavily on allusion. She discussed the decline in usage of this language, relating the story of an elderly woman who wrote her own funeral lament knowing that there would be no one to do it for her. It was remarkable to hear the recording of this woman’s lament, and although the audience could not understand her words, the artful language was universally appreciated.

The second presenter was revival lamenter Pirkko Fihlman, President of the Finnish Lament Society. Her presentation, entitled “Reviving Finnish Lament”, artfully combined history and personal anecdotes to provide a thorough overview of how traditional lament has been reintroduced in the contemporary experience. It was actually her late husband who first introduced Fihlman to the tradition of Karelian lament through his own research in the region’s history for a play he was writing. Fihlman spent much of her early childhood living in Sweden to escape the conflicts of World War II, and her family’s history with lament was not revealed to her until she began to lament herself, and her mother mentioned that she sounded just like her grandmother. Now, lament is being reintroduced to modern Finnish culture through Fihlman’s work with the Finnish Lament Society. Overall, Fihlman’s presentation was a historical retelling artfully laced with pathos and applied effectively to contemporary discourse.

The conference concluded with a roundtable discussion featuring all panelists. This stimulating discussion provided a unique opportunity for audience participation and touched on topics ranging from the historical and literary quality of the Kalevala to gender roles in global lament tradition. This open-ended dialogue was perhaps the highlight of the entire conference, allowing for candid intellectual exploration by a group of extremely diverse academic backgrounds.
The international and multidisciplinary conference Versification: Metrics in Practice was held in Helsinki, Finland from 25th to 27th May 2016. The conference was a meeting of NordMetrik (Nordic Society for Metrical Studies). Scholars from a variety of disciplines and from fifteen different countries gathered in the Great Hall of the Finnish Literature Society and the Topelia building of the University of Helsinki to discuss questions of metrics. The conference was organized by the Department of Folklore Studies and the Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Helsinki, the Academy of Finland project “Oral Poetry, Mythic Knowledge and Vernacular Imagination”, and the Finnish Literature Society.

The theme of the conference was ‘metrics in practice’. Versification, that is, the art of making verses, refers to the conventions and techniques that poets have employed when practicing their art. Meter is, however, often discussed in abstract terms. Efforts have been made to formalize the way words and sounds connect with rhythm. The aim of the conference was to highlight the inseparability of meter and language and to call attention to meter in different social language practices.

The five keynote speakers of the conference approached the theme from different angles. Tomas Riad (Stockholm University, Swedish Academy) argued against the idea that meter is an abstract pattern filled with language – the idea supported by, for example, generative metrics. Instead, he suggested that in the case of meter we are dealing with the same kind of phenomenon as prosodic morphemes and that meter should therefore be treated at root as a linguistic object. The central idea of his lecture was meter as improvement. According to Riad, improvement occurs when metered discourse obeys one or more linguistic constraints or conventions more regularly than other forms of language use.

Paul Kiparsky (Stanford University), a pioneer of generative metrics, considered inter-relations between a meter and the language in which it is used. He spoke about how meters, in addition to historical context, adjust to functional preferences. For example, genre is a factor affecting the choice of meter. Epic and dramatic forms use flexible meters that have a simple underlying pattern but complex correspondence constraints, the combination of which offers a variety of realization options. Sung lyric poems, on the other hand, consists of a wide range of complex metrical structures with simple correspondence constraints. In each case, the correspondence constraints and the types of flexibility that they evolve depend on the language of performance.

Poet and philologist Jesper Svenbro (Swedish Academy) provided a practitioner’s perspective on Sapphic and Alcaic stanzas, linking his philological research on these poetic forms to the reflective analysis of his own uses of them and resultant choices in the composition process. In addition to his own poetry, he presented examples from Sappho, Friedrich Hölderlin and Tomas Tranströmer proving the vitality of Sapphic and Alcaic stanzas in modern poetry.

Kati Kallio (Finnish Literature Society) discussed the relationship between meter, music and performance in oral poetry. Kallio began by stating that with oral poetry it is problematic to consider meter exclusively as an abstract pattern. Illustrated with many examples, she presented ways in which Finnic language-speaking peoples have sung poetry and varied meter according to a given performance situation.

Jarkko Niemi (University of Tampere) gave a lecture based on his research project involving the musical traditions, and especially sung expression, of the indigenous ethnic groups living in western Siberia and Northwest Russia, looking especially at peoples speaking Samoyedic and Ob-Ugrian languages. He
highlighted that the linguistic structure of a metrical line could be significantly, if regularly, altered and reorganized as an organic part of oral performance. In his lecture, Niemi presented the results of his project that also cast light on the local cultures more broadly, revealing that areal patterns in the singing traditions of these different groups had evolved through their contact history.

A wide variety of verse forms were examined during presentations in the parallel sessions, ranging from poetry of Antiquity to recent folklore and from medieval court poetry to rap music of the 21st century. Many of the presentations dealt with meter in sung poetry and music. Approaches and methods varied as well. Maria-Kristiina Lotman (University of Tartu) and Mihhail Lotman (University of Tartu/Tallinn University), for example, introduced their new research project in which they study the relationship between meter and semantics by means of statistical-comparative analysis. Eva Lilja (Göteborg University) spoke on “Embodied Rhythm”. Employing the example of Ann Sexton’s poem “The Fury of Rain Storms” she explicated how rhythm produces meaning by using a four step analysis model.

Wednesday evening was spent on Tervasaari island, where the attendees had the opportunity to talk about syllables and statistics in an informal manner with good food and nice weather. On Thursday evening, Tuomas M.S. Lehtonen, the Secretary General of Finnish Literature Society, welcomed everyone to the Society-organized reception.

The Viking World – Diversity and Change
27th June–2nd July 2016, Nottingham, United Kingdom
Elisabeth Maria Magin, University of Nottingham

Trying to capture the Viking Age in all its aspects and facets, with its wide range not only of territory but also of time, is a task that cannot be accomplished. Still, people have made attempts. For example, “The Viking World – Diversity and Change”, which took place in Nottingham from June 27th to July 2nd in 2016, made a very valid attempt to at least present as many different aspects of the Viking Age as possible, attracting visitors not only from the former Viking territories, but also from countries where Viking influence was not as prevalent as in Northern Europe, like Spain or Russia. Moreover, the conference confined itself neither to one discipline nor restricted itself to the Viking Age alone – periods preceding and following the Viking Age were considered as well as the core areas and time periods of Viking dominion. All papers presented at the conference showed one thing quite clearly: in studying the Viking Age, one needs to broaden the horizon.¹ What caused a Viking to become a Viking, and what constituted his or her identity as a ‘Viking’ was at the beginning of this chapter of history something very different than what it was on the eve of the Norman Conquest. The fact that both Knut’s accession to the English throne and the Norman Conquest celebrated their respective anniversaries in 2016 brings home once more how diverse the subject we call the Viking Age actually is.

The conference’s full six-day programme ensured that no conference attendant was bored at any time. An excursion to Lincoln along with an Iceland-England football match and a visit to a sales venue provided ample distraction to fend off conference fatigue. Since our knowledge of the Viking Age is still based on relatively few sources, naturally many talks took their starting point in either archaeological finds or written sources – or both. Fortunately, presenter approaches varied widely. Hypotheses on the – possibly evolutionary –
cause for the earliest known raids, and thus the start of the Viking Age were discussed alongside burial customs in different geographical areas.\textsuperscript{2} Amongst observations on changes in burial customs in specific geographic areas (like on the Isle of Man\textsuperscript{3}), attention was directed to the phenomenon of master-slave graves,\textsuperscript{4} the influence of gender on the interpretation of a person’s burial mound,\textsuperscript{5} and the reuse of older, local burial sites in Viking territories as a possible sign of assimilation or statements of power.\textsuperscript{6}

Not all areas of Viking influence have Viking burials, however, and in some cases – such as in the case of Iberia – it is even questionable if the Vikings were there at all or if travelling to Spain is simply a trope employed by saga authors.\textsuperscript{7} It is interesting, however, to look at the routes Vikings explored and travelled along,\textsuperscript{8} and their manners of navigation. Papers comparing material evidence with written sources or looking at linguistic contacts\textsuperscript{9} revealed that in some areas the Viking influence appears to have been particularly strong on vocabulary concerning farming and fishing,\textsuperscript{10} and that our assumption that they navigated along a ‘Viking mental world map’ maybe wrong. Rather, looking at how locations along their trading routes were named, it would be more correct to think of the Viking landscape as more of a ‘mental string’.\textsuperscript{11} Due to their extensive travels, the Vikings had many points of contact with other cultures,\textsuperscript{12} as is evidenced by the presence of Vikings in Arabic sources,\textsuperscript{13} but also in the bones of inhabitants of Viking towns like Ribe.\textsuperscript{14} These border encounters opened up influences on daily life that ran both ways.\textsuperscript{15} Viking identities appear not to have been as solid as we may think, raising questions about contemporary concepts of social, gender, and language identity.\textsuperscript{16} These factors may have been influenced by elements such as location, language proficiency, and perhaps even market demand.

It is therefore logical to pay attention to how people regarded the space they inhabited, and which rules governed ‘inside space’ and ‘outside space’.\textsuperscript{17} Outdoor activities like tar production\textsuperscript{18} or attending a thing all had their own set of rules that were expected to be followed, as did, for example, the interior of a home. The consequences of violating rules can both be found in poetry and sagas,\textsuperscript{19} and interesting observations on the difference of focus in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian law codices were a topic of discussion.\textsuperscript{20} Space utilized to create a specific effect is perhaps most obvious in giant monuments like Gamla Uppsala in Sweden or the Jelling site in Denmark,\textsuperscript{21} but can also be traced in boat graves, which connect to boat burials known from narratives like the god Baldr’s funeral.\textsuperscript{22}

Poetry, languages and myths of origin obviously played a great role in creating a ‘Viking identity’, but were also important in creating local, flexible identities and in ordering the world, whether explaining the origins of illness\textsuperscript{23} or for assigning people to a specific family. Papers on those subjects focused on the role of praise poetry in the Danish dynasty,\textsuperscript{24} but also on kinship markers\textsuperscript{25} and, again, on language contacts and the remnants of said contacts in individual languages. One particularly interesting paper showed how Harald harðráði’s character was constructed by means of using the women of the saga as the saga author’s mouthpiece.\textsuperscript{26} Yet not everyone told the same story, as reflected in the contrast between Irish stories about Brian boru and Njáls saga.\textsuperscript{27} Both examples serve to show that as a Viking leader, respecting and making use of the diversity of your army\textsuperscript{28} was not enough, you also needed a good skald to tell of your deeds. But the choice of who to hire should be made carefully – two other thought-provoking papers dealt respectively with the ingenuity of Egill in scorning Erik Blood-axe even as he praised him,\textsuperscript{29} and how Vafprúðnir could have avoided his own death by listening to the little hints at Odin’s identity the disguised god sprinkled into their verbal sparring.\textsuperscript{30} They were not the only ones to resort to ‘cheating’, however. Also interesting were the presentations on the topic of conversion\textsuperscript{31} and the various forms it took in written sources, whether in ascribing a ‘good character’ to a pagan ancestor post-mortem,\textsuperscript{32} or bishops advising their priests on how to bend the rules in order to not scare away the newly Christened.\textsuperscript{33}

Stories were not only told with words. Events and cosmology were also depicted on
objects of art like the Bayeux tapestry and the Oseberg finds. As one speaker observed: “These artefacts display considerable skill and open up for the question of who we grasp in these finds.”

Shields were objects that could tell their own story, and appear to have had a connection to the female sphere; dwarfs were popular figures but are not necessarily depicted as small or even supernatural, smiths as a sort of cyborg do capture the imagination, and the embroidery and stitches used to create tapestries in turn tell stories about cultural contacts and influences as much as they tell the actual story in pictures. In detecting these cultural contacts, manuscripts, names and runic inscriptions also play an important role. Runic inscriptions dating from after the Viking Age show that contacts established during the Viking Age were still alive even after the decline of Viking influence; the situation is somewhat more complicated with names.

But there is still cause to suspect that scholarly interest in the Viking Age as well as recourse to Viking Age myths and stories helped to create the identities of later rulers and dynasties like the Danish royal family and Hedeby.

Stories about the Vikings, their treasures, and their world continue to be told in our modern world, and the references to the Vikings are manifold. This is proven by the amount of material the World Tree project has collected, but it also shows in historical fiction. Two authors of historical fiction, Victoria Whitworth and Justin Hill, gave talks in the course of the conference, and a round table, open to the public, opened discussion about historical facts in fiction between James Aitcheson, Justin Hill, Helen Hollick, and Victoria Whitworth. Topics covered included the amount of research required to write historical fiction and how to deal with historical facts as a storyline hindrance.

During the conference, the conference and recent political developments were topics discussed by Twitter user King Cnut the Great (@CanutusRex), just one example of how embedded events and persons from the Viking Age are in our own memories and identities. It is therefore not surprising that a great ten-year research programme, ‘The Viking Phenomenon’ located at the University of Uppsala, will be launched on the year of these anniversaries, and the conference certainly served to further future research and strengthen networks between scholars of the Viking Age and adjacent periods.

Notes

5. “Gender and Burial”, by Marianne Moen.
8. “Rus’ Raiding in the Caspian Region and the Norman Theory”, by Vusala Afandiyeva; “Norse Beliefs in Viking Age Poland: Objects, Symbols and Identities”, by Leszek Gardela.
10. “Viking Shielings in Northern Britain: sætr and ærgi Names” by Ryan Foster.
16. “Transformations: Norse and Gaelic Languages/ Viking Identities”, by Roderick McDonald; “‘Turn and Face the Strange’: Changing Regional Ethnic
Interdisciplinary Student Symposium on Viking and Medieval Scandinavian Subjects

17th–18th March 2016, Aarhus, Denmark

Filip Missuno, University of York

Held at Aarhus University, the ninth instalment of the Interdisciplinary Student Symposium on Viking and Medieval Scandinavian Subjects represented the crowning of a remarkable expansion in size, quality, international visibility and attractiveness over the previous years. As it unfolded over two full days packed with vibrant scholarly communication, it became apparent that this event, now the largest of its kind, had reached full maturity and perhaps an ideal format.

The symposium saw a delightful diversity of presentations by 25 MA and PhD students representing ten different universities across
Europe. The papers, skilfully distributed thematically across eight sessions, engaged with an impressive spectrum of research areas within the cultural, historical and archaeological contexts of Viking Age and Medieval Scandinavia as well as Old Norse language, literature and myth. (The programme of the symposium and an archive of past events are available online at www.vikingoldnorse.au.dk.)

Chair of the organizing committee Simon Nygaard (Aarhus University) addressed a warm welcome to a large gathering of young researchers keen to learn, exchange results and insights from their ongoing work and acquire the indispensable experience in the academic genre of research presentation. He stressed that the Aarhus Symposium still remained true to its original principle – which has been decisive in its growing success – namely, to be a scholarly event organized “for students, by students, with students as speakers, in a professional yet informal setting”.

The first session, themed “Reception History”, opened with Jay Anthony Hash’s (University of Iceland) presentation on the challenges besetting the early days of runic studies as seen through the letters of a pioneer in the field, the Danish polymath Ole Worm. Offering an original, modern counterpoint, Shirley McPhaul (University of Iceland) spoke enthusiastically on how Norse myth is used (and changed) in video games, mainly in terms of narrative. Hana Spacilova (Aarhus University) rounded up this rousing opening session by comparing the treatment of the character of Brynhild in retellings of Völsunga saga, focusing on the versions by Morris, Lang and Tolkien.

Logically moving on to the written sources themselves, the following session’s topic was “Manuscript Studies”. It was started by Anne Ladefoged (University of Copenhagen) who, from a consideration of medieval Danish law manuscripts, analyzed the relationship between a manuscript’s layout to its function(s) and intended audiences. Balduin Landolt (University of Iceland/University of Basel) followed with a study of two variants of Færeyinga saga interpolated in kings’ sagas, examining their relation to the framing text and demonstrating their adherence to a shared structural pattern. The session concluded with Anthony Jay Bunker’s (University of Iceland) inquiry into the treatment of the Huns in Old Norse sources, showing that these ‘others’ were instrumental to the articulation of important cultural and literary themes, such as kinship or inheritance.

This provided a brilliant transition to the session that set off after lunch under the banner “Á austrvega: On the Eastern Way”. Emily Reed (University of York) opened the session by examining the stylized tropes and conventions of medieval letter writing through the correspondence between the Swedish monk Petrus de Dacia and the German mystic Christina von Stommel, interrogating the possibility for us to hear their original voices. Johan Sandvang Larsen (Aarhus University) followed by arguing that what evidence we have for the island of Bornholm’s Viking Age material culture points to Swedish tradition and influence rather than to the island having been part of Harald Bluetooth’s kingdom. The session closed with two papers that travelled further afield on the ‘eastern way’: Csete Katona (University of Debrecen) reviewed the question of the presence and influence of the Vikings in the Carpathian Basin and their supposed friendship with the Hungarians in early medieval times. Katona struck a sceptical note in view of the sparse and inconclusive nature of the evidence. Klaudia Karpinska (University of Rzeszów) discussed the quality and authenticity of Viking Age re-enactment in Poland (and exhibited a finely-wrought replica of a putative seiðr-staff), stressing the fine line between the valorization of the past and its depreciation.

For the closing session of the day, with the theme of “Daily Life”, the audience was treated to two presentations revolving around food and drink: Beth Rogers (University of Iceland) explored the significance of milk and dairy products in medieval Scandinavia and showed their centrality in the culture and mentality of the North. Benjamin Sibley (University of Iceland) analyzed the references to brewing and drinking alcohol in the prose of Íslendingasögur and Sturlungasögur with a view to assess their uses in historical,
archaeological and cultural contexts. After this apposite and appetizing conclusion of the day, the participants were invited to the conference dinner.

The second day of the symposium was essentially devoted to language, literature and mythology. The opening session, on “Literary Structures”, started with Brian MacMahon (University of Oxford) discussing the framing devices used in the sagas, notably the epilogues, in relation to scribal intention and the audience’s interpretation of the act of storytelling. Moving on to poetical structure, Nicholas Hoffmann (University of Iceland) showed how verses in a saga can embody and transmit its strange and supernatural aspects, taking the example of the understudied Harðar saga Grímkelssonar. Claudia Hoßbach (University of Greifswald) followed by shifting the focus onto the literary device of laughter and seeking its function in the Íslendingasögur. Madita Knöpfle (University of Basel) ended the session with a consideration of how music interacts with meaning in various Scandinavian variants of the famous ballad Den talende Strengeleg [“The Talking Harp”].

From there the following session proceeded to “Language and Linguistics”, beginning with Katherine Thorn’s (University of Iceland) examination of the mentions of multilingualism in the sagas and the cultural or narrative importance for saga protagonists to be able to communicate across linguistic borders. Zooming in further on lexis, Johan Bollaert (Uppsala University) presented the results of his research on Romance loanwords in the riddarasögur and their subsequent fate in Icelandic and Norwegian in the light of theories about language contact and semantic change. The session concluded with Denis Sukhino-Khomenko (University of Copenhagen, Visiting PhD from Lomonosov Moscow State University) who raised the question of Scandinavian impact on the category of thegn (Old English þegn meaning originally ‘servant’) in the Danelaw, stressing the complex evolution of the social group that this word denoted.

Everybody was kept alert and entertained after lunch by a lively session venturing into the field of “Liminal Beings and Borders”. Barða Davidková (University of Iceland) began by tracking down the trolls in Barðar saga Snaefellsáss in order to interpret their feasting habits through a cultural and religious lens. Jonas Sandager Brammen Møller (Aarhus University) followed with a presentation on disir, suggesting that these female figures are best understood as agents of fate. Barðar saga then made a comeback as Daria Segal (University of Iceland) used the abundance of toponyms in the text to argue that naming was a means of asserting control over the undefinable otherness of liminal space. Blake Middleton (University of Aberdeen) wound up the discussion by addressing the problem of the destination of supernatural beings (or of their ‘souls’) after death in Norse myth.

The symposium went full circle with its last session, which bore the topic of “Reconstruction”. Grayson Del Faro (University of Iceland) gave an entertaining lecture on textual discrepancies and methods of reconstruction in the notorious case of Sigurðarkviða in meiri, and Roderick McDonald (University of Iceland), in an interesting and intriguing finale, offered paths for reconstructing the largely missing ‘Norse Arthurian cycle’ through a comparison of the figure of Út in Norse romance sagas to his antecedent Cai in Welsh tradition.

It remained for the organizers to thank all participants and the audience for yet another a successful and enthralling symposium in Aarhus. A wealth of ideas were shared and probed, many fresh angles and perspectives were opened onto research areas old and new, and there was food for thought to take home for everyone. The quality, variety, originality and colourfulness of the presentations and the abundance of interesting questions and discussions – which merrily rolled on into the final reception – bore witness to the vitality of Old Norse and Scandinavian studies among junior researchers. This bodes well for scholarship in the field in future years; and in the meantime, one now certainly awaits with impatience yet another Interdisciplinary Student Symposium on Viking and Medieval Scandinavian Subjects, with new exchanges and new excitement, next year.
The monograph Svyatogor: Smrt a iniciace staroruského bohatýra (Svyatogor: Death and Initiation of the Russian Epic Hero) was published by Pavel Mervart, Červený Kostelec, in 2016.

This book presents a structural analysis and comparative interpretation of thirty-seven textual variants of the byliny of bogatyr Svyatogor. My contention is that the Russian folk epics – byliny – are a great candidate for thusly based research due to their formal qualities and subject matter.

The principal character of the presented and analysed narratives is Svyatogor, an old and tired hero of gigantic stature and superhuman strength. In the songs he drowsily and solitarily wanders through the regions of his eponymous Holy Mountains (Svyatye gory). This is the only area in which he is allowed to dwell, because due to his enormous strength the Moist Mother Earth herself cannot bear his weight. On these Holy Mountains Svyatogor is encountered by Ilya Muromets, young and progressive hero, the most famous bogatyr of the Russian bylinaic epics. He tries to attack the sleeping giant, but Svyatogor drowsily puts him into his pocket and carries him over the mountains for a few days. Paradoxically, the two heroes become friends and Svyatogor even becomes Ilya’s mentor and teacher. The narrative climaxes when the two bogatyri find an empty coffin in the among the stones and they both try to lie inside it. The coffin is too large for Ilya but is a fit for Svyatogor. When the giant tries it out, he is miraculously trapped and closed inside the coffin. Despite many attempts to free him, Ilya cannot do anything about it. Finally, Svyatogor acknowledges his bitter fate – the inevitability of a predestined death – and he offers a generous gift to Ilya: he wants to pass on to Ilya a portion of his enormous strength (sila). Ilya agrees and accepts Svyatogor’s gift. According to regional variation, this sila is represented either by a breath that Ilya must inhale, or by a series of many-coloured foams, sweats, or salivas that come out of the dying hero and which the young hero must lick from him. Odd as it is, this central and cathartic moment is not only uncanny in its form but also in its consequences: the passed-down sila usually contains some malicious feature which threatens Ilya’s life when mishandled. He nevertheless escapes the dangers and, strengthened by the powers of his dead mentor, rides away to the steppes. In some variants, the story is supplemented by an episode containing Svyatogor’s unfaithful wife acting as mediator between the heroes or by an episode featuring Svyatogor’s blind father. In this narrative, Ilya must ride to him and announce the death of his son before accepting a sign of his approval.

Even though the narratives above all deal with the destined death of an old, tired, and sleepy bogatyr, I am convinced that their parallel meaning in fact lies in a conceptual second birth of a young epic hero. The narrative is structured as if mirroring death of the former, who is at the same time the hero’s adversary and teacher, and who escorts him through his initiation. Simultaneously, these narratives thematise the peculiar and delicate matter of the relationship among the generations and the problem of generational change and succession. This is my hypothesis and in this book I propose as many facts as possible to support it.

The more general problem that lies behind this book is the question of whether and how possible it is to grasp and understand the semantics of old and rather odd narratives – myths – that in their original context must have made a bit more sense than what we can make
of them today. This question highlights universal problems associated with the study of mythology and symbolic systems of traditions (i.e. religions) that have not survived to the present day – so-called dead traditions – and therefore cannot be examined by way of an anthropologically-based enquiry. I believe that the study of oral epic traditions may shore up many theoretically and methodologically interesting research questions and principles that can be useful for other specialists, including religious studies academics, linguists, and cultural theoreticians. Among other things, this book is an attempt for a kind of *archaeology and anthropology of text*. One of its goals is the reconstruction of beliefs, imagination and symbolic representations of the archaic, bygone societies.

The book is divided into three equally extensive parts. Its first chapter is theoretical and methodological. The chapter sums up the basic nature and features of the primary sources and presents substantial theoretical attitudes that must be mentioned in order to pursue subsequent analysis. Readers are introduced to the issues central to Russian oral epic studies, including the history of the genre and its academic reception. Then I present the corpus’s basic oral-formulaic and structural principles and explore issues of the oral text intertextuality and the fragmentation of texts into smaller narrative units. Next I thoroughly present Lévi-Strauss’s notion of *mythème* as a useful concept for studying the narrative and structural units of epic songs. Finally, I propose my own structural concept of myth and cultural representation. I understand *myth* as any narrative with a potential to make sense in the context of particular culture and its symbolic universe of meanings, norms, and values. My contention is that, thusly conceived, the mythopoetic and performative potential of bylinaic narratives shows them as a very important part of Indo-European mythological and epic tradition.

In the second, central part of this study, I attempt to apply the above-mentioned methodological principles to the Svyatogor narrative itself. The two central characters of the narrative are carefully introduced to the reader. I then present an analysis of the narrative in its 37 variants. In order to make sense of the local context of intertextual bylinaic tradition, I employ a thorough analysis of the story while seeking to demonstrate which mythemes – and their relations – were fundamental to this narrative. My thesis claims that these narratives primarily deal with the themes of the initiation of a young hero, the generational conflict and the law of succession, and the transmission of a mentor’s position to his apprentice (or, metaphorically, a father’s position to his son). I then take the ‘additional’ episodes concerning Svyatogor’s wife and father into consideration. My conclusions yield proposals: I schematically sum up substantial structural relations I observe to be embedded in my pantotypic reconstruction of the narrative. I then attempt to discern what meanings these abstract structures could have had for the recipients of the *bylina*. I observe that traditional singers of these tales pursued many compositional rules. On the basis of this survey I assume that many – even substantial – differences between particular variants of the story can be understood as meaningful structural variations of the basic mythemes, mythemes that formed a narrative core and from which the tissue, so to speak, of the songs was composed. I identify two particularly important mythemes: first, the mytheme of *inflicted and cancelled inhibition* and, second, the mytheme of *overestimated social relationships*. The mythemes of *acceptance or denial of one’s destiny* and *insidiousness of the dying giant* seem important as well.

The third and last part of my study consists of a comparative survey of general narrative structures, mythemes, and an isolation of particular motives found in Svyatogor narratives. The hypothesis about initiation- and destiny-based meaning of the *bylina* is subsequently tested via a two-phased comparative analysis of the central mythemes and their clusters: Firstly, I compare the context of the immanent corpus of bylinaic and the synchronic ethnographic circumstances of the Russian North (i.e. I make an internal comparison). My analysis reaches up to the possible textual layers that belong to a semantic horizon of the Kievan Rus’; it is assumed that the core of the Russian folk epics originated among the court
singers of the Ruthenian princes. The ethnographic evidence is dealt with as well – I examine the semantic range of the concepts of marriage, relationship of men to women, sin, destiny, and death. I also consider the possible remnants of boys’ initiation in the bylinaic tradition and in East Slavic folklore.

Finally I deal with the subject in a wider scope of the common Eurasian mythical and epic traditions (i.e. I make an external comparison). Mythemes from the Svyatogor bylinas are compared with Indo-European, Caucasian, and Ugro-Finn mythological and epic traditions. Based on the works of preceding researchers and the narrative parallels discovered by them, I present a complex picture of shared narrative principles among different traditions. I propose new narrative parallels based on the motif of the passing on of Svyatogor’s strength, generally ignored by previous interpreters. I introduce a narrative about the transmission of power to Bǫðvar Bjarki through his brother Elc-Fróði in Hrölfssaga kraka, an episode from the life of Ættleifr the Dane in Pidreksaga af Bern, and some other examples. I also propose previously unnoticed ritual parallels: firstly the Vedic rite of passage concerning the death of the father and his passing of the vital forces to his son (mentioned twice in the Upaniṣads), and its collation with the archaic Roman ritual postremum spiritum excipere.

My comparative analysis of the strength-transmission motif is also supplemented by the linguistic and anthropological examination of the various archaic concepts of the human vital sources of energy, life, and strength. Besides that I propose possible etymological connection (based mostly on the works of R. Kregždys) of the Slavic lexeme sila ['strength, power']) and Lithuanian siela ['soul'] and seila ['saliva’]. From this I suggest a common etymology of these Balto-Slavic lexemes and the Germanic words for the ‘stuff of life’ arising from the reconstructed Proto-Germanic root *saiwalō (> Eng. soul, Ger. Seele, Old Norse sála, etc.) which has to date been interpreted as something along the lines of ‘connected with the sea’, a hypothetical Germanic otherworld.

Also, I highlight a possible connection between Ilya’s unusual heroic initiation by the giant Svyatogor on the one hand, and the archaic paederastic and homoerotic initiation rituals from various Indo-European and other cultures on the other.

The book is supplemented by the collection of the 37 variants of the bylina in the Russian original and its Czech translation.

I attempt to interpret Svyatogor’s bylinas in the context of initiation rituals. It conclude that in the foreground of the Svyatogor’s narrative complex stands a story about the origin of the exceptional and famous young hero who takes advantage of Svyatogor – or even causes his own death. Ilya Muromets as an ultimate and invincible hero kills his old mentor and teacher (perhaps, metaphorically, his father), and even later his own son, Sokolnik. Ilya is the optimal and the most perfect archetype of an epic hero – he is a powerful warrior who can be corrupted neither by riches, nor women, and the only value he stands for is the Mother Rus’ whom he devotedly protects from intruders.

Svyatogor, in comparison, is a much more complex and ambivalent character. His point of view in the presented narrative is actually a sad swan song of an old, exhausted hero who has problems with women. There is no place for him in this world. He simply wanders in the Other World among his Holy Mountains. And when he is found there by a young hero Ilya, the tragic fate of the old man is confirmed.

Finally, he tries to eliminate the young hero by a last, desperate attempt to prevent his fate: he tries to kill Ilya by way of a deadly overdose of his powers or by some other malevolent trick. But he can never succeed, because the final victory and invigoration of the young hero is predestined and inevitable. The narrative deals with the inevitability of the fact that old is replaced by new, inertia is surpassed by mobility, weariness is beaten by energy, and age exceeded by youth.

This narrative as a story with mythical potential that could have – in my opinion – worked as a cognitive simulation for dealing with the neuralgical social and psychological situations of parental succession. Very important in this respect is the analysed ‘pattern of the reversed effect’ – the narrative situation in which a character performs an action with a certain intention or purpose, but
the result of the act is always contrary to the intention: Svyatogor wants to kill his destined wife, but instead he heals her illness. He wants to possess her for eternity, but he instead loses her forever. Ilya, in comparison, wants to kill Svyatogor in the field, but instead he wakes him. Then he wants to release him from the coffin but instead he binds him there for eternity, and so on. What was the meaning of this narrative pattern?

One possible interpretation is that it is a narrative attempt to comprehensively express the ambivalence of the relations between the characters of the story. It seems that this pattern always turns up in situations where social relations between characters are somehow overestimated or underestimated (i.e. when someone wants to kill the other or to keep him or her forever). The ‘pattern of the reversed effect’ could be the representation of the ambivalent, questionable and psychologically unjustifiable moral nature of the particular acts: Ilya ‘loves’ his mentor so much that he buries him by means of his attempts to release him. Svyatogor ‘loves’ his wife so much that he forces her to adultery by means of his excessive efforts to harness and bind her. The narrative schema tries to disguise these inevitable but morally dubious acts (as killing of the mentor) as seemingly good, benevolent intentions, only with the reversed effect. Unconscious psychological content is thus transformed into the symbolic form of the narrative, in which it is rationalized and idealised. But it eventually need to be resolved in a way the story wants it to: tragically.

The second option for the interpretation – which could be perceived as an amendment to the first one – can be proposed in regard to the central role of the inevitability of the fate motive. During my analysis, it became apparent that everything Svyatogor does to prevent his predestined fate eventually leads to the exact result that was prophesized or predestined, which is again the result of the ‘pattern of the reversed effect’. However, this could also be the manifestation of a general human experience when an individual can never see the purpose or the direction of his or her fate in the present. He or she can only grasp it retrospectively. Only from retrospection can the past can reveal its true sense. What at first looked like a blessed state of being turns out to be a passing delusion, later leading to tragic situations. And vice versa: what at first seems to be a catastrophic and unfair chain of events can, viewed in retrospect, turn out to simply be a path leading to positive outcomes.

The motive ‘things are not what they seem to be’ can be found in the Svyatogor’s bylinas at various points. A small bag is in fact filled with the weight of the whole earth. A sick woman covered in scabs is actually a beautiful girl. What looks like an ordinary coffin is, upon closer inspection, a deadly trap. That invigorating breath is actually a deadly temptation. These heroes find out the true nature of their acts only ex post.

The possible moral lesson that the Svyatogor bylinas may have provided to its audience is that to rebel against one’s destiny is always futile, that such rebellion only leads to a series of tragic events that fulfil the destiny an individual was trying to avoid. As Oedipus, who was predestined to kill his father and marry his mother, experienced, all efforts to avoid this lead to the exact fulfilment of one’s destiny. And so it went for Svyatogor. The Svyatogor narratives communitate that no man can escape from his destiny, no matter how hard he tries.

Inaccessible to the everyday man, only the epic and mythological hero has the ability to know his fate in advance. Stories about tragic heroes such as Svyatogor – who ‘knows more’ and yet is powerless to stop the mechanisms of fate – could work as a means of comfort for everyday people, the listeners of the epics, functioning as a means deal with the unexpected ‘structural twists’ of their own life narratives.

Even though Svyatogor was probably a negative example, his status of the ‘elder bogatyr’ and as a mentor of Ilya Muromets make him an important part of the East Slavic oral epic tradition. By studying his story and its twists, mirrorings, and allusions, we can more easily understand some of the other regularities found among the inner narrative dynamics and story-telling topics of the bylinaic epics. Eventually perhaps we can even reveal complex genetic and typological connections with the other Eurasian epic and mythological traditions.
Master Poets, Ritual Masters: The Art of Oral Composition among the Rotenese of Eastern Indonesia
James J. Fox, Australian National University


This is a study in oral poetic composition. It examines how oral poets compose their recitations. Specifically, it is a study of the recitations of seventeen separate master poets from the Island of Rote recorded over a period of fifty years. Each of these poets offers his version of what is culturally considered to be the ‘same’ ritual chant. These compositions are examined in detail and their oral formulae are carefully compared to one another.

Professor James J. Fox is an anthropologist who carried out his doctoral field research on the Island of Rote in eastern Indonesia in 1965–66. In 1965, he began recording the oral traditions of the island and developed a close association with numerous oral poets on the island. After many subsequent visits, in 2006, he began a nine-year project that brought groups of oral poets to Bali for week-long recording sessions. Recitations gathered over a period of fifty years are the basis for this book.

The book is available in an open-access electronic format. For further information, please visit the publisher’s website at: https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/master-poets-ritual-masters.

(Magic) Staffs in the Viking Age
Leszek Gardela, University of Rzeszów

A monograph published as volume 27 in the series Studia Medievalia Septentronialia by Verlag Fassbaender (Vienna 2016, 348 pages).

In December 2016, a new book by Leszek Gardela entitled (Magic) Staffs in the Viking Age was released as volume 27 of the academic series Studia Medievalia Septentronialia. The monograph is partly based on the author’s doctoral dissertation, entitled Entangled Worlds: Archaeologies of Ambivalence in the Viking Age, which was defended in 2012 at the University of Aberdeen Department of Archaeology, but has been fully revised for the purpose of publication to include previously unreleased material and new interpretations.

The monograph explores the motif of the magic staff in the Viking Age from an interdisciplinary perspective and in a broad cross-cultural context. A magic staff is defined in a general sense as an object with special properties deriving from the material that was used to produce it, or the appearance, words, and actions of its bearer. The author argues
that, by critically combining Old Norse literature and Viking Age archaeology, it is not only possible to identify material examples of magic staffs in the archaeological record, but one can also unravel the intricate symbolic meanings of these remarkable objects.

Chapter 1 (Introduction) introduces the readers to the broad history of magic staffs and discusses their different examples and applications in a wide spatiotemporal perspective, from prehistory to the Middle Ages. It is argued that staffs made of wood, iron, and other materials are some of the oldest ritual paraphernalia in human history, and were used for a plethora of purposes by ritual specialists and religious leaders in various cultural milieus throughout the ages. In some societies – such as among the Ancient Greeks and Romans – staffs were also regarded as very powerful and important attributes of gods and supernatural beings (de Waele 1927). Following an overview of the different meanings and applications of staffs in times predating the Middle Ages, focus shifts to exploring their role among Viking Age Scandinavians. The use of staffs is discussed in the context of seiðr magic and several famous accounts of this practice are brought to the reader’s attention (e.g. Eiríks saga rauða, Laxdœla saga, Ynglinga saga). Over the last two centuries, seiðr has been debated by numerous scholars, including philologists, historians of religion, and archaeologists. Although this monograph does not seek to explore the complete history of seiðr research and its various nuances, the major cornerstones and seminal contributions to this field of study are critically discussed (Strömbläck 1935; Ohlmarks 1939; Price 2002; Solli 2002; Heide 2006; Tolley 2009). In the author’s opinion, in order to better understand the various intricacies of seiðr (including its human and supernatural practitioners and their ritual paraphernalia), one must take into consideration not only the textual sources that describe it, but also a wide range of archaeological finds dating from the Viking Age. In doing so, however, it is important to acknowledge the fact that any attempt to entangle texts and archaeology presents a number of problems; this endeavor cannot be undertaken uncritically. In order to clarify these methodological dilemmas, the final sections of Chapter 1 discuss how and under what circumstances texts and archaeology can be used to effectively illuminate each other.

Chapter 2 (The Archaeology of Viking Age Ritual Specialists) provides an overview of the history of archaeological research on magic and its practitioners in the Viking Age. Particular attention is devoted to the seminal study of Neil Price, entitled The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia, and to a range of more recent work that seeks to expand and/or revise his arguments. Since the publication of Price’s monograph, a number of archaeologists have devoted their attention to the material dimension of magic in the Viking Age. This increased interest in pre-Christian religions and expressions of past beliefs in the archaeological record has resulted in new discoveries and the reinterpretation of a number of older finds. These include specialist analyses of the contents of the famous Fyrkat 4 grave (believed to belong to a female magic-worker), and reevaluations of several opulent Norwegian graves from Gausel, Hopperstad, Oseberg, and Trå, some of which contained ambiguous iron rods that could have been used as magic staffs (Holck 2006; Kaland 2006;
Pentz et al. 2009; Sørheim 2011). In addition to discussing the results of these new studies, the final sections of Chapter 2 summarise the author’s recent work, where he argues that iron or wooden staffs from Viking Age funerary contexts are not the only plausible indicators of graves belonging to ritual specialists. In his view, large stones placed on the cadaver could also imply that the dead engaged in the practice of magic.

Chapter 3 (Staffs in Viking Age Archaeology) offers a thorough analysis of Viking Age artefacts that have been interpreted as magic staffs. After providing a critical overview of their different interpretations, the author explores various aspects of their material composition. He notes that they could be made of wood or iron, and are sometimes found with additional copper-alloy decorations. While the main focus of this chapter is on full-size examples of staffs, a separate section is also devoted to miniature staffs, which probably served the role of amulets. Furthermore, the chapter also examines iconographic representations of staffs in the Northern world, particularly depictions of staffs on objects made of metal (e.g. guldgubber and bracteates) and on carved stones.

Chapter 4 (Staffs in Old Norse Textual Sources) examines staffs from Old Norse texts, including those mentioned in the Poetic Edda and Prose Edda and in different genres of Old Norse sagas. The survey allows the author to identify several different types of staffs with varying applications. It is argued that some features of staffs mentioned in textual sources closely correspond to features of Viking Age staffs from the archaeological record.

Chapter 5 (Interpreting Staffs) is an attempt to bring the archaeological and textual evidence together and provide a nuanced interpretation of the meanings and functions of staffs in the Viking world. In the author’s opinion, the magic staff can be seen a multivalent object possessing a range of symbolic connotations. In addition to being one of the most distinctive attributes of the ritual specialist, the staff can also allude, in both a material and a symbolic sense, to other concepts and objects, such as a distaff, a weapon (e.g. a spear), a phallus, a key, a lamp, a whip-shank, and tools of exchange. The author also argues that staffs may have been conceptualised as models of the universe (axis mundi), and that they may have been believed to possess features of specific animals or even have been regarded as animals in their own right. The final sections of this chapter explore other aspects of the materiality of staffs, including how these objects were held, transported and stored. Based on archaeological evidence, the author suggests that some staffs are found in funerary contexts bent, broken, burnt, or covered with stones.

Chapter 6 (Multivalent Objects) offers a range of final conclusions and demonstrates that the actual function of magic staffs often depended on the skillful mental manipulation of their owners, and that the belief in the supernatural power of these objects was deeply embedded in the pre-Christian worldview of Norse societies. This final discussion of staffs...
from the Viking Age is supplemented by an analysis of similar ritual tools from other early medieval societies, such as those of the Slavs, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Baltic peoples.

In addition to an extensive bibliography, the book features a catalogue which thoroughly discusses almost all known examples of staffs from the Viking world, including precise details of their measurements, context, and state of preservation. Each staff is presented on a separate black-and-white plate with photographs taken from multiple angles. One innovative feature of this catalogue is the use of QR codes which link each of the plates with the Pre-Christian Religions of the North Database. By scanning a code with an iPad or Smartphone, one can obtain more information about a particular find and download full-colour photographs.

The book can be purchased directly from the publisher, Verlag Fassbaender (www.fassbaender.com), or on Amazon.de.

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Since the beginning of 2014, I have carried out a project on Antikensagas, the Sagas of Antiquity, both in Iceland as a visiting researcher at the University of Iceland, the University of Oslo, and at the University College of Southeast Norway. What was at first a research reconnaissance on the reception of Antiquity in mediaeval Iceland – with time and much sound counsel from my friends and mentors in the North – developed into a project for my PhD dissertation on The Saga of the Romans (Rómverja saga) in the context of mediaeval cultural transfer between continental Europe and Scandinavia.

This project has been implemented with support from Iceland and Norway, through a grant from the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism under the Scholarship and Training Fund (The EEA & Norway Grants). In the following brief project description, I will introduce this work, which will continue until September 2019.

Since this is an ongoing PhD project, the following conclusions are bound to be preliminary. However, I hope they will be helpful to any reader interested in Latin/Ancient Roman influences on Old Norse-Icelandic culture. The purpose of the thesis is to discuss the possible Latin/Ancient Roman influences on Old Norse-Icelandic literature and culture. It employs Rómverja saga as an example, along with related Latin and Old Norse-Icelandic literature.

Until recently, Rómverja saga was little studied. Over the years, Rómverja saga manuscripts have been edited by Konráð Gíslason (1860), Meißen (1910), and, most recently, Porbjörg Helgadóttir (2010). The research on Rómverja saga manuscripts, including, the questions of dating them (and the text itself), manuscript authorship, ownership and provenance, and the narrative’s connections to Sverris saga and Veraldar saga has been conducted by Meißen (1903), Hofmann (1986), Porbjörg Helgadóttir (1987–1988; 1996), Hermann Pálsson (1988; 1991),

My approach, however, goes beyond these questions. I examine the place of Rómverja saga in the cultural transfer of knowledge and learning, as well as the saga’s place in the civilizing process of Europeanisation of Scandinavia.

Latin or Ancient Roman culture had flowed into Scandinavia via waves of texts from the South. Literary contacts between continental Europe and Scandinavia started as early as the Christianisation of the North. Powerful currents of Latin learning and continental European culture were felt in Iceland from that period onward. The North underwent Christianisation, the first profound colonial civilizing process, in the 11th and 12th centuries. The region opened up to Latin culture, and later to the courtly culture and the primary intellectual stream of the Middle Ages in Europe – translatio studii et imperii, the cross-cultural exchange of knowledge – the transfer of written knowledge through translation – between the societies in Europe.

Rómverja saga is an interesting manifestation of the above-mentioned Europeanisation of the mediaeval North through the instrument of translation. By focusing on this ‘displaced’ text, an Old Norse-Icelandic translation/compilation of several Latin / Ancient Roman texts, I intend to highlight cultural connections between the two apparently unrelated times, namely Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and places, specifically between the Roman Empire and the Viking-Age and mediaeval Scandinavian kingdoms and the Icelandic Commonwealth. My PhD thesis aims to describe how certain Latin manuscripts that contained ancient Roman texts were imported from continental Europe and the British Isles to Scandinavia and Iceland to certain monasteries and cathedral schools. There, they ended up in the hands of monks who not only used them to teach Latin and possibly history, but also translated Latin texts into the vernacular. A further consequence of the importation of manuscripts is the influence the process yielded on the production of texts in situ, the education of the country’s intellectual elites and social change sensu largo.

I primarily focus on the main intellectual stream of the Middle Ages in Europe – translatio studii, cultural transfer or cross-cultural exchange of knowledge and learning between societies in Europe. I also examine the ‘cultural imperialism’ that helped the Catholic Church and the continental monarchies gain influence over Northern Europe. By these cultural means, they were inducing those within their sphere of influence to imitate the forms and values of the dominant culture.

I reflect on the mediaeval Icelanders' pursuit of knowledge about the South and Greco-Roman Antiquity as a deliberate activity undertaken at all levels: beginning with the import of manuscripts, translation practices, intertextual relations, cultural transfer, and ending with changes in social cognition and mentality.

Preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion, my dissertation is divided into five parts. The first part establishes the methodical and theoretical background of my approach to the Icelandic sagas and ancient Roman literature. The second part concerns the background of cultural transfer: people, places, trails, institutions, structures, and manuscripts. The third part is a textual analysis of Rómverja saga addressing the question of what became of the ancient Roman text that would eventually be translated by a mediaeval Icelander. The fourth part examines the intertextual relations surrounding Rómverja saga and addresses how the saga became intertwined with vernacular Icelandic literature. In the fifth part, I focus on the strata of the social cognition as resembled by the language of the texts, looking for traces of Latin-Old Norse interfaces, points where these two conceptual worlds meet and interact.

Throughout my discussion I refer to a number of theoretical perspectives employed in fields such as linguistics, literary studies, and history. My inspiration for this work is Stephen Greenblatt’s cultural poetics theory. The research undertaken in this study is also based upon methodological principles set out by postcolonial theory, intertextuality theory, approaches to cognitive linguistics as
established by George Lakoff, and approaches to cognitive poetics by Peter Stockwell. These theories enable me to examine Rómverja saga from many different angles. The resulting portrait is that of a complex phenomenon featuring material, textual, intertextual, and socio-cultural dimensions.

In the second part of my study I seek answers for a basic question: how did the classics (Lucanus and Sallustius in the case of Rómverja saga) reach Iceland from continental Europe? What was their route of transmission? I take a close look at the social institutions and structures of Scandinavia that produced a vital environment for literary activity (literary milieus, patronage, and monasticism), at the migratory networks of people travelling between Scandinavia and the continent (scholars, students, pilgrims, missionaries, or travellers) and at the lineages of transmission. I ask, what enabled this case of transcultural translation? What were the channels of transmission that reinforced this flow of ideas? For example, manuscripts may have been transmitted along the same route scholars, students, pilgrims, missionaries and travellers followed, such people bringing manuscripts, books and other material sources of knowledge home with them.

Digging into the textual strata of this case of cultural transfer, I open up an intertextual perspective. I ask, what happened to this cultural product that travelled through time and space to emerge and become enshrined in new contexts and configurations? What are the differences between the original text and the target text? How did the translator re-read the text? The translator, confronted with the texts of foreign linguistic, sociohistorical, cultural and literary origins, as ancient Rome must have been to a mediaeval Icelander, had to decode the text and translate it not only from a foreign language into his or her own but also from a foreign cultural context into his or her own. Differences and tension within the text indicate the presence of conflicting discourses. This is particularly valid not only within the interfaces of cultures and languages that occur in the translated text but especially in the case of a text that was created as a compilation of texts, texts that had originated in different ideological contexts. How did the compiler of Rómverja saga resolve the contradiction between the republican Sallustius, whose works have radical ideological implication and share a tragic pattern of fictionalisation and the monarchist Lucanus, whose writings have conservative ideological implications and share an epic pattern of fictionalisation? In this part of my dissertation, I explore omissions, additions, and other modifications that indicate shifts in ideology, from anti-royalist to monarchist, and changes in fictionalisation patterns.

With the flow of Latin learning to Iceland, the Old Norse-Icelandic conceptual world did not remain intact. The classics imported from the South and the Latin language had an important influence on the mediaeval Northern World. Through translation, mediaeval Icelanders incorporated European culture into their own, which made them not only familiar with continental European culture but also enabled them to identify with the region. Therefore, in the following part of my dissertation, I also seek to answer the following questions: to what extent was Old Norse-Icelandic language and literature, in the sense of semantics/meaning, influenced by Latin language and literature? Changes in mentality came hand-in-hand with language change. But what exactly was the influence of classical ideas on Old Norse-Icelandic thought? Might these ideas have been to a certain degree integrated into the mentality of mediaeval Icelanders? Or at least the mentality of certain groups inside mediaeval Icelandic society? In my dissertation, I explore these questions while looking for evidence of the transfer of social norms in the form of cognitive metaphors from continental Europe as it appears in the Sagas of Antiquity (Antikensagas) and the vernacular sagas.

The research in this part of my dissertation focuses on social cognition in the context of Latin and Old Norse-Icelandic literature and language, their interfaces, the cross-cultural adaptation of cognitive structures (a process wherein a bit of cultural information is brought into a society), its existing schemata, existing meaning structures, and how it may be subsequently accommodated and assimilated into the social structure, causing changes in mentality and worldview.
In order to see the network of beliefs and attitudes (connected with the worldview of the cultural community from which it stems) which underlie Rómverja saga and its texti recepti, Sallustius and Lucanus (and which would be otherwise invisible while always implicit in the texture of the saga), I dig deeper into the text and its language to find cognitive structures and metaphors.

On the basis of ancient Roman literature, Antikensagas and other vernacular Icelandic sagas and poetry, I draw a social-cognitive models of personality (based on the ancient Roman virtues: virtus, pietas, fides, iustitia, prudentia, gravitas, elementia, etc.) and cognitive models of luck and fate as understood by Romans (the fatum – Felicitas – fortuna – fôrs – infelicitas complex) and Icelanders (the auðna – gifta – gæfa – hamingja – happ – heill complex) with its cognitive structures, metaphors, schemata, and explanatory models. I detect and analyse differences and similarities between them, and trace Ancient Roman/Latin substrata in a ON-I model. Using as examples works by Lucanus and Sallustius, and works such as Rómverja saga and other Antikensagas, as well as related vernacular ON-I literature, I consider the following: First, if and how were these cultural concepts translated from Latin to ON-I? Second, how was meaning changed, accommodated, or adapted? Third, to what extent was ON-I language, in the sense of semantics and meaning, influenced by Latin? Fourth, might these Ancient Roman-Latin ideas have been to a certain degree integrated into the mentality of mediaeval Icelanders (or at least the worldview of certain groups inside mediaeval Icelandic society)? Fifth, if yes, in what way was the mentality of mediaeval Icelanders affected by these concepts?

Literature is actively involved in the making of society. It plays a significant role in discursive practice. Texts participate in creating the cultural moment from which they originated and in which they were read, and should be associated with other phenomena in society that occurred during a given period. Literature produces cultural effects. The truly important feature of this phenomenon is the creation of hybrid cultures open to continued changes. Therefore, we should read cultural transfer in terms of ‘cultural transplantation’: elements become grafted from one ‘cultural body’ to another and are in turn adapted to new cultural environments. Through an assimilationist attitude towards foreign language and culture – Latin in the case of mediaeval Scandinavia – it was willingly and knowingly embraced by leading mediaeval Icelandic intellectuals as a modus operandi of the society's Europeanisation. Ultimately, a kind of hybrid identity was developed in the North, which consisted of the following substrates: Old Norse oral tradition, Christianity, and continental Latin culture.

The present project will contribute to the extant body of research on the mediaeval cultural transfer by producing a monograph on the case of Rómverja saga. This monograph will enhance our understanding of the development of the mediaeval Icelandic society embedded deeply in the pre-Christian traditions, but strongly influenced by Christianity and Latinity.

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**Berserkir**: A Re-Examination of the Phenomenon in Literature and Life

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Supervisor: Judith Jesch (University of Nottingham).

Examiners: Christina Lee (University of Nottingham) and Alaric Hall (University of Leeds).

This thesis reappraises the nature and depictions of berserkir (sing. berserk), figures known primarily from Old Norse literature. It challenges the stereotype of the violent, out-of-control, liminal character and seeks to replace it with a more nuanced interpretation. In doing so, this thesis defines three models for berserkir: the probable Viking-Age reality, the medieval literary character, and the modern popular depiction.

The key question the thesis asks is: did berserkir in literature and reality go berserk in the modern English sense of the word? Typically, research has taken it as a given that they did, and that the key question was how they did this. Suggestions have included: eating amanita muscaria (Ōdman 1925: 177–183; Schübel 1885 I: 224–226; Fabing 1956: 232–257); consuming alcohol (Wille 1786: 273–274; Poestion 1884: 129–148); suffering from mental illness (Grøn 1929: 4–58; Shay 2003: 77–99); and via shamanic practices (Peuckert 1988: 88–100), among others. The unthinking assumption that berserkir went berserk has shaped the dialogue and vocabulary around them to the point where
it is difficult to discuss berserkir in terms that do not imply a berserk fit or frenzy; there is no translation of the Old Norse (ON) compound noun berserksgangr that does not presuppose illness or loss of control, despite the fact that its etymology is related to neither, but rather to movement. This perception is further reinforced by modern, popular culture depictions of berserkir. As the final chapter of the thesis discusses, the modern perception of the concept is that of a one-dimensional killing machine with no regard for his own safety or survival. With this in mind, my analysis focuses on what medieval audiences understood ON berserkir to mean, how that meaning may be related to the probable Viking-Age reality, and considers how modern depictions might have shaped and guided researchers’ thought processes.

Berserksgangr

The defining feature of berserkir in Old Norse literature is berserksgangr. This, more than anything, is how the modern audience recognises and engages with them, and this feature has been researched more than any other, as noted earlier. Two pairs of attributes define it: shield-biting and howling, and invulnerability to iron and fire. While other attributes, such as frothing at the mouth, occur so rarely that they are almost certainly the result of authorial inventiveness, these attributes are present in most narratives about berserkir.

Most berserkir that bite their shields also howl. These actions occur before the start of combat, and there is often a gap between berserksgangr and the fight starting. In Egils saga, for example, this gap is punctuated by a poetic contest which Ljótr loses (Egils saga: 202–204). The pause between berserksgangr and the main action indicates that berserksgangr was not a berserk frenzy, because a truly berserk warrior is unlikely to have held back. Thus, like a Māori haka, it was pre-battle posturing or ritual. Similar to Germanic warriors of Tacitus’ day, berserkir appear to have used their shields as sounding boards to appear more frightening (Germania: 134–135), planting the teeth on the rim as shown on the Lewis gaming pieces (Robinson 2004: 28-29) and howling. In a pre-Christian context it is tempting to see a parallel here with Óðinn’s spell in Hávamál 156 where he chants under the shield to carry warriors safely into and home from battle (Hávamál: 72). Thus, the Lewis gaming pieces provide a clue how the medieval audience may have envisaged berserkir, while the descriptions feed into interpretations of a probable Viking-Age reality.

Invulnerability of berserkir to fire and iron is sufficiently consistent within Old Norse literature that it may have been an element of historical reality too. Danielli (1945) suggested that resistance to fire was part of a fossilised memory of a ritual, although this motif was subverted in later texts to prove Christianity’s superiority to Norse paganism, as in the conversion episodes in Njáls saga (1954: 267) and Vatnsdœla saga (1939: 124). Invulnerability to iron may have been either perceived through ritual, or a function of wearing animal-skin armour. A wolf- or bearskin could have proven effective against edged weapons, as Öláfs saga implies when Þórir hundr could only be wounded on those parts of him not covered by the enchanted reindeer-skin (Öláfs saga: 383–384). However, being flexible, it would have provided little protection against blunt-force trauma, hence the descriptions of berserkir being beaten to death with clubs.

Thus, while hidden elements of ritual were certainly present in reality but not depicted in Old Norse literature, depictions of berserksgangr provide valuable clues about the probable Viking-Age reality, and close reading shows that it is unlikely that medieval audiences would have interpreted howling and shield-biting as symptoms of loss of control. Instead, where it is said that a berserkr rages, it appears to be more a hyperbolic statement of rage as aggression and ferocity in battle than a description of going berserk. This idea is supported by the idea that going berserk would not be a positive attribute in a shieldwall that relies on holding the line as a team (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2009: 49–50).
**Social Position and Roles**

Breen (1999) and Liberman (2004) maintain that analysis of berserkir must begin and end with Old Norse literature, because ON berserkr is only known from the literature. This would limit analysis to the texts, even though Viking-Age usage of ON berserkr is demonstrated in Haraldskvæði (102 & 113). However, the evidence supports much wider analysis, because berserkir are linked to ulfheðnar through texts like Vatnsdæla saga (24), where the reference suggests that ulfheðnar were a sub-group of berserkir. From this, and the clear etymology of ulfheðinn meaning ‘wolfskin’, a connection can be traced to the iconographic evidence of the Vendel-era helmet plates with depictions of wolfskin-clad warriors in association with an entity with a horned helmet that has been identified as Óðinn (Hauck 2011: 3–4). From there, the connection may be made to Migration period bracteates where similar iconography exists. Thus, it is possible to construct an image of the social position of ulfheðnar and thus berserkir, and, by extension, to comment on the roles and functions of berserkir in the Viking Age.

The iconography and imagery associated with ulfheðnar lies wholly within the aristocratic, martial domain, featuring on helmet plates from wealthy graves and on gold bracteates. This places ulfheðnar, and by extension berserkir, among the social elite sittinguate them as retainers and bodyguards, if not lords themselves, and firmly places them at the top of society, not on its margins. It also places them in a domain that falls within Óðinn’s purview. Thus, they would have been associated with the god without having to be his priests or shamans. The interpretation of berserkir as social elite is further reinforced in the fornaldaarsögur, as in Hrólfs saga kraka which includes berserkir as some of Hrólf’s closest retainers. The social position of berserkir in the Íslendingasögur is less clear, but they do engage with the upper echelons of society directly, and thus may be considered to be part of it, except in the rare cases where they are outlaws. Certainly, Halli and Leiknir in Eyrbyggja saga were retainers of Hákon jarl Sigurðarson (Eyrbyggja saga: 60–61) and thus originally members of the elite. Furthermore, the use of ON berserkr in Ívens saga to translate Old French champion (Ívens saga: 80–81) indicates that the medieval audience would have recognised in berserkir figures whose role was that of a champion. In this role, they would have fought as bodyguards and fought judicial duels, much as the blámenn or giants in Ívens saga (80–81) feared Íven’s lion might do.

The connection between berserkir and duelling is reinforced by the berserk suitor motif (Blaney 1982) where the berserkr challenges a man for all his possessions and a female relative. These duels appear to have had legal force, such legality being commented on in Old Norse literature, and the episodes have been interpreted as an initiation ritual (Danielli 1945) where the young man is tested before joining a warband. Weiser (1927: 80–82) and Höfler (1934: 340–341) saw in these episodes a form of initiation into warbands as Männerbünde or all-male secret societies. This over-interprets the evidence and ascribes to it a cultic nature that is not evident in the texts. It is more likely that they represent a form of coming-of-age ritual where the young man earns a sword as a badge of his adult status, and it might be linked to the requirement in the Nyere Landslov of Magnús lagabættir that a man be hölmfærr in a case where he seeks to inherit (NGL 1885: II, 90). Thus, while berserkir do provide a foil for the hero to test his mettle against on the literary level, the medieval audience may have recognised a test of manhood in episodes featuring troublesome hölmgongumenn.

**Conclusions**

The final analysis shows that there are three main models of berserkir, and that much research into berserkir does not clearly differentiate which of these models is its subject. The Viking-Age berserkr is a member of the social elite, a champion and a bodyguard, probably with a ritual component to his warband membership. The medieval literary berserkr incorporates the attributes of the Viking-Age berserkr, but can also be socially disruptive. The modern berserkr is a one-dimensional killing machine who actually goes berserk in the sense of today’s idiomatic
usage, unlike his medieval and Viking-Age predecessors. In all of these depictions, the vocabulary used to translate and discuss berserkir devolves to the concepts of frenzy and battle madness. Translating ON berserkr as Present Day English ‘berserker’ immediately suggests wildness and frenzy, while President Day English ‘champion’ encompasses many of the historical roles and literary activities of berserkir. Similarly, ON berserksgangr is always translated as ‘berserk fit’ or ‘berserk frenzy’ and it is difficult to find an alternative translation that fits the sense of the component elements of ON berserksgangr without straying into the realms of the overly mystical (with translations like ‘way of the berserkr’). While ‘berserk fit’ may be appropriate in some cases, as when berserksgangr is used to refer to illness rather than the activities of berserkir, a better, less semantically loaded, if somewhat awkward, translation may be ‘the champion’s movements’. It cannot be doubted that the choice of vocabulary can steer the analysis subconsciously and thus alternative modes of expression need to be found if further research into berserkir is to be pursued effectively. This thesis has begun that process with its three models of berserkir and its call for greater precision.

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Runes, Runic Writing and Runic Inscriptions as Primary Sources for Town Development in Medieval Bergen, Norway

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Dissertation project undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Runology at the University of Nottingham, completion expected between summer 2018 and 2019.

Supervisors: Judith Jesch (University of Nottingham), Chris King (University of Nottingham) and Gitte Hansen (University of Bergen).

The unknown traveller who brought a small wooden stick to the medieval Norwegian town of Bergen sometime towards the end of the 12th century, may have mourned said stick’s loss upon discovering it was gone. Or he may have rejoiced – after all, it was inscribed with a message that might have gotten him into trouble were his wife to have found it amongst his belongings: 'Ingibjorg loved me when I was in Stavanger’ (cited after Samnordisk Runtextdatabas, 2014 release). Whether he himself was the person who carved the runes in a moment of reminiscing, or Ingibjorg smuggled the inscribed stick into his pack when he was not looking, we do not know. Yet we can be fairly certain that a wife, if she existed, would not have been happy to discover this memento.

Dire and potentially painful as the consequences of that little message may have been for the man who brought it with him, had someone found the inscription hidden under the wax on a little writing tablet, it might have ended the owner’s life. Consider the following inscription:

I would ask you this, that you leave your party. Cut a letter in runes to Ólafr Hettusveinn’s sister. She is in the convent in Bergen. Ask her and your kin for advice when you want to come to terms. You, surely, are less stubborn than the Earl. (Inscription N B368, Bryggen, Bergen, cited after Samnordisk Runtextdatabas, 2014 release.)

During the Civil War era,¹ a message like that could easily prove fatal if seen by the wrong pair of eyes. Since this inscription, as well as the first, was found in Bergen, there is reason to assume that the recipient followed the instructions and arrived in Bergen, where he lost or discarded the wooden tablet. His safe arrival there was surely cause for relief and happiness. However, the next recipient, one Eindriði, was probably not too cheerful when he read the following:

Eindriði! This you owe in payment: two measures and three casks, or else(?) sixteen measures. And you should, Eindriði, take the corn which Bergþórr has to discharge. (You should take) no less than sixteen measures or otherwise take nothing. And I order my father that he pay me three casks … (Inscription N 650, Gullskoen, Bryggen, Bergen, cited after Samnordisk Runtextdatabas, 2014 release.)

These are three very different messages pertaining to three very different aspects of medieval life. They have one thing in common though: all of them were found in the remains of the medieval urban landscape of Bergen. Following a fire in the old town quarter, Bryggen, on July 4th, 1955, archaeological excavations were conducted in the area, where the town’s medieval merchant and wharf area were once situated. Excavators hoped to find physical proof of what written sources like sagas had to say about medieval Bergen. Much to their surprise, the excavations not only yielded a somewhat to-be-expected array of

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household items, building structures, items of trade and pottery shards, they also yielded a find type that had hitherto been almost unknown: runic inscriptions on small wooden sticks, carrying messages of various types.

By that time, runic inscriptions, while not unknown from Norway, were still mostly connected to Sweden, where the vast majority of them was carved into stones, commemorating deceased family members or friends. The inscriptions on these stones tend to be formulaic, revealing mostly information pertaining to the deceased and their family. The runic inscriptions from Bergen thus not only stirred great interest amongst scholars, they also caused a shift in our perception of the runic script. Earlier runologists had suggested that runes were mainly used by the ruling classes as a mode of communication. However, the Bergen inscriptions, with their everyday, even vulgar content, put that theory to the test. The inscriptions are also (in regard to the use of runes as a script) comparatively late, dating from 1100 to 1400. Most of the Bergen material boasts neither the monumentality of the runestones nor the kind of formulaic language found on them. Hardly legible and definitely not intelligible runic sequences that may be taken for bored scribbling are found as well as Latin quotes from classical literature, and rather explicit statements about sexual conquests are found alongside prayers to the Christian god and saints. In fact, the inscriptions from Bergen are rather reminiscent of modern day Facebook or Twitter posts.

However, about 60 years after the first discovery, a large part of the Bergen inscriptions still awaits publication, and general knowledge of the material in both Norway and other countries is mostly limited to specialists. This is unfortunate for several reasons, and in order to change the current state of affairs, a PhD project supervised by Judith Jesch, Chris King (both University of Nottingham) and Gitte Hansen (University of Bergen) has been initiated. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, the project aims to investigate the importance, function, and use of runes and runic writing in medieval Bergen, paying special attention to their development over the course of time. With approximately 680 rune-inscribed objects known, and about half of them deciphered, a database containing information about each single inscription was a logical choice as the basis of investigation. This information is then combined with context information from the archaeological database maintained by the University Museum of Bergen. Various approaches, exemplified in Figure 1, are applied to the material to gain a broad picture of life in medieval Bergen.

Figure 1: Possibilities of combining the different approaches to analyse the society behind the runic inscriptions (c) Elisabeth Maria Magin, 2016.
The examples provided above provide a solid impression of the variety of information that can be gleaned from these inscriptions. They yield four names which are used in an onomastic survey of the material. In a paper presented at the Viking World Conference 2016, it was shown that in comparison to other name corpora dating to approximately the same time (specifically the name corpora represented in the Icelandic and Norwegian Diplomataria as published by Lind 1915, 1931), the Bryggen name corpus contains some peculiarities that are in need of further investigation. Despite an earlier theory by Jan Ragnar Hagland (Hagland 1988a; 1988b; 1989), as a corpus it is closer to general Norwegian tendencies than to the Icelandic corpus; yet some prominent, well-used names from the Diplomatarium Norvegicum appear to be underrepresented in the Bryggen names. Since both Diplomataria contain mainly correspondence and documents written by people with the requisite knowledge and resources, i.e. the upper classes of society, this may give an indication of runes as a means of communication being preferred by the middle and lower classes of society. This thesis is further strengthened by the appearance of names in the Bryggen corpus which are not present at all in one or both of the Diplomataria. However, no large in-depth studies of changing naming customs over the course of the Middle Ages in Norway and Iceland have been conducted as of yet. A diachronic study of name use in Bergen, Norway in general and Iceland will thus necessarily remain exemplary; but since the Bryggen corpus can be dated fairly well, the corpus can provide a scaffolding for future research on a larger scale.

A different approach leaves aside names and instead looks more closely at the content and purpose of each message in itself. Since there is such a wide variety of texts, it seems plausible that certain types of inscription may point to different areas of activity in the town landscape. Due to comparatively good documentation of the excavation area, it is possible to map the exact location of a number of runic inscriptions in the context of a unit, for example a house or a thoroughfare. Although the wooden sticks featuring these inscriptions are not large – and may easily have been lost in places where they have no business being – it is possible to pick out inscriptions which have very likely been deposited where they were used (cf. Hansen 2005: 51). Initial test runs with Geographical Information Systems (GIS) have proven that it is possible to look at patterns inside the larger excavation area; what remains to be seen is how much such an analysis can contribute to detailed analyses on a house/street level. In the meantime, though, an example of how the mapping of a specific kind of inscription works may suffice.

The type of inscription chosen are the so-called name tags, small sticks or pieces of wood bearing only a name and in some cases the verb “owns”, sometimes succeeded by the goods owned. They were used by merchants to mark their wares. These inscriptions have been extracted from the runic database by taking the scholarly opinion of their use and purpose as a means of filtering all available runic material. They are subsequently mapped using available coordinates, which produced the map presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Occurrence of name tags in the excavation area of the Bryggen Site BRM 0 in Bergen (c) Elisabeth Maria Magin, 2016.

Although only 36 of the approximately 100 name tags could be mapped during the test runs (this being due to coordinates lacking for the rest), so far the spatial pattern suggests that name tags occur more frequently in the
foremost parts of the excavation area, closer to the waterfront. Since name tags are traditionally connected to trade and tradesmen, this might hint at storerooms for goods located near the waterfront to allow for easy access when loading and unloading cargo, and it stands to reason that traders would prefer to store their goods close to the waterfront rather than further back. This pattern, though, will need to be compared to maps including the as of yet unmapped name tags as well as the dating of each individual name tag. These analyses will require different approaches, though, as GIS mapping is reliant on coordinates. As the project moves into its second year, these key issues (missing coordinate data, \textit{in situ} finds, and varying/missing dating) will need to be addressed. However, the database created for this project has proven to be a vital tool for interpretation, and will continue to be expanded, thus rendering results clearer and more encompassing. It is to be hoped that by the predicted end of this project in 2018 or 2019, it will have helped to shed more light on what function runes had in medieval Bergen while providing new insight into the people who used them.

Notes
1. Fights for the Norwegian throne started during the Viking Age and continued into the High Middle Ages. Ölafr Hettusveinn, the man mentioned in the second inscription, can (with some caution) be identified as one of the pretenders to the Norwegian throne in the Civil War era between 1130 and 1240. He was declared king for a short period before another party overthrew him and his followers.

2. Every few years a newspaper article in \textit{Aftenposten}, \textit{Bergens Tidende}, or another Norwegian newspaper calls attention to these extraordinary finds, and they have been featured both in museum exhibitions and TV documentaries. This does not appear to have had any lasting effect on the general public’s memory, though. For example, as of September 2016, while the English (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bryggen-inscriptions), French (https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inscriptions_de_Bryggen) and Swedish (https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runinskrifterna_fr%C3%A5n_Bryggen_i_Bergen) Wikipedia extensions host at least a short article on the Bergen finds, the Norwegian Wikipedia does not feature an article on them at all.

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Between Unity and Diversity: Articulating Pre-Christian Nordic Religion and its Spaces in the Late Iron Age
Luke John Murphy, Aarhus University

\textit{Dissertation project undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Study of Religion at Aarhus University, Denmark, completed in May 2017. Supervisor: Jens Peter Schjødt (Aarhus University); Terry Gunnell (University of Iceland).}

Submitted to the School of Culture and Society at Aarhus University in January 2017, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the ongoing academic discourse regarding unity and diversity within pre-Christian Germanic religion. John McKinnell argued that pre-Christian religion was \textit{Both One and Many} in 1994, Fredrik Svanberg pushed for \textit{Decolonizing the Viking Age} in 2003, and Stefan Brink demonstrated intense regional variation in sacral toponymy in 2007, leading to a groundswell of dissatisfaction with the idea of a single reconstructable pre-Christian religion. These ideas appear to have broken
into the academic mainstream in the last ten years, with articles by Jens Peter Schjødt (2009; 2012) and Andreas Nordberg (2012) in particular prompting conscious debate about unity – or lack thereof – in pre-Christian Nordic religion. The aim of this project is to engage with this debate by examining evidence for variation in the locations of religious praxis and sacraly-charged space in the Germanic Nordic cultural area during the Late Iron Age (ca. 500–1200 AD). The dissertation consists of a portfolio of six articles that employ different approaches to a range of source material concerning a variety of religious contexts. While each article addresses its own independent research questions, a number of running themes and issues underlie the dissertation as a whole: the tension between unity and diversity, spatialisation (the imburement of objective area with subjective value), variety in the social settings of and diachronic development in sacral space, and the idea that distinct articulations of pre-Christian Nordic religion can be meaningfully identified along different axes.

The first article, “Reasoning Our Way to Privacy: Towards a Methodological Discourse of Viking Studies”, is an analysis of methodological approaches commonly employed in studies of historical cultural phenomena, including religion. It aims to contribute to the nascent methodological discourse of the emerging “Viking Studies” field, and outlines and categorises a number of methodological approaches into two loose family groupings of “bottom-up” and “top-down” methods. The former are described as attempts to deduce the cultural categories employed by bearers of a culture, that is, as examples of Max Weber’s Idealtypen that depart from the concrete and attempt to generalise on that basis (Weber 1904; cf. Frank 1997; Hall 2009: 1–20). An emic case study of heimolleikr, a medieval Nordic cultural concept akin to modern Western notions of privacy, is conducted on the basis of philological evidence from medieval manuscripts. Top-down methods are then argued to employ inductive reasoning in their application of external categories to cultural phenomena (e.g. Cole 2015; Shay 2003; cf. Fitzgerald 1997; Jensen 2003), and their results described as examples of Ferdinand Tönnies’ Normaltypen, which move from an abstract idea to concrete data (Tönnies 1931; 1979). An example of etic methods is presented in the form of a case study of “Old Norse Privacy”, which is then compared to heimolleikr: it is proposed that the latter reflects greater stress on interpersonal relationships than is typically the case with privacy, which features a greater concern with the control of access to space. Finally, the polarised nature of the presentation of approaches in the article is once again stressed, and the abductive reality of most scholarship noted.

The second article, “Continuity and Change: Forms of Liminality in the Sacred Social Spaces of the Pre-Christian Nordic World” (Murphy 2016), is a study of the locations at and into which sacral value was imbued in the Nordic region during the Late Iron Age. A range of types of such sites are identified through toponymic evidence (Brink 2007). Following a discussion of spatial theory (Foucault 1986; Hubbard & Kitchin 2011), textual and archaeological evidence for the social space of an etically-proposed grouping of sites including rocky places, wetland, and woodland is examined. The geographic and cosmological location of these places on the border of human settlements, and the subsequent marginalisation of the Other, is discussed (cf. Hastrup 1990). It is concluded that the sacral value of such sites was assigned on the basis of geographic and spatial liminality. A second grouping consisting of architectural sites – hof, cult houses, and halls – is then considered, and it is noted that such spaces are cosmologically and socially central (Brink 1996; 1997; Herschend 2009). It is argued that the cosmological Other could not be expected to inhabit such strongly human spaces, and that their sacral value was instead imbued on the basis of religious ritual such as sacred drama (Gunnell 1995; 2011). Finally, it is suggested that in order for a location to be invested as sacral space in the pre-Christian Nordic region it needed to demonstrate “dimensional liminality”, a sense of detachment from the human centre of the cosmos.
The third article, “Processes of Religious Change in Late Iron Age Gotland I: Rereading, Spatialisation, and Enculturation” (Murphy 2017), is a study of the changes to – and survivals of – pre-Christian sacral spaces during the eleventh-century Christianisation of the Baltic island of Gotland. It departs from the thirteenth-century Guta saga description of how the first churches on the island were constructed by (the possibly fictional) Botair of Akubek (Peel 1999). The saga’s justification for the survival of the second church is deconstructed, and the Nordic phenomenon of vế investigated. On the basis of textual and archaeological evidence (Zachrisson 2014), it is argued that vế were spaces charged with both sacral value and a prohibition of violence, and featured a range of objective barriers and subjective boundaries. Gotlandic evidence for other spaces where violence was forbidden or taboo is considered, and it is proposed that the “vì” of Guta saga was a permanent ritual location in which Botair deliberately built a church in an attempt at incultural Christianisation (cf. Bintley 2015). Such Christianisation is argued to have altered the ontological system within which values were assigned without altering those values. It is therefore concluded that Christianisation was thus a multifaceted process both responsive to and driven by spatial issues.

The fourth article, “Processes of Religious Change in Late Iron Age Gotland II: Centralisation, Enclosure, Privatisation, and Nationalisation”, builds upon the preceding work in further deconstructing the process of Christianisation, and seeks evidence for notably Gotlandic features of pre-Christian religion practiced on the island. With reference to the second article (Murphy 2016), it is argued that the cliffs under which Botair’s church stood in Guta saga may have been the primary location of sacral value on the site. A process of centralisation is thus proposed to have run parallel to the Christianisation of Vi (cf. Fabech 1994). The strengthening of the inside/outside binary and the reduction in experiential access to ritual inherent in the replacement of an open-air space with a building is discussed. Evidence from Guta saga, Guta lag, and toponymy is used to suggest that pre-Christian Gotlandic sacral places featured a notably public character. This is suggested to reflect the notably flatter social hierarchy of Late Iron Age Gotland (Siltberg 2012; Yrwing 1978). The effects of the Christianisation are thus argued to have privatised sacral space to a much greater extent than had previously been the case, with concomitant effects on social unit formation. It is suggested that this forced a renegotiation of Gotlandic identity. It is therefore concluded that the Christianisation of Gotland was accompanied by and achieved via concurrent processes of centralisation, enclosure, privatisation, and nationalisation.

The fifth article, “Domestic and Household Religion in the Pre-Archaic North: Pre-Christian Private Praxis”, is an examination of evidence for small-scale, locally-focused cult in the Late Iron Age Nordic region. It argues that such cult can meaningfully be described as “pre-Archaic” in Robert Bellah’s typological cultural evolutionary paradigm (Bellah 1964; 2011). A paradigm of pre-Archaic domestic, familial, and/or household religions is first established on the basis of comparative studies of antique Near Eastern and Mediterranean religion (Bodel & Olyan 2008; Albertz et al. 2014). A household articulation of pre-Christian Nordic religion is then identified on the basis of textual accounts from medieval Iceland. This cult is proposed to have typically been performed in or near the dwelling; to have been dedicated more often to localised supranatural beings (including ancestral spirits) than to more widely-known deities; to have offered more significant roles for women than other pre-Christian Nordic religion\'s; and to have been more common in the late autumn and early winter. It is argued that neither food-based rituals nor the use of iconographic representations of the supranatural allows the drawing of useful differentiations from other pre-Christian Nordic religion\'s. The lack of evidence for rites de passage explicitly linked to a household-based congregation or domestic setting is also noted, as is the possibility that the picture of pre-Christian Nordic household cult that emerges in this study represents a largely west Norse, late pagan articulation of private religion. It is concluded that this model
of pre-Christian household cult is simultaneously an articulation of both pre-Christian Nordic and pre-Archaic domestic, familial, and/or household religion.

In accordance with the requirements of the School of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, the concluding text of the dissertation also takes the form of an article, entitled “Synthesising the Spaces of Pre-Christian Religion in the Late Iron Age”. It offers a summary of the proceeding articles and seeks to establish how the findings of the those articles address the research questions of the dissertation as a whole. The dissertation concludes that pre-Christian Nordic religion was characterised by intense variation along all manner of axes, and that seeking to further our understanding of the interactions between these articulations and their aggregate assemblage will contribute not only to the study of pre-Christian Nordic religion, but also to the wider Study of Religion, Nordic cultural history, and Viking Studies.

Notes
1. I owe thanks to Russell Poole, the editor of Viking and Medieval Scandinavia, and the anonymous peer-reviewers for their feedback.
2. I owe thanks to Meg Boulton, Heidi Stoner and Jane Hawkes, the editors of Place and Space in the Medieval World, for their input, and to the copyright holders of the images reproduced in the article for their generosity in allowing me to use their work.

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The Birth of the Iamb in Early Renaissance Low Countries

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Dissertation project undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Meertens Institute, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, scheduled for submission in February 2020.

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Launched in February 2016, “The Birth of the Iamb in Early Renaissance Low Countries” is an ongoing research project at the Meertens Institute of Amsterdam expected to be completed in 2020. The project aims to investigate contact-related language change by way of considering changes in poetry as a reflection of changes occurring in the language itself. The present article constitutes an overview of the project and its areas of investigation.

This research project focuses on the development of iamb in Low Countries poetry. During its Renaissance phase, around the end of the 16th century, Dutch poetry moved from an accentual verse to a foot-based one (Gasparov 1996; Kazartsev 2008) by incorporating iambic meter, a result of the influence of French and Italian poetry. Italian poetry, during the development of Renaissance thought, had revitalized and adapted the classical iambic meter, and French poetry, inspired by the former, had elaborated its own version of the new metrical form. The use of iamb was far from Germanic poetic tradition; hence, its incorporation determined a deep change in Dutch poetry. The aim of this research is to analyse metrical and language change and to determine the role played by lexical borrowings in the two processes. The plan for this study builds on the principle that a large amount of lexical borrowings can lead to structural borrowings and hence structural
changes in the target language (Winford 2003: 53). This principle was combined with the observation of a great number of Romance lexical items that entered Dutch vocabulary during the Renaissance, which are expected to have contributed to the metrical change.

In the following paragraphs, I first provide a description of the context in which the change occurred, secondly I present the starting points of the investigation and, third and finally, I outline the goals of the project.

The Renaissance spread in the Low Countries with a certain delay compared to its birth in Italy and its development in France. Due to this delay, Dutch poets were exposed to works of French and Italian Renaissance poetry, which were already at a mature stage. Moreover, they could access not only the original classical texts in Latin and Ancient Greek, but also their translations in Modern languages. In addition, numerous were the translations of Italian Renaissance works into French.

In terms of poetry, the Italian Renaissance had been characterized by the development of the sonnet and of the endecasillabo. The endecasillabo is a syllabo-tonic verse, with a tendency towards iambic rhythm, which is composed by ten syllables plus a feminine ending. In this meter the stress pattern is relatively free, made exception for the tenth syllable and the one in fourth or sixth position, which are always stressed (Elwert 1973; Menichetti 1993; Gasparov 1996; Beltrami 2002). The stress on the fourth or sixth syllable depends on the position of some kind of caesura, or rather pause, which, according to Nespor and Vogel (1986: 281), coincides with the end of a phonological phrase.

In France, the poets of la Pléiade (the literary group of which Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay and Jean-Antoine de Baïf were members), being inspired by Petrarch’s work, promoted the use of the Alexandrine, a twelve-syllable line with an obligatory caesura in the middle. Being a syllabic meter, the alexandrine was composed without considering any internal stress pattern, but, due to word group stress occurring at the right edge of every word group, the sixth and the twelfth syllables always carried stress (Gasparov 1986; Lote 1991; Dinu 1993). Important sources of Renaissance poetry were the classical works from which the term iamb derives. A significant difference between classical poetry and the French and Italian development was its basis in a quantitative meter: an iamb consisted of a long syllable preceded by a short one. After several attempts at recreating quantitative meter, it was adapted to modern languages by substituting the concept of “long” with “stressed” and “short” with “unstressed” (Elwert 1973).

With this brief background in place, we can now turn to Low Countries poetry. Before the Renaissance, poetry was mostly composed following an accentual meter, in which a fixed number of stresses were divided by a varying number of unstressed syllables. The only exception seems to be het leven van Sinte Lutgart [‘The Life of Saint Lutgardis’], a 14th century poem written in iamb, which constitutes, though, an isolated case (Zonneveld 2000). With the blossoming of the Renaissance, many poets decided to renew and heighten their poetry by imitating poetic forms used in the prestigious French intellectual scene, in particular by the poets of la Pléiade, and by imitating the icon of the Renaissance movement, namely the endecasillabo of Petrarch.

Yet in order to do so, Dutch poetry needed to undergo some changes and therefore the beginning of the Renaissance in the Low Countries was characterized by the passage from an accentual verse to a foot-based one. This was the way in which a stress-based language could incorporate the iambic foot, used in syllabic, syllabo-tonic and quantitative meter. It resulted in a line composed by a fixed number of iambic feet. Kazartsev divides Dutch Renaissance iambic poetry in two phases: a first phase in which deviations from the template are more common and the verse is freer, and a second phase, in which the sequence of iambic feet became more regular due to theorization by poets (Kazartsev 2008).

However, a geographical distinction has to be made. In fact, there is a linguistic difference between the poets of the south of the Low Countries and the ones of the north, a difference that needs to be considered: the southern poets were mostly bilingual, speaking
both Dutch and French, while the northern ones, despite knowing French, could not be considered bilingual per se. The relevance of this observation lies in the accessibility of the French structure among the two groups of Dutch poets. Clearly, both groups were fluent enough to understand and try to imitate French poetry. But only the southern group could have full insight into its functionality. This difference led to a significant distinction in the initial phase of iambic meter versification: on the one hand, in the south, cases of isosyllabism in the French manner were attested, which consisted of lines with a fixed number of syllables yet with a very free disposition of stresses and an alternation of iambic and anapestic feet (Gasparov 1996: 193; Zonneveld 1998: 206); on the other hand, these instances do not seem to be attested in the north.

The exposure to the prestigious French and Italian Renaissance works led, along with the new meter, to the entrance of many lexical borrowings. As observed above, such an influx of foreign lexical items is expected to have an effect on the structure of the recipient language. Interestingly, a parallel situation was attested in English poetry, which, during its Renaissance phase, incorporated a large amount of French lexical elements. According to Halle and Keyser (1971) and Duffell (2010), it was in fact the great influx of loanwords that, by causing a change in English stress rules, facilitated the spread of iambic meter. To explain, the English stress system underwent a change due to a large number of loanwords from French, a change which consisted of a stressed rule for Romance items becoming part of the stress system. The change in the general stress rule enhanced the potential for English to accommodate iambic foot.

This research project’s goal is to investigate the influence of loanwords through two different perspectives. The first perspective considers the role of lexical borrowings in the language as a system. In other words, it focuses on changes, mainly stress-related, that were caused by the large influx of Romance words into the Dutch lexicon. The starting point is the assumption that an account similar to the one that Halle and Keyser (1971) and Duffell (2010) made regarding stress changes in English can also be made for Dutch. A study of the Romance lexical borrowings attested in a large corpus of Dutch poetry and an analysis of their influence on Dutch language stress will reveal significant insights on how the language changed during that period. In a more general view, it will contribute to the understanding of how language and stress can change under an extensive contact with another language.

The second perspective focuses on differences between the groups of Dutch poets. As observed before, the division is based on the geographical origin of the poets. The two groups reveal two different approaches to French poetry, namely an initial attempt at isosyllabism versus an immediate foot-based approach. A corpus analysis of the two groups and of their different phases is forthcoming. A comparative analysis of the two groups in relation to the Romance source will also be considered. The observation of the possibilities of deviation from the iambic pattern in the different phases and within the two groups leads to the elaboration of a diachronic picture of the process. Moreover, the comparative analysis of the two groups gives a more complete understanding of the different degrees of influence played by the Romance source. In particular, it explores the relationship between the level of linguistic competence of the poets in the source language and the degree to which the source metrical forms can be emulated in the target language.

Works Cited


Bodies Become Stars: Numinous Transformation of Physical Damage in Heaton Cosmology
Ross Downing, University of the Highlands and Islands

Thesis project undertaken for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Viking Studies at the University of the Highlands and Islands, completed 30th September 2016.
Supervisor: Alexandra Sanmark (University of Highlands and Islands).

This study is borne out of the recognition of a pattern in Old Norse mythology where figures lose a body-part but gain a positive attribute. The classic example is Óðinn, a god who gave his eye for wisdom. The study’s introductory section deals with previous attempts by scholars to understand Old Norse cosmology. From a thorough discussion of current methods, models, and theories, I define several parameters that allow for a study of the corpus’s complex body of religious stories. Having established a ground for discourse, my analysis section lists a number of major instances of body-damage in the myths and interprets these events in emic terms. My observation is that there are several variations of a transformative pattern of the physical to the spiritual. There are two main appearances of this motif: First, fólginn, an emic concept of physical loss which leads to a change in the soul-types (hugr, hamr) of the individual and second, transpersonal empowerment, whereby the physical damage of one individual provides power (megin) to another individual. Finally, I conclude that there are several possibilities in which this religious language could be expressed in Old Norse cosmology, and that this language fundamentally serves as a means to understand communication between the material and the numinous.

A Heathen Mecca: Interpreting the International Germanic Contemporary Pagan Response to the Icelandic Temple
Ross Downing, University of the Highlands and Islands

Thesis project undertaken for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Religious Studies at the University of Gothenburg, completed 20th January 2017.
Advisor: Åke Sander (University of Gothenburg)

In 2008, Ásatrúarfélagið, Iceland’s largest Germanic Contemporary Pagan (Heathen) organisation, purchased land to build a partly state-funded temple in Reykjavík. The structure was commonly covered by international media as ‘the first Viking temple in 1000 years’. As of January 2017, the temple remains unfinished, but in the last eight years since its announcement, four Heathen temples have been built or purchased and converted by groups in the United States, United Kingdom, Spain, and Denmark. All used the same headline in their promotion. All four groups share a folkish (racialist) interpretation of Heathenship which is opposed by Ásatrúarfélagið and many other Heathens around the world. A number of events within the Heathen community in the last two years show a growing polarisation and division between Folkish and non-Folkish Heathens. This thesis uses data from interviews with 78 Heathens in North, Central, and South America; Africa; Europe; Australasia; and Asia, and from a questionnaire that received responses from 110 Heathens in the United States. The data shows that many Heathens...
perceive Folkish Heathens as in competition with the Icelandic temple. Moreover, the Icelandic temple is a beacon for change and inspiration among Heathens. Nearly all of my 188 informants intend to visit the temple, proving it is a significant turning point for this New Religious Movement, bringing a sense of strengthened confidence and international community. The data also indicates that racialist organisations’ own temples are representative of competing religious ‘market forces’. This, in turn, has led to non-Folkish Heathens becoming more confident and communicative, and closing ranks against racialist Heathens. This activity indicates that many Heathens believe the temple itself will improve public relations along with their social standing, numbers, and ability to practice publicly, ultimately allowing them to live more open and influential religious lives.

**Weaponry from the 9th to 11th Centuries from Watery Locations in North-Western Poland**

Klaudia Karpińska, University of Rzeszów

*Thesis project undertaken for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Archaeology at the University of Rzeszów, completed September 2016.*

*Supervisor: Marcin Wołoszyn (University of Rzeszów, Leipzig University).*

*Reviewer: Michał Dzik (University of Rzeszów).*

Since the early twentieth century, numerous early medieval weapons have been found in lakes and rivers in northwestern Poland. These include complete and fragmentarily preserved swords, saxes, axes, battle axes, spears, javelins, and helmets as well as a chainmail. Several of these weapons are decorated with fine and elaborate ornaments. Interestingly, some of these weapon finds were accompanied by everyday objects such as tools and utensils, jewellery, costume elements, horse tack, and riding equipment.

Over many years, numerous researchers have sought to explain the circumstances which might have led to the weapons ending up in lakes and rivers. Two primary explanations for the presence of these weapons are proposed in Polish academic literature. The first explanation sees them as accidental losses and as objects that fell into the water during battles while the second associates them with ritual practices. In my opinion, however, this problem is more complicated than it seems. In my master’s thesis, I attempt to analyse and re-interpret all weapon finds from watery contexts in a manner never before attempted.

The first chapter (*Introduction*) includes basic information concerning the chronological and territorial scope of the thesis. It contains a detailed description of the regional geography of the five current voivodeships. The chapter additionally provides a chronology of Poland in the early Middle Ages.

Chapter 2 (*A History of Research and Interpretations*) provides an overview of past interpretations of weapons from thirteen lakes and five rivers.

Chapter 3 (*Typological Analysis of Weaponry*) discusses the typology of weapons from waters. It compares dating and the shape of particular weapons from lakes and rivers with the types of military equipment included in Andrzej Nadolski’s (1954) and Jan Petersen’s (1919) typologies.

The next chapter (*Weaponry in Watery Locations*) is divided into three parts (1. *Losses?*; 2. *Traces of Cult?*; and 3. *Weapons in lakes and rivers*) and provides a new analysis and re-interpretation of military equipment from watery locations. The first part places a particular focus on finds from Lake Lednica and explores the possibilities of interpreting weapons from watery locations as accidental losses. The second part of Chapter 4 examines all weapon finds from lakes as potential traces of early medieval Slavic rituals. It also considers the potential sacral function of these objects in the context of medieval textual sources (such as *Chronicon Thietmari*) and accounts from folklore. In the last part of this chapter, finds from lakes and
rivers in northwestern Poland are compared with those from old Denmark and Mecklenburg.

The last chapter (Conclusions) includes some concluding remarks and presents future research possibilities. I suggest that the weapons found in watery locations might reflect various events not necessarily of military nature.

This master’s thesis also features a detailed catalogue of all weapon finds from watery locations in northwestern Poland and is supplemented by plates presenting selected artefacts mentioned in the thesis.

Notes
2. The watery locations (lakes) analysed in the thesis include: Bnin (site no. 1), Bobięcino (site no. 3), Giecz (site no. 2), Gwieździn (site no. 54), Hornówek (site no. 8), Izdebno (site no. 5), Łoniewo (site no. 1), Nętno (site no. 38), Niedźwiedź (site no. 5), Orchowo (unnumbered site), Pszczew (site no. 2), Rybitwy-Ostrów Lednicki (sites no. 3a and 3b), Świeszyno (site no. 48), Trzynik (site no. 12), and Żółte (site no. 33).
3. The thesis examines weapons discovered in the followings rivers: Dziwna, Maskawa (Moskawa), Noteć, Odra, and Rega.
4. Artefacts form Lednica Lake discovered in the context of charred wood and among the remains of bridges are in majority interpreted as the remains of one episode: the invasion of Greater Poland by the Czech Duke Břetislav I in 1038 or 1039. In my thesis, I disagree with this statement. I argue that these finds could be the remains of several different events rather than a single battle.

Works Cited
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